

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 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 Ms. Lori Foley

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

Official School Name Tipton Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 400 E. 6th Street

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

City Tipton                      State IA                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 52772-1617

County Iowa

Telephone (563) 886-6131                      Fax (563) 886-2555

Web site/URL http://www.tipton.k12.ia.us                      E-mail lori.foley@tipton.k12.ia.us

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. Marlene Johnson                      E-mail marlene.johnson@tipton.k12.ia.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Tipton Community School District                      Tel. (563) 886-6121

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 Mrs. Diane Wallick  
(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. 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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 (2016-2017) 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	23	15	38
K	40	33	73
1	38	30	68
2	37	32	69
3	42	31	73
4	38	38	76
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>	218	179	397

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 97 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 11%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	25
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	403
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.109
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
2 Total number ELL

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

German

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28 %  
Total number students who qualify: 98

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %  
38 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
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 23:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	96%	92%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**  
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

<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.

Our school mission is to create a positive learning environment using proven educational practices so all students will experience success and become enthusiastic learners!

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**

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Tipton Elementary is located in the rural town of Tipton, Iowa. Tipton has a population of 3,221 and is the county seat of Cedar County. Tipton is known as a “bedroom community” as it is nestled between four larger cities, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Iowa City and Muscatine, where many of the community members commute to work. Tipton Elementary is one of three schools, which makes up the Tipton Community School District. The district’s total school enrollment is 1,002 students. At the elementary school 27 teachers and 16 paraeducators are committed to educating 393 students in preschool through fourth grade. There are two sections of preschool and three sections of kindergarten through fourth grade. Our school has a free and reduced population of 27.6% and 9% receive special education services.

Proudly, in 2012, Tipton Elementary was honored to receive the School of Character Award awarded by Character Counts of Iowa as endorsed by former Governor Robert D. Ray. This year Tipton Elementary earned the rating of High Performing on the Iowa School Report Card, placing our school in the top 13% of all Iowa elementary schools.

There is a strong and dedicated commitment to Tipton elementary school’s vision, “Our Staff Vision is to create a positive learning environment using proven educational practices so all students will experience success and become enthusiastic learners!” Teachers developed this vision collaboratively during the 2015-2016 school year. It is the vision that leads and guides our instructional model each and every school day. It is grounded in the core belief that ALL of our students can learn and is our promise to every child and parent. We believe that Tipton Elementary is charged with the critical role of building a strong, caring and healthy educational foundation for every child. As a result of our belief in living this vision, a simplified, student friendly school motto was created, “You CAN do it and we WILL help!” This motto was developed as a means to let our students know that we are committed to their education.

Tipton Elementary has established a positive school culture that nurtures the development of the “whole child”. Our educational goal is to help children grow into well-rounded, productive, caring adults. With that philosophy, these five domains of learning: cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral and physical are all highly valued and regarded as crucial to insure that all students have a positive school experience and receive a strong educational foundation.

Each week, during a protected hour, teachers collaborate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss and analyze literacy data. We embrace the goal to strive for 100% proficiency for all students. Our PLCs provide and guide the instructional plan to meet the unique needs of each of our students. For the past four years, teachers have utilized a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to address specific student learning challenges and to provide learning opportunities for students who will benefit from academic extensions. We use an “all hands on deck” approach to provide customized learning opportunities for children. Reading specialists, special education teachers, music and physical education teachers all contribute to this collaborative effort. Grade level interventions, Whatever I Need (WIN) are designed to differentiate for a variety of learners.

An additional team meeting is scheduled weekly for grade level teachers to collaborate as they review data from other curricular areas and implement Character Counts education. This provides valuable time for teachers to support each other and discuss student-learning needs.

Establishment of a safe and caring school environment with a common language of expectations has been an unwavering piece of our school culture. The Character Counts framework has enabled our school to customize behavioral instruction and address areas of school improvement. A research-based approach has been utilized to teach, enforce, advocate, and model (TEAM) our building goals. The TEAM approach provides students with clear expectations and guidelines for appropriate behavior.

As we continuously evolve in our own educational knowledge and pedagogy, we value the implementation of new researched based practices. This year, our district has initiated the Iowa Department of Education’s new Teacher Leadership and Compensation System. With the resources of two new Instructional Coaches in

place, we are working to determine the best way to influence and impact student achievement.

We are most excited that a 4.1 million dollar bond recently passed with 76% of the community's support. Our community looks forward to the addition of four new classrooms dedicated to early childhood and other structural updates to improve our already wonderful school!

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Iowa Core Standards drive instruction at Tipton Elementary. The Iowa Core has been created from the National Common Core Standards and encompasses Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The PLC process has been a key avenue that we use to create each grade level's essential standards and the common assessments. It is here that we offer supports and enrichment through Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Our work in unpacking the Iowa Core Standards has allowed us to vertically align our essential grade level standards. We use student friendly "I Can" statements where students understand and own their learning. Students are given common formative assessments to check on their progress of essential standards. These, along with universal screeners, help our teachers provide intentional instruction as well as meaningful interventions.

During literacy instruction, students and teachers focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension to build the foundational skills laid out in Iowa Core. Core components are taught using differentiated literacy rotations: guided reading groups, shared reading, read aloud, and independent reading. Our goal during whole class and small group instruction is to meet students' individual needs through our reading series and leveled texts. To ensure that our students are proficient readers by third grade, mandated by the Early Literacy Initiative (ELI), 90 to 120 minutes are focused on literacy instruction each day. We also focus on writing across the different curriculum areas. Students who are not meeting ELI benchmarks are immediately provided interventions during WIN (Whatever I Need) time.

Tipton Elementary teaches mathematics with a rigorous and real world approach. We teach math for 60 minutes per day. Envision Math by Pearson is the resource we use to guide our instruction. Envision Math helps us to teach common core rigor in a way that is easy for students to understand. Teachers use classroom discussions, real world situations, manipulatives, and small groups to help students learn about math on a deeper level. In the early grades students learn concepts and skills at the foundational level, setting the stage for higher-level concepts. A Collaborative Learning Team (CLT) is working on Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) for math. This is a number sense approach to teaching mathematics enabling students to discuss as a group, share their thinking, and learn new ideas through collaboration with peers. We infuse technology in our math curriculum through Dreambox Learning. This online program adapts to the individual student and aligns to Iowa Core.

We've adopted the Next Generation Science Standards. Our instruction focuses on student inquiry and challenges them to be active learners in questioning, creating experiments, observing and exploring. The Van Allen Science Teaching Center (VAST) delivers ready-to-use, hands on, inquiry based materials to our classrooms. Included in these materials are engaging textbooks that strengthen non-fiction reading strategies. A great addition to our science curriculum has been the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program provided by the Iowa State University Extension Office.

We embed Iowa Core Social Studies Standards across the curriculum. Real world connections are made as students read news magazines and Newsela.com (news articles written at five different Lexile levels). Tipton Elementary uses the McGraw-Hill series to guide instruction in the five core content areas: behavioral sciences, economics, geography, history, and political science/civic literacy. Our school has contributed to the local food pantry, animal shelter, local homeless shelters and world crisis relief. All elementary students actively participate in Jump Rope for Heart for their own health and have been leaders in the state raising money to help fund heart research. Giving back to our community enhances and provides a model for essential social studies standards.

[1] Tipton Tiny Tigers Preschool program is a fully integrated Early Childhood Special Education Program within an accredited state funded voluntary 4 year-old preschool classroom. Teaching Strategies GOLD is the state selected ongoing observational assessment system for building and developing academic and social foundations. Teaching Strategies GOLD is utilized to support teachers with online data collection of formative assessments based on the ten learning domains for preschool. This information is reported to the

students and their families three times a year. Kindergarten and preschool teachers collaborate to prepare students to transition into elementary school. GOLD data indicates that students leaving the preschool program have shown to be more self-directed and academically prepared for learning.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

In addition to our intentional focus on literacy, math and positive behavior, we embrace the belief that creative and physical learning experiences are critical to the development of our children throughout the school day. We are fully committed to the education of the “whole child,” therefore; instruction in art, music, physical education, library/media and guidance are essential building blocks.

Art education has a direct correlation with the development of fine motor, visual learning, creative and critical thinking skills. Kindergarten meets once every six days for thirty minutes, first grade meets twice every six days for 30 minutes, and second, third and fourth grades meet once every six days for 45 minutes. The art curriculum provides cross-curricular lessons to support the acquisition of essential skills. Students of all ability levels are challenged to become self-directed learners. Projects are modified to differentiate instruction. Our art program also connects to families and community through an online art gallery called Artsonia. After parent’s permission is granted, students’ artwork is uploaded and shared through Artsonia. The parent participation rate for elementary students is 96%.

Studies support the association between music education and increased abilities in language and math. Music education is provided for students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. Students meet for thirty minutes twice every six days. A wide variety of music curriculum is taught such as music reading, music history, playing instruments, theater productions, and analyzing a variety of musical styles, cultures and historical periods. All grade levels participate in an evening performance showcasing their learning for families and friends.

Physical activity improves general and overall health. Our physical education program contributes to the physical, psychological, and social development of children through activities that provide stimulation, challenge, excitement, fun, satisfaction, and success. Students in kindergarten through fourth grade participate in physical education class once every three days for thirty minutes. The physical education curriculum follows a sequence of learning experiences designed to fulfill the growth, developmental, and behavioral needs of each student.

Research supports that when children have access to good libraries with a certified teacher librarian, quality books, and easy access to those books, children will read more and as a result score better on literacy assessments and tests. Students in preschool through fourth grade have library class once every six days for thirty minutes. Our teacher librarian has two goals for all students. The first goal focuses on the effort to introduce, encourage, instill and maintain a love of literature by teaching students about the variety of materials and resources (including electronic.) A second goal is to reinforce the literacy skills presented in classrooms, while illustrating how the pillars of character carry over in all parts of life through stories that are shared. In the first five months of the school year 19,997 books have circulated in and out of our media center.

In an effort to support positive behavior, all students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade receive 30 minutes of classroom counseling in a 6-day cycle. Skills for learning empathy, emotion management, problem solving, child protection, bullying prevention and career exploration are delivered through a research-based curriculum. Students are explicitly taught how to identify and regulate emotions, express feelings and make friends to give them a strong base of social readiness for school. Students are also given explicit instruction in skills for learning such as focusing attention, following directions and listening skills. Students practice these skills in the classroom to transfer them to real-world situations.

Technology supports and enhances our goal of successfully educating our students. The third and fourth grade students are 1:1 with Chromebooks throughout the school day. All kindergarten through second grade classrooms are equipped with iPad Mini’s for small group and individual work. The elementary students also have access to three MacBook mobile labs that are shared throughout the building.

Other educational resources available to our students are the Extended Learning Program and English Language Learning supports.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Tipton Elementary has established a system to ensure that all students receive the educational supports they need to be successful learners. Our building focuses on three levels of learning using MTSS developed through our PLC meetings.

Tier 1 supports are those provided in the general education classroom instructing core curriculum for all students. Formative assessments determine the level of understanding for all learners from this instruction. Teachers meet as grade level teams to review the data of all students to ascertain what percentage of students are proficient. This information drives what happens next. If a small percentage of students need further support, re-teaching is provided to the small group in the classroom setting.

If data suggests that more intensive teaching is needed in the core curriculum, students are grouped by skill needs and WIN time is used to reteach, reinforce and expand the skill. For the Tier 2 support, in addition to the classroom teachers, each grade level has a literacy specialist to support student learning. Students with the greatest need are grouped in smaller groups to provide more 1:1 focus on the skill. At the conclusion of the WIN session students are reassessed. For students who persist in needing support, an additional block of time is given to provide those students with time to work on the needed skill. Interventions for those students strive to provide alternative methods of teaching in an effort to approach the skill in a different way.

Based on literacy assessments, students in first, second and third grade are selected for Title 1 reading. Small groups of two to four students receive additional instruction in foundational skills and are progress monitored weekly.

Students in need of intensive remedial support in universal skills are supported through Tier 3 interventions. An instructional strategist or a literacy specialist may provide individualized instruction for students to meet their unique learning needs.

Tipton Elementary uses the Iowa Tools for Innovation and Educational Results data system to administer assessments, view student data, analyze the data, and share student progress in reading. Preschool uses the Individual Growth and Development Indicators assessment within the system. K-4 grade students are screened and monitored using the Formative Assessment System for Teachers. All Preschool-4th graders are screened three times a year. Protocols are in place to instruct and monitor students who are not proficient. We analyze our data in teams, recommend adjustments to core instruction if the results are weak, plan for differentiation, and utilize a literacy consultant from the GWAEA for assistance.

Formative assessment is an integral part of learning for students and teachers at Tipton Elementary. Setting clear learning goals (in kid friendly language, in every classroom) was a big take-away from our 2014-15 professional development training on assessment for learning. All teachers were challenged to post learning goals and success criteria as a visual reminder of the learning target. Assessment for learning depended upon both students and teachers knowing what they were striving to achieve daily. Embracing and modeling a growth mindset helps our students feel safe to learn from assessment, rather than feel judged by assessment.

As a staff, we employ a wide array of formative assessments such as: reading records, rubrics, planned questions, observations, exit slips, embedded assessments, portfolios, performance assessments, checklists, conferencing, peer assessment, constructive feedback with an opportunity to refine work, and self assessments. Kindergarten and first grade teachers use running records to determine if students have attained benchmark reading levels each trimester. Common formative assessments are aimed at identifying learning strengths and gaps so teachers can work together to tailor instruction rather than planning one-size-fits-all lessons. Students showing mastery of an identified skill move to a new skill group, an advanced application of the skill, or a higher-level thinking project.

The Iowa Assessment test is administered to second, third and fourth graders. Teachers review grade level results with the Improvement Coordinator and examine areas of strength and weakness. Teams are encouraged to consider reasons for scoring trends and possible ways to increase achievement.

The Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP) test is given twice a year to third and fourth graders. Reading, math, and science sections are tested. Teachers receive detailed reports of individual student growth and skill areas in need of additional instruction. Teachers use the information to plan instructional groups for students with like needs. Teachers review the results with parents at conference time.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Tipton Elementary has a core belief in the importance of character building. Character Counts is the framework we use to set expectations for our staff and students. Nine years ago this instructional framework was set in place in our elementary. Each year we strive to focus and customize our plan to meet the current needs in our school. The principal and staff take responsibility as role models and every student is expected to show admirable character. Good character is celebrated one day each week. The “Character Cop” walks the halls to recognize students who have supported the pillars. Students’ pictures are published in the local newspaper for family and friends to see. In addition, the students wear “Capes of Character” throughout their special day so that all staff and peers can acknowledge their good character.

Each morning student ambassadors and teacher volunteers greet students and their parents as they enter the building. All teachers welcome students as they pass through the hallways and enter their individual classrooms. Fourth graders share the important news of the day over the intercom announcing birthdays, lunch menu and lead the Pledge of Allegiance and the Character Counts pledge.

Our staff worked to create a mission statement this past year, which we recite at every staff meeting. It exemplifies the core beliefs we hold for our students and ourselves. We strive to embody the philosophy that all children can learn and will experience success with our support. Our building motto is: “You CAN do it and we WILL help!” Through the PLC framework, literacy specialists, instructional strategists and grade level teachers gain a collective knowledge of all students at that level.

In addition to discussing the social/emotional needs of students of concern, the Student Support Team is working to develop a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to assist in handling behavioral needs. We are identifying and analyzing current behavioral concerns in our building and developing a MTSS plan to proactively address these behaviors. Our goal is to keep students in the instructional setting.

The purpose of our Sunshine Committee is to spread cheerfulness throughout the building. We strive to support staff members in joyful and challenging times. Whether it’s celebrating special events in our lives or organizing meals for a colleague during a difficult time, the Sunshine Committee helps us care for each other. Positive staff morale contributes to staff willingness to go above and beyond job requirements to help students.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Tipton Elementary faculty, staff, and students constantly strive to engage our families and community members in a positive way to ensure all parties feel their connection to one another. We all understand the importance of this connection in being one of the most critical factors to increase student achievement.

There are many ways that we reach out to parents and families of our students. These activities include Meet, Greet and Find Your Seat Night prior to the start of the school year to build relationships with students and parents as they learn about their environment. Parent Information Night informs parents of their child’s typical day, expectations, and teacher contact information. This event helps bridge the partnership between home and school ensuring shared responsibility in our students’ success. Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. Our school goal for parent/teacher conferences is 95% or better attendance rate, which we have successfully achieved for the past five years. Step Up Day occurs just before the end of the school year so students will be given the opportunity to meet their teacher and classmates for the upcoming school year.

The elementary staff keeps parents and community members informed of learning initiatives and school programs through classroom Facebook pages, Twitter, newsletters, Class Dojo pages, and blogs. To inform parents of their child’s progress, report cards are sent home after each trimester as well as student results from district and state assessments. Teacher presentations are given at monthly school board meetings to

inform board members and the community about new learning initiatives.

The school and community are closely connected through a number of partnerships. Our public library supports literacy by hosting a Summer Reading Program for students every year. Big Brothers Big Sisters provides social/emotional support to our students. Cedar County Conservation educates students about the environment. The Iowa State Extension Office provides monthly Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) activities for our students. Tipton Rotary Club donates dictionaries to third graders yearly and purchases coats for all students in need. Local police and fire departments teach students about bike and fire safety. Parents and community members work with our teachers and students as volunteers. Backpack Buddies, in collaboration with the Lutheran Church, provides food to families who may face food insecurity over the weekends. Annually, school children host a Veteran's Day program for over 100 local veterans and our community.

Character Counts posters are provided to businesses, photos of our character students are in the community newspaper, and our principal speaks with the local Rotary and Athenaeum yearly about our Character Counts efforts.

### **3. Professional Development:**

We at Tipton Elementary School have focused our Professional Development in two areas. We are a Character Counts School (CC), and have participated in summer training, school wide, to implement the CC Framework. This past summer a teacher team traveled to Des Moines and attended Character Counts 5.0 for additional training. They meet monthly and present regularly at staff meetings to keep everyone energized.

Our building has dedicated many summer hours at the PLC Institute to have a crystal clear understanding of the PLC process. Every single staff member at Tipton Elementary has participated in this institute. We have committed to becoming a PLC school and are in our 5th consecutive year of implementation. As a result of the implementation of the PLC process we have been removed from the status of "at-risk" in literacy.

We are encouraged as a staff to explore various professional opportunities that enrich the learning of our students based on their educational needs. Our district encourages each staff member to use 20 extra paid teacher quality hours, outside of our scheduled professional development. Having the ability to tie compensation to the PLC goals has been integral to the broad staff participation and momentum of adoption.

Our district School Improvement Director coordinates and facilitates professional development. Recent topics encompass the Iowa Core's Five Characteristics of Effective Instruction: Teaching for Understanding (2011-2012), Student-Centered Classrooms (2011-2012), Rigor and Relevance (2012-2013), Teaching for Learner Differences (2012-2013), and Assessment for Learning (2014-2015). Tipton partnered with the University of Iowa and the Department of Education for an Assessment for Learning pilot in 2013-2014. During the 2015-2016 school year, we studied the connection between the brain and student achievement.

We are in the infancy stage of a Teacher Leadership System (TLS) with instructional coaches and model/mentor teachers. Planning by district leadership has been ongoing for several years to obtain the grant, but implementation of the TLS began in 2016. Adding two instructional coaches in the district reflects the growing consensus that job-embedded and ongoing coaching can improve our instructional practice and lead to improved student learning. Six elementary teachers are continuing in their full time teaching role, but are also providing support as models, mentors and District Leadership Team members. Mentors receive training from the New Teacher Center and Instructional Coaches lead monthly training for all model teachers.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) framework was launched at Tipton Elementary in 2013. The principal galvanized support for PLCs by offering training to every member of the staff and extended the offer to new teachers as they came onboard. Currently, all team members have attended one or more PLC trainings. One hour of Making A Difference (MAD) time is guaranteed for each grade level team to meet as a PLC. In addition to the MAD hour, grade level teams meet weekly to insure curriculum, instruction and assessment are consistent throughout classrooms. Vertical team meetings are called as needed throughout the year to align curriculum between grade levels. Summer School decisions are made based upon the data collected and shared through the PLC process.

Every teacher participates on one of the following building teams that meet monthly: Building Leadership, Character Counts, Student Support, and Sunshine. The principal provides facilitative leadership for the teams.

Initially, all staff was trained in Character Counts and worked on teams to creatively implement the character pillars through curriculum development, publicity, safety, and school wide events. We were selected as a pilot school for the state of Iowa, Connecting with Character. Our school served as a site based field research center for analysis and academic application. Once established, leadership for Character Counts was designated to a team.

The Student Support Team is designed to merge school and community experts in an effort to support students and families facing obstacles to their well-being and/or academic success. The principal, school nurse, psychologist, speech pathologist, counselor, and a local law enforcement officer sit on the team with classroom teachers and a reading specialist. The weekly meeting focuses on proactive solutions to address student problems.

The Building Leadership Team meets monthly to consider building policies, review initiatives, or discuss current matters. Each grade level is represented and team members are liaisons between staff and administration.

The district's School Improvement Director insures professional development aligns with Iowa Core and district goals. The director guides and coordinates the District Leadership Team, the Iowa Teacher Quality Committee, Collaborative Leadership Teams, Peer Review, and has a leading role in the creation and execution of our recent Teacher Leadership Grant for the district. Instructional coaching and model/mentor teachers are receiving rigorous training and have started observation and improvement cycles.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The Tipton Elementary staff has found synergy in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process. The combined power of teachers working together has had more impact on student achievement than teachers working separately in their own classrooms.

Each week, one hour of protected time is guaranteed for each grade level team to come together without interruption allowing teachers to be intensely focused on the needs of all students in that grade level.

As the culture of collective responsibility has developed, trust has grown, and a shared vision has empowered teachers to answer these four corollary questions: What is it we expect students to learn? How will we know when they have learned it? How will we respond when they don't learn? How will we respond when they already know it? Each teacher has ownership of building wide learning. Common instructional practices, language, and pacing throughout grade levels are evident as teachers collaborate weekly. Instructional staff draws on colleagues' knowledge and experience to strengthen their own pedagogy.

Instructional strategists are members of each grade level team and a symbiotic relationship has developed. Strategists develop a better understanding of grade level curriculum and expectations. They contribute knowledge from their area of expertise. In addition, participation by the specialists allows for smaller instructional groups during "Whatever I Need" (WIN) time. Students enjoy movement to other classrooms and are exposed to a variety of instructional methods and styles. They understand the importance of this time, which is tailored to their individual needs.

Priority core standards are reviewed each trimester and drive the instruction in the classrooms. Common formative assessments are created and utilized to provide data to monitor proficiency on the standards. Students who are not proficient receive further intensive instruction in the skill, while other students are provided with additional application of the skill. The expectation that all students can learn at high levels has helped us target how we respond with differentiated instruction.

Central to our work is the PLC data room. This is where we come together as teams. Student photos are arranged on a data wall according to grade level and reading proficiency based upon the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) screening. It conveys we care about the personal achievement of each child. No student is forgotten, we document how we intend to instructionally support those at risk. PLCs have sparked a transformation in the way Tipton Elementary is successfully closing the achievement gap.