

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Sara Burnett

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

Official School Name Tri-Valley Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 409 East Washington Steet

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

City Downs                      State IL                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 61736-9380

County McLean

Telephone (309) 378-2031                      Fax (309) 378-4578

Web site/URL http://tri-alleyelementary.weebly.com    E-mail sburnett@tri-valley3.org

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/Tri-

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/vikingstv3    575725232540356/                      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 Dr. David Mouser                      E-mail dmouser@tri-valley3.org

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

District Name Tri-Valley CUSD 3                      Tel. (309) 378-2351

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. Carl Neubauer

(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

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

1. 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

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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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	10	3	10
K	41	37	78
1	30	35	65
2	29	39	68
3	29	37	66
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	139	151	290

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 96 % White
  - 0 % 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: 4%

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	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	267
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.045
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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: 27
8. Students receiving special education services: 22 %  
65 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.

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

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	13
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals	4
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	96%	97%	96%
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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The school strives to provide a safe and nurturing environment where: all students learn, all students succeed, and all students are valued.

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

Tri-Valley Elementary School is an elementary building that serves early childhood through third grade. The elementary building, middle school and high school are located on the same campus with total student enrollment of 1006. The District employs 76 certified staff members and an additional 61 staff members who are non-certified.

Over the years, the Tri-Valley School District has gone through many changes. Originally, Tri-Valley was predominantly a rural area with agriculture as the primary economic factor. The development of large, rural subdivisions between Downs and Bloomington-Normal has dramatically changed the demographics of the district over the past 15-20 years. Tri-Valley has become an area populated by a large number of middle to upper income families.

The growth of the district and the changing demographics created by the growth have strengthened the district in many ways. The increased number of students has allowed Tri-Valley to expand the number of programs offered. The new homes have increased the local tax base and provided the district with additional revenues. Families moving into the Tri-Valley School District often cite the schools as one of the main reasons for relocation. This attitude is reflected in the number of parents who take an active role in their children's education.

Academically, the elementary school has been a recipient of the Illinois State Board of Education Academic Excellence Award since the mid-2000's. The Academic Excellence Award is presented to schools achieving 90% meets or exceeds in math and reading for three consecutive years. As the expectations for the NCLB requirements have risen, Tri-Valley Elementary School has continued to meet or exceed annual yearly progress. In addition to NCLB requirements, our building out-performs other elementary schools in our region with similar demographics.

Traditionally, our goal is to provide a smooth transition between home and the beginning of formal education. This is accomplished through a unique approach to curriculum and instruction. Teachers work collaboratively to develop curriculum which is tied to Illinois Common Core standards, going beyond the traditional basal approach. Through district professional development, teachers are able to scaffold curriculum between and across grade levels. In addition, our CARES team (Collaborative Action and Resources for Educational Success) provides support through academic testing, counseling, and collaboration. Students are given access to individual, small group, and whole group early interventions that target needs in areas of academics and social skills, helping to build a solid foundation.

Tri-Valley Elementary School is committed to creating a proactive student body that endeavors to learn and that leads without hesitation. Through the Leader In Me program, students are provided opportunities to actively participate in the school and classroom environment. The Seven Habits teach students to respect individual differences and develop a healthy approach to life. Our staff builds skills to strengthen student confidence needed to succeed academically and make a positive difference beyond the classroom.

Along with our entire district, TVES is ever-evolving with technology. Each class has a weekly scheduled lesson in the computer lab to build information literacy skills and identify appropriate tools for collecting, finding, communicating, and using information ethically. The engagement and programming with these devices has allowed students to learn on a new and exciting platform. It is very common to conduct a walk-through in a TVES classroom and see students engaged with Smartboard activities, iPad activities, and more traditional learning groups. These components enhance the foundations of our student learners.

Student development at Tri-Valley Elementary School does not solely consist of academic growth and achievement. While at TVES, students may participate in American Girl Club, chess club, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. TVES also offers a variety of intramural sports such as soccer, basketball, t-ball, wrestling, JFL football, and cheerleading. The student successes in these areas are a proud tradition at Tri-Valley Elementary School. We strongly believe in recognizing our students for their non-academic successes while promoting a balance with their academics. Philosophically, we also stress the necessity to help others. Our Kid-to-Kid program offers support to families in district who are in distress during the holiday season. The

students also assist with and fundraise for groups such as Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and St. Jude Children's Hospital.

Tri-Valley Elementary School and its community are proud of the accomplishments of our students and staff. We believe in honoring our students and staff. In today's educational world there are many distractions, but the focus of TVES remains on high levels of achievement. The goal is to see these achievements in all areas. We continue to evaluate our influence on the whole child and then critically analyze our own roles so that we can grow and change to meet the needs of the ever-changing world of education.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The curriculum at Tri-Valley Elementary sets the foundation for future learning. By using a diverse curriculum, we are preparing our students for life and future academic experiences. First and foremost, we want them to be successful. The total experience at Tri-Valley focuses on the whole child.

The core curriculum at the elementary school is built upon a content basal series. However, each grade level enriches its programs in different ways. Through collaboration across grade levels, teachers are able to plan and develop curriculum that meets the needs of each student at his/her individual level. Multi-faceted lessons within each grade level enrich and provide students the opportunity to absorb, process, comprehend, and retain information in their preferred learning style. Grade level meetings and school improvement days are often spent devising lessons and making sure the lessons are aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards and Common Core State Standards. During school improvement days, each grade level constructed a framework within every common core standard was incorporated for the yearly lesson plan.

Our Pre-K classroom goals and objectives are based on the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, which are aligned to the Illinois Kindergarten Standards and the Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten. These goals and objectives focus on The Creative Curriculum learning framework. This framework is based on theory and research in the early childhood field. In our Pre-K, students develop skills and dispositions to be life-long learners. They learn and grow as they engage in a variety of whole group, small group, and independent activities utilizing eleven interest centers. We have observed that the preschoolers entering kindergarten from our pre-k program have the necessary basic skills and readiness to begin our stringent curriculum.

The strength of the kindergarten program is the diversification that takes place in each classroom. Leveled guided reading groups, a scaffolded writing program, and a new reader's workshop program address Common Core Standards in English Language Arts. Teachers are able to tailor their lesson plans to meet the individual needs of their students. Phonemic awareness is practiced through the Michael Heggerty program. Writing begins using the Four Block program and transitions to Michael Heggerty's writing resources. Teachers use Cognitively Guided Instruction and a stringent skills introduction based on Common Core Math Standards. Using small groups, teachers are able to adapt lessons to each child's needs. In kindergarten, science and social studies are integrated into the weekly themes and the standards are met through hands-on activities, learning centers, and literature.

In first grade, teachers continue to emphasize diversification as their primary philosophy. Along with the basic program, the Daily 5 program promotes stamina, independence, and accountability. By utilizing this program, teachers choose individual goals, formulate strategies, monitor progress, and provide intervention, meeting the needs of every student. Michael Heggerty writing is continued in first grade, building on basic writing form and working toward different techniques and styles of writing. Math lessons scaffold from their kindergarten experience and carry on using the CGI philosophy. Common Core math skills are taught through a variety of large and small group activities and are assessed weekly. Science and social studies are based on a basal series, but are enriched with hands-on experiments, projects, and speakers addressing specific topics.

Educators from each grade level collaborate to make sure learning builds each year. In second grade, the teachers continue to use the Daily 5 program, scaffolding from the students' previous levels. Additional programs such as Shurley English and Accelerated Reader are incorporated to solidify the skills needed for third grade. CGI continues in second grade with students using higher-level thinking skills to solve a variety of problems and increase skills and knowledge. Science and social studies instruction is more in-depth in second grade. Teaching the scientific method, developing and utilizing models, and analyzing and interpreting data is emphasized at this grade level. In social studies, the use of research projects and biographies begins to develop cultural awareness and social responsibility.

The main difference between second and third grade is the preparation of students to enter the middle

school. There is an emphasis in third grade in Shurley English. This program instills skills of increasing complexity that makes language arts concepts learn and logical. Using small groups in reading allows the teachers to continue to teach at each child's level. The beauty of the CGI program is illustrated by the continuation of the development of mathematical understanding and application. Science and social studies instruction uses the inquiry design model, which leads the child to a more in-depth understanding of his/her environment. This allows children to develop inquisitive and analytical questions, which leads to critical thinking.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Cuts in school funding and budget constraints have affected the non-core areas of instruction. Individual classroom teachers' commitment to teaching fine arts has resulted in creative solutions. Teachers take time to research and implement plans that teach technique and appreciation of fine arts. Various art techniques are on display throughout the building. Popular artists and illustrators that include Wassily Kandinsky, Eric Carle, and Georges Seurat, to name a few, inspire projects at various grade levels.

Pre-K through third grade explores drama through classroom programs that involve music, dance, actions, and language. The Pre-K presents a poetry and musical performance. The kindergartners culminate their year with an ABC Program involving music, poetry, and dance. The first graders present a recitation at their November Thanksgiving celebration. Second graders use music, poetry, and drama during their yearly Thanksgiving and Grandparents Day performances. The third grade talent show has been a tradition and all time favorite in the community.

Kindergarten students receive music instruction once a week. First through third graders go to music class twice weekly. They are exposed to different genres of music, composers, a variety of musical instruments, and music methodology. Students have the opportunity to share their acquired skills in programs attended by the community twice a year. Efforts are made to further enhance music appreciation with a yearly field trip to the Illinois Symphony and performances by our high school musical groups. A local theater company affiliated with Illinois Wesleyan University brings an operetta to the school each year. These productions are often accompanied with classroom lessons that extend the experiences.

Up until this year, the Tri-Valley Academic Boosters have offered an extra-curricular foreign language club. Students in kindergarten through fifth could attend Spanish classes once a week. This was a great segue to the middle school Spanish class. We have been looking for a way to continue foreign-language learning and are excited to be able to offer Spanish as one of our new summer camp options.

Tri-Valley is particularly proud of its physical education program. Pre-K through third graders receive 30 minutes of instruction daily. We employ two p.e. teachers who teach individual classes daily and team teach once a week. Unique to Tri-Valley is the collaboration that results in a variety of units that incorporate team-building skills, personal physical wellness, and knowledge of how the body works. An example of the p.e. teachers' creativity is the use of obstacle courses to teach fire safety skills and the way the circulatory system works. Hands-on activities provide opportunities for students to learn about the brain and the skeletal system. Personal fitness goals are set at the beginning of the year and continually assessed and reevaluated. Student achievements are recognized at the end of the year assembly.

Technology throughout our district is state-of-the-art and highly respected in the area. We are fortunate to have a wide variety of technology available. Each classroom uses iPads in small group work across the curriculum. The iPads have given teachers the ability to incorporate innovative materials that spark student interest. Teachers share iPads to broaden the experience for a larger group of students. By placing the technology into the hands of the students, it gives them ownership for their learning. Smartboards are available at each grade level and in the media center. These boards allow the students to learn kinesthetically and give the children the opportunity to teach each other. Several classrooms utilize the boards for housekeeping activities, curricular extensions, and promoting technological awareness. The elementary school houses two computer labs. The media center lab offers a technology class once a week where children learn internet safety, keyboarding skills, research skills, and application usage. Technology is often integrated into other disciplines as students research, write, and create projects to share. The second computer lab can be checked out by individual teachers to work on class curriculum through technological

means. Teachers also incorporate student-created powerpoint presentations and movie-making into classroom presentations.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Tri-Valley Elementary is committed to making sure each child receives instruction based on his or her strengths and weaknesses. The use of whole group, small group, and individual instruction forms the basis of our teaching philosophy. The tiered instructional process is used in RTI. Problem-based instruction can be observed in CGI math, social studies, and science. Explicit instruction can be seen in the CARES plan, Daily 5 mini-lessons, and the Shurley English program.

Response to Intervention (RTI) instruction in reading and math enables us to enrich our high achievers and remediate our struggling students. RTI time is allotted daily at each grade level. All classroom teachers, special education teachers, the Title I teacher, the RTI coordinator, and classroom aides are assigned a group of students with specific learning goals. This allows the group size to fluctuate based on ability and need. This is especially important to our above average students who need to be challenged with materials that mirror cognitive abilities. It is not unusual for multiple lessons to be taught simultaneously within a classroom allowing for further differentiation.

Another program that enables us to enrich our high achievers and remediate our struggling students is the IXL computer program. The third grade is piloting this program in math and language arts. It is used to preview skills, teach concepts, provide valuable practice, and challenge critical thinking. The program mirrors what is being taught in the classroom, and can be individualized for different needs. Some students work on very basic concepts while others are challenged by more complex topics both within and above their grade level.

Our CARES team meets on a monthly basis and provides support to teachers and students who are in academic or emotional distress. Data is collected, shared, and analyzed to determine specific interventions and supports to be utilized in the classroom. Students are reevaluated each month and their plan is adjusted according to progress made.

A good example of a unit that uses a variety of instructional methods is our third grade economics unit. This introductory unit is integrated into all disciplines and taught in August. The overlying concepts of community service, financial planning, and goal attainment continue throughout the school year. Student goals range from learning basic money concepts to understanding financial investments. Students receive an income based on their job selection and performance. Income is then used to pay monthly bills and purchase items at the classroom store. Students who can think abstractly will realize that budgeting and projecting future costs increase their spending power. Concrete thinkers work at learning basic economic life skills such as counting money and financial responsibility. Some will think ahead and plan for the future, while some live paycheck to paycheck.

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

Formal and informal assessments are ongoing and can be unique to each classroom. Some examples are observational checklists, anecdotal records, running records, and weekly tests. School-wide assessments include a variety of additional assessments as well.

Our early childhood teachers utilize the Gold assessment weekly. The Gold assessment is a developmental scale for early learning. Based on weekly observations, specific lessons are planned for the following week targeting the needs of each student. The results are shared with parents formally three times per year and informally as needed.

Kindergarten through third graders use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment. It is administered three times per year. We use the benchmarks to determine placement in RTI groups, form individualized plans, and monitor student progress. These scores are reviewed at team meetings and provide the basis for classroom instruction. Scores are shared with parents as requested. Aimsweb data is used for progress monitoring. It indicates which students are at risk and guides the

intensity of instruction necessary. This instruction is provided through our RTI program. The data is shared with all faculty who are involved with the child's learning. Parental reports are shared periodically. The Stanford Achievement Test is administered to first and second grade students at the end of each school year to indicate how our students are performing nationally. The scores are used as an indicator for special education placement and alerting future teachers to the academic potential of their incoming class. The kindergarten teachers use Educational Software for Guiding Instruction (ESGI) online assessment program throughout the school year. This software provides instant one-on-one assessments that effectively produce data that guides whole group and individual instruction. A printout of the results is sent to parents four times per year.

A specific example that magnifies how results are used to guide instruction is the running record. This assessment helps teachers identify patterns in student reading behaviors, which allows the teacher to observe the strategies that students use and determine each child's strengths and weaknesses. This information is used to place students at appropriate reading levels and plan lessons accordingly.

Each spring, by using the data from the various assessments, class lists are formed, taking into consideration academic levels of students as well as behavioral and emotional needs. Teachers are assigned according to their strengths and support staff is placed in the classrooms with the highest needs.

The Tri-Valley vision is that our students are strong, analytical, innovative, well-rounded, cutting edge, and ready for the future. Through high expectations, parental involvement, teacher dedication, and continual assessment of curriculum and use of the most current best practices, we encourage students to strive for personal achievement each and every day.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The climate at Tri-Valley Elementary supports, engages, and motivates students through a highly dedicated staff that utilizes current trends and best practices. Tri-Valley is proud of our two National Board teachers. Fifty percent of the staff hold a masters degree in education while others are pursuing an advanced degree. Collaboration between teachers is evident through weekly team meetings and quarterly planning sessions. The curriculum promotes students to become active and self-motivated learners with flexibility and inventiveness in thinking. A new school-wide initiative in behavior management gives children the opportunity to self-monitor and make individual choices, seeing their own progress throughout the school day. The program has motivated many parents to implement a similar program at home. Various school assemblies honor individuals that have shown positive growth in their personal choices and relationships with others.

Through the development of the Leader In Me program, students can take ownership of their own strengths and build upon them. As a result of the LIM program, students feel the empowerment to make changes that will have a positive effect on the school culture. An example of this involves an individual student who, after seeing struggles with friendships and isolation on the playground, discussed the possibility of implementing a buddy bench on the school playground with her teacher. In turn, the teacher encouraged her to discuss the idea with the school principal, which was then discussed at a Leader In Me team meeting. By incorporating the buddy bench on the playground, students are encouraged to be empathetic to others and to engage in group play.

Differentiated learning can be seen throughout the building. Small group work is a fundamental practice in all classrooms, ensuring all individual needs are met. This practice allows teachers to understand each student and provide support at a personal and emotional level. Students are able to feel more successful due to the positive relationships between the teacher and students.

The success of Tri-Valley teachers can be attributed to the trust between the administration and staff. Teachers are empowered and encouraged to be innovative in their classrooms while maintaining a standard that ensures all students are successful. Monthly Building Leadership Team meetings ensure that the voices of all teachers are heard.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Tri-Valley Elementary has a long history of family involvement and support. Our open-door policy ensures that parents feel comfortable volunteering for community events or working in the school.

Parent volunteers are visible in many classrooms throughout the building. This is possible in part through a mutual agreement with State Farm Insurance Company for comp time that enables parents to take time off to help teachers, thereby meeting many more individual student needs. State Farm also supports our district through the educational grant program that is awarded to the school for individual volunteer hours which are accrued throughout the year.

Tri-Valley Elementary has developed a close relationship with Illinois State University. Illinois State University provides us with an excellent group of student teachers and practicum students. This enables the teachers to see newest practices and again allows for small group instruction. TVES has a long time relationship with the ISU Math Department. It was influential in implementing the Cognitively Guided Instruction philosophy of math instruction, which made the transition to Common Core math standards quite seamless.

The Parent-Teacher Organization is highly involved in many aspects of our student life. This organization helps meet many classroom needs, as well as promotes a sense of community. Events such as Picnic in the Park welcome new families as well as old and encourage the beginnings of life-long friendships. Some of PTO's other endeavors include sponsoring the Kid-to-Kid program, school carnival, walk-a-thon, and the

end of the year play day. It is responsible for planning and supplying volunteers for these events as well as for classroom parties. The profits from events make it possible for teachers to obtain items from their wish lists, enabling the teachers to implement new and exciting programs in their classrooms.

The Tri-Valley Education Foundation Board is comprised of community members who plan and organize a yearly golf outing fundraiser. The funds are then distributed each spring through teacher submitted grants. To date, \$120,000 have supported a variety of innovative programs outside of the basic curriculum.

Our stellar community support was exemplified this fall when we faced mold issues that temporarily closed our elementary building. Over a weekend, our teachers, community members, and student organizations moved twenty-four classrooms to other campus sites, showing the willingness to do “whatever it takes”. Throughout the four weeks our elementary students were displaced, the communities focus was to ensure the children had a successful start to the school year.

Moving back, we had community members, the PTO, our Downs Fire Department, and students come in droves to lend a hand. In less than one hour, we had moved every teacher back home. The resilience of the staff and a positive attitude from the community is an example of Tri-Valley uniqueness.

### 3. Professional Development:

Tri-Valley school district consistently reserves four half-day school improvement days and four full-day school institute days for professional development. The SIP days are based upon board goals. This year the goals are curriculum, technology, and student leadership. Teachers who took part in the summer of 2015 Viking Academy (a summer college course developed especially for Tri-Valley teachers to enhance teaching and support district goals) developed common assessments per grade level/department in reading or math. Their work was shared with fellow teachers on the first teacher institute day. Throughout the year, teachers have met quarterly to fine tune and implement the common assessments. The grade levels will continue to increase the scope as the years progress.

In the 2014-2015 school year, a pilot group of teachers researched and studied the Leader In Me leadership program by Stephen Covey. The pilot group consisted of teachers from all disciplines and grade levels as well as an administrator, a parent representative, and classroom support staff. This group developed resources for each of the seven habits. These are available to staff and parents in hard copy and on our newly developed Leader In Me website. These resources were shared on school improvement days with faculty and staff. In turn, the teachers have added new lessons and activities to the Leader In Me resource sites. The pilot group of teachers continues to meet throughout the school year to enrich the program. It has brought in high school students to paint a wall mural and organized and planned assemblies which have impacted student interest in the program. Walking through the school, students, staff, and visitors can see examples of student leadership. For example, one student took it upon himself to create posters to remind other children of proactive habits.

In order to succeed in our technology goals, TVES teachers have independently attended technology sessions offered both in and out of district. Teachers with technological expertise share their passion with other teachers during an annual technology inservice. Some of the classes offered include Smore newsletter website, class dojo, iMovie, Wikispaces, Weebly websites, and Google Classroom. This summer, the Viking Academy will focus on Google classroom. Google Classroom is a blended learning platform which bridges home and school communication and enables teachers to move into today's world of technology.

Tri-Valley teachers take advantage of classes which are offered at the county, state, and national levels. The teachers are then expected to share what they learned during a faculty meeting or weekly team meetings.

#### 4. School Leadership:

The leadership at Tri-Valley starts with the Superintendent and the building administrators. Each week, the administration team meets to discuss district policies, current issues, goals, and positive experiences in the district. The unique compatibility between the administrators allows for collective decision-making when dealing with the broad spectrum of policies, initiatives, and issues. This was exemplified when this group developed a solid plan for facing the district mold issue in under an hour.

The philosophy at Tri-Valley Elementary is that all teachers are leaders. Their opinions are valued and often form the basis for decision and policy-making that affect the lives of our students. The open-door policy enables lines of communication to flow back and forth between teachers and administration. The teachers and principal are comfortable in sharing issues and ideas, big and small. Mutual respect and understanding often results in positive outcomes.

The principal shares updates and information with the staff through a weekly staff newsletter and with parents through a bi-monthly parent newsletter. Topics are discussed at greater length during quarterly team planning meetings and during the Building Leadership Team meetings. The BLT consists of representation at every grade level and specialty. They meet on a monthly basis to ensure there is ongoing communication and problem-solving. The teacher representatives in turn report to the grade level teachers during the weekly team meetings to ensure that the line of communication is complete. This whole process can work in reverse, starting with the teacher and working up to the superintendent.

The feeling of empowerment is strong at Tri-Valley. The trust between the principal and teachers allows the freedom to innovate and try new ideas. One teacher's interest and success in implementing a new program often results in expanding the program to the other classrooms in that grade level.

At one point, the principal saw a need to develop cohesiveness among grade levels in the math curriculum. Because the line of communication between teachers and administration is so open and collaborative the ambitious undertaking to scaffold the math program became a reality.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Cognitively Guided Instruction is a research-based philosophy of mathematical instruction that uses a teacher's knowledge and beliefs to construct a program that uses children's thinking as a basis for instruction. The teachers use a variety of problems with addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division that are specifically designed to encourage a child's innate abilities and understanding. Research has shown that children move through a series of mathematical strategies, going from concrete (using manipulatives) to abstract (deriving facts), moving on to higher levels of thinking. In CGI, it is believed that children come to school with an informal and intuitive knowledge of mathematics. Teachers use this knowledge to build more formal problem-solving and computational skills.

In the mid- 1990's, a group of six Tri-Valley teachers, in collaboration with Illinois State University, underwent an intensive training at the University of Wisconsin in Cognitively Guided Instruction. The group of six teachers presented at state and national conferences as well as instructed teachers in other districts. These teachers then mentored and collaborated with their grade-level teachers. Slowly, teachers began to use this philosophy as the basis for mathematical instruction. Recently, teachers at every grade level attended a university taught refresher class that solidified the philosophy throughout the school.

Today, CGI is visible in every classroom in our building. The philosophy is the same, but the autonomy of the staff allows each class to be unique in its implementation. Students are taught individually, in small groups, and in whole group as their own levels of understanding increase. Teachers facilitate students learning through the development of specific problems, but do not provide explicit instruction on how to solve them. Students are required to explain their thinking, resulting in deeper understanding for themselves and their peers.

Throughout the changes in education, CGI instruction has continued to help Tri-Valley students meet and exceed the mathematical expectations. Tri-Valley has not felt the need to adopt a new math series because math scores continue to rise. Common Core skills and facts are learned through CGI, resulting in children gaining a true understanding rather than memorizing isolated facts. This understanding is gained by empowering children to develop and own their mathematical thinking. The diversity of mathematical thinking in each classroom is phenomenal. One student may be using cubes to perform basic addition and subtraction problems while another is utilizing a highly complex strategy. While both students are meeting Common Core objectives at grade level, the diversification among learners is why the majority of our students continue to exceed expectations throughout their school career.