

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. Todd Novak

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

Official School Name Gayle H. Gray Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 10400 US Highway 42

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

City Union State KY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 41091-0000

County Boone County

Telephone (859) 384-5333

Fax (859) 384-5318

Web site/URL

http://www.boone.k12.ky.us/school_home.aspx?schoolID=8

E-mail todd.novak@boone.kyschools.us

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/gray_middle 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*DR. Randy Poe

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

E-mail randy.poe@boone.kyschools.us

District Name Boone County Tel. (859) 283-1003

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 DR. Maria Brown

(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
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 23 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	188	182	370
7	183	173	356
8	173	170	343
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	544	525	1069

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 89 % White
 - 2 % 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	44
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	33
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	77
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	1066
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.072
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2%
22 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21%
Total number students who qualify: 223

8. Students receiving special education services: 10%
103 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.

- 7 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 4 Emotional Disturbance
- 3 Hearing Impairment
- 11 Mental Retardation
- 4 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 26 Other Health Impaired
- 41 Specific Learning Disability
- 4 Speech or Language Impairment
- 1 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
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	38
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	24
Paraprofessionals	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	12

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 28:1

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%	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.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Provide a safe, respectful, responsible environment in order for students to move toward learning the skills and content necessary for college, career, and life readiness.

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

Gray Middle School is located in southern Boone County in the city of Union, Kentucky. Opening in 1994, the original enrollment of 650 students has expanded to 1,069. The school was built to serve a quickly growing community, on land that previously served as a pasture for horses and cattle. That pasture land has since become the third K-12 educational campus of Boone County, housing Ryle High School, Gray Middle School, and Shirley Mann Elementary. Union's elected officials have striven to maintain the rural character of the city. A drive through town is very different from a drive through the areas to the north, where stores and businesses line the streets. Commercial development is strictly controlled in Union and housing developments are purposefully designed to maintain a genteel character. To the south and west of town, where the balance of our students live, farms and agricultural estates are the dominant feature of the landscape.

The growth of our student population mirrors the population growth of the surrounding area where the majority of our students live. In 1994, there were a little over 1,000 people living in Union, while today the number of residents has grown to around 5,800. Overall, the community we serve is affluent and highly educated. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2014 median household income was approximately \$100,000, 98% of the residents had graduated high school, and half of the residents held a bachelor's degree or higher. With 6% of the Union population considered to be in poverty and the inclusion of a few economically challenged non-Union neighborhoods into the Gray Middle School service area, 21% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

The most striking thing about our community and school must be observed, as it is difficult to measure. The word compassionate would be an appropriate description of what one would observe. Our students, their families, and our staff cooperatively support several programs and special events that provide assistance to our families in need. One such program is the Family Resource and Youth Services Center that serves our area. Each month, hundreds of pounds of canned goods and sundry items are donated from our community and distributed through the center. Additionally, throughout the year our Student Council and National Junior Honor Society hold fund-raising events. The Annual Holiday Drive helps provide gifts for families in need and Pennies for Patients raises money for cancer research.

While these activities promote the emotional and social growth of our student population, we also support our students academically. Gray Middle School has several programs to ensure the academic success of all of our students. One way we achieve this is by providing all of our students with an Advisory class, every day. Each child is assigned to a teacher during this time, who monitors their grades and encourages them to do their best. Students spend Advisory time completing homework assignments and, when needed, visiting their teachers for assistance. Another way to help our students academically is by offering an after school tutoring program for students who need more help mastering content. Our Extended School Services program is staffed by faculty members who tutor after school each day. Approximately 10% of our student population participates every week. Finally, we offer a credit recovery option for students that continue to struggle and are at risk of failing. These students stay after school twice a week to work in an individualized learning path based on their academic weaknesses. Our goal is to ensure all students are ready to move on to the next grade level at the end of the school year.

To extend learning opportunities beyond our classrooms in both academics and physical skills, we offer several after school programs. Lego League, Math Counts, Odyssey of the Mind, and Trout in the Classroom provide additional learning opportunities in the STEM areas while archery, intramural basketball, and Girls on the Run provide the opportunity for our students to learn new physical skills. Along with these academic and social development programs, we also help our students grow culturally. During the school day our students have Art and Art Appreciation classes, Drama, Careers, and music classes. The music program includes a Music Appreciation class, choirs, and band classes for all grade levels. Our band director offers an extracurricular jazz band and percussion ensemble, where high school students serve as mentors and practice music with our students. An after school Art Club, several drama productions throughout the year, and writing and art competitions like the Reflections contest sponsored by the parents in our PTSA give students additional cultural opportunities. Through the hard work and dedication of our faculty and

parent volunteers, our students are pushed to be the best they can be. Whether it is our academic programs, our charitable opportunities, or all we offer culturally, our school and its surrounding community is determined to see each child reach his or her full potential.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

In order to best meet the needs of our students, Gray Middle School administration has asked that staff meet monthly as a department to discuss curriculum standards and progress. Each grade level also meets within their content areas to discuss lesson plans, curriculum pacing, and student strengths and weaknesses. Grade levels also meet across contents to share lesson plans, curriculum pacing, student needs, strengths and weaknesses, and enrichment opportunities such as field trips. In addition, faculty and staff members have access to an instructional coach who is available to team teach, provide professional development in individual areas, or provide fresh insight or ideas to implement in the classroom. Gray Middle School's English/Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum focuses on reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language skills in a blended learning framework preparing our 21st century students with the skills essential for college and career readiness. Aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR), the ELA curriculum engages students in vertically aligned thematic units which integrate and appropriately scaffold the five skills in the three grade levels. Learning targets are created based on the CCSS and are frequently formatively assessed to determine student needs. Students read appropriately challenging informational and literary texts utilizing various strategies to strengthen reading skills.

To strengthen student writing, the ELA curriculum offers informational, argumentative, and narrative writing opportunities. ELA also collaborates with science and social studies to develop research skills through informational and argumentative writing pieces, including evaluation of sources for reliability and proper documentation of sources through MLA formatting. Application of language skills are integrated into the writing process. Students are offered a variety of opportunities for speaking and listening skills in both formal and informal presentations, debates, and literature circles. Through development of Student Growth Goals, the ELA Department focuses instruction linked to specific CCR Anchor Standards to grow students in targeted areas of weakness.

The Language Arts Department also offers targeted reading intervention for students who are not meeting benchmark or who demonstrate a need for remediation or more individualized instruction. These students are identified through collaborative discussions amongst language arts teachers, social studies teachers, a reading specialist, guidance counselor, and administrator to ensure that the best placement is made for each student. Gray Middle School math classes focus on high-level learning and challenging thinking essential for college and career readiness. Each grade level uses the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSS), stressing the mathematical practices of perseverance, reasoning, constructing viable arguments, and modeling in a variety of forms. The use of both summative and formative assessment lessons are incorporated with a myriad of activities to reach the different learning styles of our students. The Math Department also provides a variety of courses to differentiate and best meet the needs of all students. STAR math testing is utilized to place students in the most appropriate setting; this placement is fluid. We offer accelerated classes at each grade level, including Algebra I and Geometry for high school credit. For these courses, we make use of the rigorous standards set forth by ACT in the End-of-Course Assessments. Students struggling academically have many opportunities for assistance, including Extended School Services (ESS), individual tutoring, RTI math classes, and our Math Enrichment class, which provides remediation for those students demonstrating a need for reinforcement of skills. Extra-curricular math activities are available through both our academic team and our award-winning Math Counts team. The focus of Gray Middle School's integrated science curriculum is based on the Next Generation Science Standards, as determined by our state, to enhance science literacy for all students. The curriculum path allows real world experiences through inquiry using STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Labs are presented through traditional and virtual experiences, using online resources such as Gizmo, Discovery Ed, and Brain POP. Professional learning communities are established within our school to create student growth goals, monitor student progress, develop both formative and common assessments, analyze student data, differentiate instruction, and reflect on daily instruction for the benefit of our students. The Science Department collaborates throughout the building to provide cross-curriculum instruction. In addition, Project Lead the Way courses incorporate engineering and robotics, and science based

extracurricular clubs meet outside of the school day. Our students also have access to the Northern Kentucky Makerspace, which gives students an opportunity to explore and experiment with individual interests such as engineering, coding, robotics, and 3-D printing. In alignment with the College and Career Readiness Standards, the focus of the social studies curriculum at Gray Middle School is to provide students with a rigorous approach to the study of history, geography, economics, and civics. Under the direction of the Social Studies Department, students learn historical thinking and cultural competence, develop the skills necessary for geographic reasoning, and practice effective economic decision making through classroom study of the ways in which individuals, businesses, governments, and societies make decisions.

Finally, students learn about constitutional democracy, the foundations of our American society, and how to practice civic-mindedness in today's world. The Social Studies Department uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to analyze student growth and areas for targeted remediation. Social Studies teachers work collaboratively with language arts teachers, administrators and counselors to analyze student performance and identify any potential barriers for learning. Students demonstrating a need for additional instruction have access to Extended School Services and individual tutoring. Eighth grade students participate in Camp Joy, an interactive camp experience that allow students to experience the trials of the Underground Railroad first-hand, and the Reality Store, which provides real-world application of economic principles. Seventh graders are offered the chance to explore the nation's capital, immersing students in a rich culture that combines science, technology and government. To ensure that students have acquired the foundational skills needed to be a successful learner, we progress monitor through the year to ensure student success through the use of STAR testing, RTI math and reading interventions, PBL extensions, GATES activities, ESS, EXPLORE testing, and S.M.A.R.T assessments.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Gray Middle School, unified arts classes are divided into two categories, Practical Living and Fine Arts. All students have the opportunity to participate in these classes for two periods a day, with five terms consisting of seven week rotations throughout the school year. As part of the Fine Arts program, students may also choose to participate in a full year performance class, either band or choir.

Students in Health classes learn essential life skills, including nutrition, personal safety, and self-esteem building. Lessons include resisting peer pressure, personal growth and development, media influence, drug abuse and goal setting. In addition to our qualified faculty, students experience guest speakers from our community, such as nutritionists and chiropractors.

Our Physical Education program allows students to develop their skills in team building, individual sports, team sports, and cooperative games. Cross-curricular activities incorporate locomotor and non-locomotor movement and dance. One of the main goals of our P.E. program is for the students to develop activities for life-long physical well-being.

The Careers course is designed to prepare middle school students through the integration of 21st Century Skills to maximize their secondary education and to meet future career opportunities. Students assess their personal interests in order to assist them in identifying secondary course selection and planning a career path. This course will utilize the Individual Learning Plan as a tool to plan, monitor, and communicate the students' progress toward their educational and career goals.

Project Lead the Way courses include Introduction to Engineering (6th grade), Design and Modeling (7th grade) and Medical Detectives (8th grade). Sixth grade students focus on the engineering design process with an emphasis on analytical and critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Seventh grade stresses technology and computer aided design. Eighth 8th grade utilizes analytical skills and deductive reasoning as it pertains to health diagnoses of the human body.

The Spanish program is designed to increase and develop basic speaking, writing, reading and listening skills utilizing the Spanish language. Additionally, the course increases knowledge of the history and culture of Spanish-speaking countries. Within the UA program, Spanish is offered as an exploratory class to all students. Some students may also choose to take Spanish 1 for high school credit as 8th grade students.

Technology class spans between the Practical Living and Fine Arts programs. Students utilize specific software such as Microsoft Office Word, Publisher, PowerPoint and Movie Maker. While designing specific projects they are encouraged to put to use their knowledge of graphic design, as well as, the elements of art and the principles of design.

General art classes allow students to create visual art, while studying the art elements and design principles. Students are exposed to projects such as, Zentangles, quote posters, charcoal drawing, pottery building, tessellations and the design of altered books. Students across all grade levels are also given the opportunity to participate in the extra-curricular Art Club. The Art Club works with the school play to design and produce sets and props and also works on the design and production of Mondrian-inspired murals for the beautification of our school.

The History and Appreciation of Visual and Performing Arts classes survey the development of all forms of art throughout time, beginning with Prehistoric arts in sixth grade and continuing through Modern art in the eighth. Students are also exposed to graphic design concepts while learning to create art and type effects in Adobe Illustrator. In an effort to maintain real-world standards, students work on Mac books while learning Illustrator and creating class PowerPoint presentations.

Drama classes expose students to literary, technical and performance elements, as well as, historical and cultural contributions of storytelling and theatre. Students have the opportunity to create and perform in class, and may choose to participate in two extra-curricular productions each year. Students also experience live theatre through in-school field trips such as a production of Antigone by the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and The Marriage of Figaro by the Cincinnati Opera.

Students also participate in Music Appreciation classes. Basic music theory, elements and purposes of music, historical time periods in music are just a sampling of what is offered through these appreciation classes. Asian and Latin American Music make up the content of these classes, which aids in students experiencing cross-cultural understanding of current demographics within our school.

Performance groups at each grade level, in both band and choir, excel at a number of regional and state music festivals, competitions and assessments including Honor band and choir, and All-State band and choir. These groups perform at school and community events throughout the year. Additionally, GMS offers an extra-curricular jazz band and percussion program. Our music program utilizes “practice buddies” with high school mentors and is currently the only school in Kentucky to offer United Sound, a program which allows special needs students to learn to play instruments and perform with the band.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

A variety of instructional approaches, methods, and interventions are utilized at Gray Middle School to reach the diverse needs of individual students. Some of those include: Project Based Learning, specific interventions targeting individual needs based on careful analysis of standardized data in Reading and Math, and multiple technology resources providing unique, individual experiences.

Mirroring real life work experience is at the heart of our Project Based Learning Courses at the sixth and seventh grade level. By working in mixed ability groups, students bring cross-curricular content to life through the 21st century skills of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. Scaffolding instruction and modeling proper research techniques provides the framework for students to achieve the high level of critical thinking needed for their groups to answer problems posed. One such project involves the turning of vacant campus space into a viable space of productivity.

Ensuring individual student success is of the utmost concern at Gray Middle School. Providing students with a rigorous academic program is not overshadowed by any student’s ability level. Star Math and Star Reading are both used to assess a baseline of our entire student population. As each round of benchmark testing is completed, Assessment data is reviewed, teacher input sought, and decisions made to assist children whose results show that intervention is needed in either math or reading. This occurs at what is

known as an Advisory Team Meeting (ATM). Depending on the child's level of deficiency, The ATM committee will utilize one of several options to meet the individual needs of the student. For example, one student may be given the opportunity to join a class led by an interventionist specialist, while another may simply be placed on a watch list in order for all teachers to be aware that a student has been identified as needing a little more encouragement. Each student is addressed individually in order to create an intervention plan tailored to his or her specific need.

As technology seems to be a catalyst for the learning of this generation of students, our teachers have incorporated its use in a variety of ways. From online resources such as NoRedInk.com, where students can receive guided instruction and practice on grammar, mechanics, punctuation, MLA format, etc., to the utilization of Google classrooms and websites, our students are afforded the ability to connect with learning beyond their actual classrooms.

Textbooks have been made available online, as well as classroom resources such as worksheets, PowerPoints, links to additional resources, and even videos. This opens up dialogue and opportunities for a flipped classroom and other blended learning options.

In addition to the full classroom set of Google Chromebooks that each Core teacher possesses, Gray Middle School also utilizes mini-iPads for formative assessments, research, and the application of skills through apps, while using other Laptop carts for both research and writing. Students use Auto Inventor software for 3D applications in our Project Lead the Way courses, Adobe Photo-shop and Illustrator in our Arts and Humanities' class that embeds MacBooks into the development of artistic creations, and Microsoft Office in our Technology course in order to ramp up authentic productions for the larger school environment. Parents and students alike are kept connected through the use of teacher-led technology like the website/app Remind, Google Classroom, and Twitter. With the ability to stay connected with stakeholders at home, teachers are able to build a classroom community that extends beyond the brick and mortar institution. This is particularly important at this stage of Piagetian development for the middle school child.

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

Gray Middle School values assessment of learning, as well as assessment for learning. We believe that student assessment data is essential to learning in the classroom for both students and teachers, and that assessment data plays an important role in our collaboration with parents and with other school professionals. Students are regularly informed of their performance data, both directly by their teachers and through their own use of Infinite Campus, Google Classroom, and various other methods. Teachers and parents communicate and collaborate during several formal events throughout the school year, and also on a much more frequent informal basis via e-mail, telephone, and U.S. mail. Students also meet face-to-face with content teachers and advisory teachers to discuss and interpret test scores ranging from a simple quiz up to and including KPREP performance.

Our school takes a collaborative approach to analysis and synthesis of student performance data. The staff at GMS believes that assessment of learning is important, but assessment for learning is even more so. Because of this belief, we work as a team to review our state test scores and use those results to establish SMART goals for the groups we have retained and incoming students. Additionally, teachers work at the PLC-level to create common formative assessments that address the performance data from large-scale state tests as well as assessments taking place in our classroom. Our teachers recognize the importance of being in tune with student learning and keep a pulse on the classroom through varied methods of formal and informal assessments. Regular methods of assessment include written and verbal feedback, hands-on modeling, group work, project-based learning, and traditional quizzes and tests.

The entire school community is proud of our high achievement, and we all work hard to guarantee continued success. It is our vision that all students attain success at the highest level. As such, we take special measures to regularly assess all students using STAR assessments, and to provide targeted intervention to students needing improvement. To continue closing the achievement gap, we provide special interventions and outreach including personalized instruction and regular interventions in reading and math. We communicate the results of these interventions and assessments with the students and their parents. Parents

of students with IEPs and 504 plans receive a full and detailed breakdown of all student performance data during ARC meetings and communications related to the ARC throughout the year.

Our students perform at high levels because of our school culture of assessment for learning, the collaborative nature of our school community, and the targeted interventions we use for those not yet meeting expectations.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Gray Middle School is a vibrant, creative, and eclectic culture which beautifully allows students to realize their hopes and dreams. Teachers, students, and the surrounding community work together to support a family atmosphere where students find their niche and teachers are encouraged to be the catalyst that inspires students to reach and exceed their potential while in our care. Walking through the halls, students are engaged in playing instruments, singing, and producing artwork that rivals that of the masters. They are writing, hypothesizing about science questions, and learning how to change the world in a positive way. They peruse history and contemplate how mankind makes their greatest contributions to America and the world, and finally they question their teachers and themselves in profound discussions designed to ignite their curiosity and help them realize that they too are here for a reason. Positive behavior is recognized daily by teachers who seek and find adolescents making positive choices for themselves and those around them. With support from our PTSA, Way To Go Wednesdays and Gator Bucks recognize students on a weekly basis who demonstrate their understanding that good decisions will soon help them become members of a society who forever cares for one another and continues to learn beyond the walls of school. Teachers send positive notes to one another, faculty are regularly encouraged by one another and administration to be creative and collaborative and to support positive contributions that all members make to our school. We celebrate, laugh and learn together, and students care for one another as their teachers care for them.

This school achieves at a high level because there is a strong foundation of staff who enter the building daily intent on changing the lives of students. Families of teachers share students and communicate with administration about progress, success, celebration, and need. It is truly a place where teachers, administration and even the custodial staff stand in loco parentis. Parents are invited to events and keep abreast of school activities via Infinite Campus, a school web site and Twitter. Students participate, with faculty support, in efforts to collect cans for a local charity, shop for families in need at Christmas and regularly recycle to pay homage to the environment. Our music programs produce first chairs and are yearly recognized at the state level. Our drama club stages a professional play production yearly. Athletic programs such as Basketball and Volleyball always compete at high levels. Gray is most proud to have avenues for all students to find their love whether that be the arts, sciences, language, math, history, or athletics; our students shine because our teachers, parents, administration and district support them and challenge them to dream.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Gray Middle School has made both conscientious and deliberate efforts to engage our families and local community. We maintain a comprehensive website and a Twitter account to keep students and parents up to date on school happenings. A “Gator Gazette” is created and distributed at the end of each grading period. The Gazette celebrates student and school successes, highlights academic and extra-curricular achievements, and delineates important dates and events to enable parents to keep abreast of school and classroom activities. Our PTSA is also a vital part of our building, fostering a strong connection between school and home, and providing volunteers and funding for many of our undertakings (parent engagement nights, student showcases, classroom technology, walkathons, school dances, spirit days, etc.)

A few years ago, Gray Middle School launched a new Project Based Learning class for its sixth graders. Based on the success of the previous years, it was decided to expand this class into the seventh grade this year as well. Project Based Learning is a class in which students choose, or are given the task of investigating and researching, as well as coming up with solutions to certain challenges. These challenges generally engage students across the curriculum and often result in positive outcomes for our school and community. Most recently, our current sixth grade Project Based Learning class has undertaken the task of creating a “Hoop House” (essentially, a small-scale greenhouse) whose profits will benefit local charities. Student presentations have been delivered to our PTSA, and community involvement has been enlisted to bring this project to fruition. We have recruited parent volunteers and local businesses to assist with this

endeavor. For instance, a local greenhouse is supplying us with a “Master Gardner” who will walk us through the project and assist with plant selection, maintenance, etc.

At Gray Middle School, we recognize the importance of reaching out to, and building better relationships with our community and school families. To that end, we are even fostering a PT3 framework (Parents and Teachers Talking Together) to help empower and engage our parents and students. The ultimate goal of this framework is to promote awareness of school programs, recognize accomplishments, and identify future needs. Students must see a connection between school, home and the community. Building family and community relationships is an integral part of helping our students achieve at high levels, both in the classroom and beyond.

3. Professional Development:

Gray Middle School strives to provide the best educational opportunities to our students. In order to do so the learning support division of our district, grade level administrators, and instructional coach work collaboratively to develop professional development opportunities to educate teachers on the latest instructional strategies. All professional development activities that teachers engage in are geared to improve student achievement. All teachers work collaboratively in their professional learning communities on a weekly basis discussing curriculum, pacing, and instructional strategies that are being practiced. Some professional learning communities have also surfaced as a result of the teachers own professional learning through webinars and Twitter education chats. Most recently a group of teachers have organized a book study with the administration and instructional coach to delve deeper into the topic of feedback and standards based grading. Our district has employed Chromebooks to all middle schools. The effective implementation of this technology to cognitively engage students is a priority for all teachers. The goal for the technology is to develop students that can problem solve, think critically, and build 21st Century skills. The grade level administrators and instructional coach have worked collaboratively to develop a series of professional development opportunities on the use of this technology to cognitively engage students. The instructional coach currently works with individual teachers in their classrooms to assist in this implementation and provide feedback. More specifically, our mathematics teachers are participating in an Instructional Transformational Grant offered through our district and the state of Kentucky. This grant focuses on questioning in an effort to provide feedback based on the student’s current level of understanding and is based on the Mathematical Practices of the Common Core Standards. The instructional coach and the mathematics staff work collaboratively to design lessons that are implemented in the classroom to build understanding of content by diving deeper into the content and having students think and share ideas collaboratively. As a result of this work, teachers have dedicated time to build more of these lessons for each unit. In addition, our science team has participated in CINSAM fishbowl professional development activities. These activities are developed by our district office in collaboration with our local CINSAM organization through Northern Kentucky University. Professors of science at NKU will come and model a science lesson, then teachers and professors engage in conversation about the Next Generation Science Standards and how they apply to the model lesson.

4. School Leadership:

Gray Middle School believes in a shared leadership model that promotes, encourages, and supports innovative thinking and decision-making by a wide variety of stakeholders. The principal, assistant principal, and vice-principal oversee functions and features within the organization by grade level and content area. For example, the assistant principal monitors the day to day operations of Language Arts and Practical Living/Career Studies while dealing directly with teacher and student concerns within grade seven. The building principal and vice-principal have similar areas of responsibility to which they provide oversight and instructional leadership. The two guidance counselors at Gray Middle School provide leadership in similar areas by student grade level, but also in defined areas of responsibility. For example, with respect to student concerns, the counselors share the students of the three grade levels and provide school-wide expertise and leadership in such areas as English Language Learners, At Risk population, Assessment, Master Schedule, Social-Emotional Groups, and Home-Hospital, among other things. A well-defined structure is in place for our counselors to meet the needs of students in a variety of ways to

maximize learning.

Gray Middle School has a team leader for each of its seven content areas and one for each grade level. These ten teacher leaders are not only responsible for the mentoring of new teachers, but are instrumental voices in the facilitation of program/content needs in their respective grade level or department. It is these veteran teacher leaders who provide sound and solid advice on the implementation of new initiatives and programs that affect student learning. From a structural standpoint, Gray Middle School's sixth and seventh grade teachers are organized by families—with each family having a leader who brings student needs and school concerns to the attention of the family every week. Collaboratively, the family of teachers monitor the learning and success of each student to maximize the potential of every child. Eighth grade teachers meet as a collective whole, with the grade level team leader serving as chair, to accomplish the same purpose as the other two grade levels. With common planning by grade level and the insistence of operating as Professional Learning Communities, teachers are able to share ideas, discuss assessment data, and dialogue about the personal needs of students in order to grow their students. Teachers are encouraged to solve problems themselves, think innovatively, and grow as professionals. This philosophy is nowhere more apparent than during our Intervention meetings, which are held four times per year. Following the completion of standardized assessments in reading and math, administration, counselors, intervention teachers and core teachers dialogue about the growth of students and levels of intervention that can be leveraged to meet the needs of students in each grade level. It is a powerful moment of all stakeholders coming together to make decisions in the best interest of students.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

It is without question that Gray Middle School demonstrates lofty levels of continued success due to the high expectations instilled in students and staff alike. There are many things that contribute to this tradition of success, but the one common denominator across all of the policies and practices that help us succeed are the people walking our halls every day.

As a school that values and expects high-level learning and success in the classroom and beyond, GMS has learned that the best teachers are ones that are truly passionate about their work and understand the minds and hearts of middle schoolers. With that in mind, our school makes hiring decisions based on dispositions—those qualities that are going to advance the teacher’s ability to reach students beyond content knowledge. When choosing our teachers, we look for highly-motivated individuals who love to learn and want to help others reach their potential—the same qualities that we instill in our students in order to make them successful. The teachers and faculty are the heart of the building and their enthusiasm and high expectations are contagious—students at Gray want to do well, want to learn more, and want to contribute to the classroom discussion.

Students quickly understand when they enter Gray Middle School that high expectations abound. Homework is relevant and rigorous, critical thinking and application take precedent over lower level activities and rote memorization, and students are expected to demonstrate high levels of accountability and responsibility in the classroom and beyond. The school culture is one in which performing at high levels academically is the accepted norm rather than the exception. As a Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) school, we have struck a balance between teaching and promoting positive behavior through a myriad of student and teacher recognition pursuits while responding to behavior that is less than ideal through a graduated approach to student discipline. By and large, our student population has responded well to this balance; students and parents understand that there is a culture of learning while in the classroom, and academic effort is celebrated.

Operating as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers have high standards for themselves and for their peers. Meeting regularly allows our teachers to work collaboratively to develop meaningful instructional units that facilitate a variety of student learning styles, needs, and interests—from the struggling reader to the gifted learner taking high school courses. Teachers find support and encouragement in their PLC group and can use the time to brainstorm and problem solve in order to present the most effective and comprehensive units. PLC groups begin each year with a common goal—teach every day, provide opportunities for students to be successful, and expect great things to happen. Because our faculty begins with the end in mind—success for every student—our students enter every day knowing that they will learn something new, and more importantly, that their well-being and success are important to the adults in this building. Success at Gray Middle School is truly a mind-set—it begins with the dispositions of our staff and is evident in the work ethic and engagement of our students. It is this mindset that makes faculty, staff, students and parents proud to be a part of Gray Middle School!