



## **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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	0	0	0
K	21	35	56
1	25	28	53
2	36	31	67
3	30	30	60
4	28	27	55
5	28	35	63
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>	168	186	354

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 88 % White
  - 8 % 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: 17%

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	40
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	59
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	357
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.165
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	17

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):

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 70 %  
Total number students who qualify: 248

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %  
67 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
- 3 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 6 Mental Retardation
- 2 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 7 Other Health Impaired
- 20 Specific Learning Disability
- 27 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 27:1
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	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
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. 2001

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.  
Through high expectations of trust, respect, ownership and leadership, the Miamitown family of students, staff, and parents develops life-long learners who are productive members of our community.

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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Miamitown Elementary is a school located in southwest Ohio next to the Great Miami River. It is 16 miles northwest of downtown Cincinnati. The town is very small and has a population of less than 1400 people, although we pull students from several nearby small communities as well. The school is one of four elementary schools in the Southwest Local School District. The original building was constructed in 1890 as a two-room school building. The current building was constructed in 1914-15 and had 8 rooms. Additions and upgrades have been added onto the building in 1945, 1954, 1991, and 1999.

Today, the school has about 350 energetic students and 40 caring staff members. The school educates students from kindergarten through fifth grade. Besides the regular classes, children receive instruction in gym, art, and music by teachers trained in these areas. In addition, special educators support the students who have special needs. Miamitown Elementary is a Title I building with Title I support. The entire staff works together to ensure that each child is learning and to provide support for each other.

Approximately seventy percent of Miamitown's students are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch. The school and community work together to support the kids' needs. The school has a grant for all students to receive free breakfast and lunch which ensures that the students can eat at least two meals a day. On Fridays, the school, in conjunction with a local church, puts together a backpack program where food is sent home over the weekend. When students need clothing or shoes, there is a closet where staff and/or children can 'shop' for items needed. Students who need extra encouragement are placed into the Starfish program and a staff member becomes their mentor.

Miamitown is a school where children come to learn academic and social skills every day through core values of trust, respect, ownership, and leadership. These core values can often be heard as a chant at assemblies or in classrooms. The staff members are passionate about teaching students to become life-long learners. Teachers meet regularly in hallway meetings to evaluate the needs of children so that each child's needs can be met at his or her level. RtI (Response to Intervention) is a program that every child in the building participates in daily. This allows for students to receive instruction to meet their needs—whether they are below, at, or above grade level. These individual needs are met by providing the necessary interventions at all levels for all students to be successful. No student is left behind at Miamitown Elementary.

Technology is embraced throughout the building, allowing teachers to better differentiate instruction and students to work to their full potential. Access to technology allows teachers to bring the real world into their instruction. They discuss current events that correlate with curriculum, and use the vast resources of the internet to make faraway places accessible. Every classroom has numerous computers for students to use and learn, ensuring that students will enter junior high with the skills they need to flourish in a digital world, whether or not they have access to technology at home. The teachers have projectors and laptops, and there are several computer labs for further enrichment.

Miamitown Elementary has had phenomenal results with testing. Almost every grade level tested has been above the district and state norms in reading and math. Last year, no students were retained due to the third grade reading guarantee. In November 2016, the school received the Ohio Momentum Award for the exceptional student growth in reading and math. In 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, Miamitown Elementary was recognized as a School of Promise by the Ohio Department of Education. From 2005-2009, the school was rated "Excellent" by Ohio Department of Education and in 2007—2008, Miamitown earned the award of Excellence with Distinction. In 2000-2001, the school received the National Blue Ribbon Award. The school has turned these awards into a culture of high expectations. No matter what the students are hearing out of school about their potential and abilities, when they walk into this building they are part of a successful team that instills in them hope, confidence, and a love of learning. The families of Miamitown trust the school to prepare children for the next level of learning because they have done it year after year.

Miamitown Elementary believes that learning does not stop when the last bell rings. The school offers many after school clubs for children to participate. Programs range from running club, basketball club, volleyball

club to handwriting club, Kinect club, and leadership groups. In addition, we offer hands-on learning activities that further students' learning. Targeted groups of students are taken outside to fish, watch baseball games, walk through wetlands, or look through telescopes, showing them that the world is larger than our school, and full of exciting things to explore.

The school values the strong bonds we have with our students, their families, and our community. The school is dedicated to providing the students of Miamitown Elementary with the best education possible. The staff strives to prepare our students to reach their potential. At Miamitown Elementary, no one is left behind, because the students are our kids and Miamitown is family.

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

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

Miamitown’s core curriculum is based on the Ohio standards. In the Southwest Local Schools District, every grade level meets prior to the start of the school year. At this meeting, teachers use the Ohio standards to create a curriculum pacing guide. In these pacing guides, a yearly map is created to document when all standards will be taught throughout the school year in each subject. Once the district pacing guide is created, Miamitown teachers use it to create lesson plans at the building and classroom level to meet the needs of our students. Our 1st and 2nd hallway and our 3rd and 4th grade hallway coordinate units and RtI groups so that students can work in differentiated teams across the classrooms.

As stated earlier, the majority of Miamitown students come from low income families. The Miamitown teachers capitalize on our district mission “academic and social growth for all students, every day” and our district motto “excellence through relationships.” Academic success at Miamitown is a direct reflection of teachers bonding with students. Our students work hard academically for their teachers because they know their teachers care for them.

District adopted programs include Journeys reading, My Math, Social Studies Weekly and Interactive Science. These adopted programs are the focus of our core curriculum; however, Miamitown teachers go beyond these programs to create differentiation daily. Technology comes into play as teachers use supplemental research based programs including ScootPad, Read Naturally, Study Island, Moby Max, and Learning.com. Each of these programs place every student on their own learning path which allows them to focus on lessons that meet their individual academic needs. These programs provide intervention for our students performing below level and enrichment for those students performing above grade level. A daily RtI (Response to Intervention) program is in place at Miamitown for reading and math. Our RtI program is used to acquire foundational skills, provide intervention and enrichment. Grade levels have a common RtI time where our RtI staff (reading specialist, RtI aide, special education teachers) join the classroom teachers to group students based on academic needs. In addition to staff members, classroom volunteers are utilized to provide one-on-one support for students.

An important part of our core curriculum is data collection. National tests such as MAP and Aimsweb are administered in the Fall, Winter and Spring. These tests provide academic data in reading and math, giving teachers norm-referenced information about their students. Classroom teachers also keep classroom data regarding daily progress toward meeting academic standards. All of this data is used to drive instruction and create differentiated groups within classrooms and across grade levels.

Within our classrooms differentiation occurs daily. Teachers provide instruction based on academic needs in reading and math. Students are grouped by ability for small group instruction. In addition to differentiation, supplemental programs are used and implemented to add extensions to our core curriculum adopted programs. These supplemental programs include Scholastic News, Cincinnati Reds game with a cop, circus trip sponsored by our local Masonic lodge, fishing trip, K’nect after school club (a partnership with our high school), morning cursive writing club, and the school spelling bee.

Science and social studies at Miamitown are integrated into the reading curriculum in grades K-3. In 4th and 5th grade, we teach science and social studies as separate subjects. We have made the decision to focus the majority of our time and energy on bringing kids up to speed in reading and math, because many of our students come to us with no pre-literacy training or even basic book sense. Our students read and discuss texts in many science disciplines, and use them to learn to think like scientists. They do research and create written reports that line our hallways. Our teachers leverage excitement around holidays to dive into the history of our country. We work hard to instill civic values with Kids Vote, Memorial Day and Veterans Day community celebrations, and constant focus on our core values as displayed by grownups and instilled in children. Our approach is one of hands on learning—we want our students to learn skills and then use them to test hypothesis, with the goal being the creation of scientific thinkers. Starting in the fall of 2017, our district will implement a STEAM curriculum K-5.

Civic learning activities often occur through speakers, assemblies, and building themes. Some examples of our civic learning activities include: classroom visits by a park naturalist, career day speakers, librarian visits from our local public library, participation in the Miamitown Bicentennial celebration, and many enrichment assemblies about topics like technology, character education, science, and health. Miamitown teachers also provide civic learning through field trips highlighting important places in the greater Cincinnati area.

Miamitown's support staff plays an essential part of our civic education. Our guidance counselor provides in classroom character education instruction. We also provide district funded extended learning opportunities (after school tutoring for struggling students) and English as a second language support as needed.

A true reflection of living our mission and motto is noticed at the end of the year. Our primary students are given the opportunity to earn a bowling party by meeting reading and math goals set the first day of school. Our intermediate students meet academic goals to earn a skating party. Our students work hard for our teachers because the relationships have been built, which lead to academic and social growth for all students every day.

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

At Miamitown Elementary students grow not only in the regular classroom, but also in a wide variety of other curriculum areas as well.

In Music class, twice a week, the students learn music in a variety of genres. They learn to sing, read music, and even play the recorder. Students are rewarded for learning harder and harder songs with "Recorder Judo." With this reward system, students earn different color strings of yarn that are tied on the end of their recorder to signify what level they reached. Twice a year, our music department puts on a musical performance for the parents and community. Every student in grades 1-5 participates in one of these two performances. In addition, many students perform in Showcase Southwest, an evening celebrating the arts and music district wide.

All students participate in art class once a week for half an hour, where they learn about and create art. Our art teacher, along with our PTA, sponsor our annual "Reflections Contest." About 98% of our students participate in this. The Reflections Contest is more than just an arts comparison; the prompts are worded to help the students look inside themselves and grow as a person either academically, socially, or spiritually. Students also make decorations for our small town's annual Memorial Day Parade which starts at our school. This helps create a tie between our students and their community. The art teacher also doubles as an intervention teacher to help students who are struggling with a subject.

The learning excitement at Miamitown Elementary continues into our Library. All our students participate in library class for half an hour once a week, but students are also free to come in and exchange books whenever the librarian is there. Usually our librarian is the first face many of our students see each morning and the last one they see each afternoon, because she is our school's crossing guard. She knows the children and works hard to get the right book in their hands. Two times a year, our librarian sponsors a Book Fair for all the students. This is tied into our Grandparents Day which helps to foster the excitement of reading within the family. The school also celebrates a Reading Week in May, where students revel in the joy of books as they read outside, to a service dog, and during Stop, Drop, and Read! moments announced by the principal over the PA system. In an all school assembly, students who met reading goals watch the teachers Sumo Wrestle in giant body suits.

One of the busiest places in our school is our gym. All students get 40 minutes of Physical Education twice a week. On top of teaching the regular curriculum, our Physical Education teacher teaches good nutrition and offers a variety of clubs and activities to our students. All students participate in the Presidential Physical Fitness Award program. In this program, students are offered awards for standards based on different levels of fitness. Our students can also join the Volleyball Club. The club has between 20 to 30 students and meets weekly after school for an hour. They learn fundamentals and compete with another elementary school and with the teachers during the December school assembly. Our school has also participated for over 15 years

in the Jump Rope for Heart event, with students raising money for the American Heart Association. Over 90% of our students participate in this event. Students can also take advantage of our Running Club. During good weather months, students, staff, and even some parents will meet weekly to run or walk for about 45 minutes. This club has approximately 30 runners, and at the end of the season, the students meet in downtown Cincinnati to run the last mile of our city's annual Flying Pig Marathon. Finally, students in P.E. class are encouraged to do homework: keeping a log of any physical activity they do outside school. This is to encourage exercise as a lifelong goal.

Finally, all the non-core curriculum areas come together at an annual event called Showcase Southwest. On this night, parents and the community are invited to the school to see not only students' academic work and achievements, but a variety of visual art, musical performances, and physical activities.

At Miamitown Elementary, we grow our students to be well-rounded individuals. With the help of the non-curricular classes, students work to be successful while learning not to be afraid to take risks and try something new, be it a book, an art form, or a sport.

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

Miamitown Elementary embraces our diversity of challenges and needs, and as a team we work together to create solutions. We are blessed with a staff that we often refer to as family, who come together and contribute however they are needed. We treat our challenges as hurdles in a relay race, and work together as a team to jump one at a time. Then we gain momentum and triumph across the finish line. When a need arises, it's not left for one teacher or staff member to figure out, but it becomes an issue to be solved as a team.

We understand that each child is unique, and must be looked at as a whole person. To address and accept each student's diverse needs, we offer a variety of instructional approaches such as direct instruction, class inquiry and discussions, drill and practice, discovery learning, repeated readings, reciprocal teaching, tiered instruction, and differentiated instruction. However, we don't stop there. If a student is lacking the appropriate resources for the day, such as a pencil, markers, backpack, or even appropriate shoes or clothing, we are empowered to stop and address that need. We know that no matter what educational approach we take, if a child is preoccupied with a pressing need, we cannot move forward. We have to ensure that our children feel safe and secure if we want to empower them to engage in the learning process.

To identify strengths and weaknesses in skill areas, we begin the school year with some assessments and screeners. Students in grades K-5 take the Measure of Academic Performance (MAP) in the areas of reading and math. Students will take this same assessment again in the winter and spring to monitor progress and measure academic growth. Students in grades K-2 take a reading assessment using Aimsweb to gauge whether they are on track for reading success. Students who are not on track are put on a Reading Improvement Plan (RIMP) to ensure that the child's family is aware of his/her academic needs and knows what the school's plan is to address them. As part of the RIMP, the student's progress is monitored using specific research-based strategies such as setting high expectations, allowing students to practice and check their own work, using incentives and rewards, and using higher levels of questioning. We try to vary the strategies to best match the child's skill deficiencies and learning preferences. In addition to MAP and Aimsweb, Kindergarten students take the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to assess their overall academic skills. Teachers also have access to Star Renaissance which is a computer based program that identifies a student's independent reading level and determines a level or range of books that the student should read to promote optimal reading growth.

Once students complete the norm referenced assessments, teachers use the results to determine the needs of each student. Miamitown has created a Response to Intervention (RtI) team that meets with each grade level every day to work with small groups of students. The team is made up of Intervention Specialists, a Title I teacher, a full-time computer lab teacher, an RtI aide, classroom teachers, and volunteers. The team meets to analyze the data from the beginning-of-year assessments, and then students are placed into flexible groups where they work on remediation, grade level, or enrichment skills. There's a heavy emphasis on English Language Arts (reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing – especially keyboarding or word

processing skills).

Some of the programs used to support learning in the RtI process at Miamitown are Scootpad, MobyMax, Reading A-Z, FrontRow, Read Live, ReadWorks, Study Island, and Kahoot. Technology is very important in our school and, in addition to two full size computer labs of 30 computers, students also have access to devices in the classroom. Each classroom has at least 10 computers or devices. Some classroom teachers have even written grants to secure 25+ devices.

Students who are identified at risk for academic failure receive intensive interventions from their classroom teacher and RtI team. They may also be a candidate for the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) meeting if they are perceived to be a candidate for special education services. When a meeting is called, the family of the child is invited to attend with the school counselor, speech pathologist, classroom teacher, Intervention specialist, and school psychologist. Notes are taken on the child's development history, background information, strengths, and concerns to formulate a plan or academic approach.

To maintain a high level of achievement, students receive enrichment services through the RtI process and in the classroom. Teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students lacking skills, but also use this opportunity to stretch students and challenge them. We have a Talented and Gifted (TAG) teacher who meets with a small group of students twice a week.

Together, the staff at Miamitown Elementary works together to embrace each child, identify his/her strengths and weaknesses, and develop a plan to remediate, educate, and challenge that child. When we finish the race, we make sure each child is crossing the line with us!

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Miamitown has several programs in place to engage and motivate students. We are a school that provides a positive environment that supports academic, social, and emotional growth of all students. Every child succeeds here at Miamitown because we have something for everyone to succeed in. We have several activities that allow our students to feel successful and invested in learning. The following activities are currently in place:

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) - consists of school wide assemblies, dance parties, and extra recess. Students must exhibit the four core values (trust, respect, ownership, and leadership) to participate. These are values that we model here and hope that the students will carry on with throughout their adult life.

Accelerated Reader Parties - Students work toward an individual reading goal, and are rewarded quarterly for reaching it. We want to instill in them the love of reading both for pleasure and understanding. This program motivates students and encourages them to read.

Caught Being Good Tickets – Students can earn tickets from any staff member in the building for demonstrating one of the four core values. Steady reinforcement for doing the right thing creates a positive atmosphere.

Special Outings— Small groups of students are chosen for outings based on good behavior and specific student needs. These outings include a one-day fishing trip with the principal, school psychologist and other staff, a Cincinnati Reds baseball game with police officers and other community members, and a local radio show where the students who give our morning announcements get to be radio hosts. These outings give students who need extra help or encouragement time to see our values being modeled in a non-school environment.

Bowling/Skating End of Year Party – Students that attend the end of year bowling/skating party must have met quarterly academic goals. These students must also show socially responsible behavior throughout the year.

Leadership Group – A small group of students led by the school counselor oversee several community improvement projects. These students set an example for the entire student body who are then able to benefit from the projects.

Support Groups—The emotional well-being of our students is of great importance to the staff at Miamitown. Our school counselor and a building social worker provide support in many ways for students that are struggling with emotional and behavioral challenges.

Miamitown is an environment in which all teachers and staff feel valued and supported. Our small school setting enables us to get to know each other on a personal and professional level. Each hallway holds meetings to plan lessons and units as well as to make decisions about student academic and social needs. Staff members are always willing to share materials and resources with one another to ensure student success. We feel that we have a unique relationship with each other and our close-knit community. Our PTA shows support by funding classroom resources and field trips. They also support the staff by making meals and providing snacks to show their appreciation for all that we do.

We want to provide the opportunity for every student at our school to be fantastically successful at something. This empowers and encourages the children to reach their full potential.

## **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Miamitown believes it takes a village to educate our students, and luckily, we have just that. Connection with families and the community is key to the success of the school. This connection thrives on communication, which builds trust, ownership, and relationships with families and the community which last for years. As a result, Miamitown is one big family.

Communication within the school happens in various ways. Newsletters are sent home for the whole school and individual classrooms. Most classrooms use plan books to communicate with parents daily. Many of the teachers use texting (Remind 101 or Dojo) to communicate with parents in addition to email. Parents can access their student's grades through Progress Book. Parent-teacher conferences occur twice a year for every student. Additional conferences and phone calls are made when needed so parents and staff can work as a team to help students succeed. When needed, home visits are made.

Miamitown values the relationships with families and the community. Volunteers from the community come to the school to help the children with academics. The local bank has a banking program at school so that students can learn the value of saving. The park rangers come to the school bringing animals and artifacts for the kids to see. Veterans are invited into the school to share their stories. The fire department brings the fire truck to the school yearly for the students to see. Community churches support the school with donations of supplies, food, facilities, and volunteers. One church offers a yearly summer reading program for the students to attend. A partnership of churches and community groups sends backpacks with non-perishable food home each weekend with 75 of our most needy students. The community made it possible for the school to attend a circus at Northern Kentucky University, students to go fishing for a day, and students to attend Cincinnati Reds Baseball game. At Christmas time, the community and staff step up to support those families who need extra help with gifts.

Miamitown invites the community to Musical presentations twice a year. Grandparents Day occurs once a year where Grandparents eat breakfast with their grandchildren and visit their classrooms. Movie night happens where families come to watch a movie and eat popcorn together. This year, the school was an integral part of the Miamitown bicentennial celebration. The school displayed many things that were used in the 1800s and made a float for the bicentennial parade. The school also makes a float for Memorial Day parade yearly. The community and school work together in many ways to support each other developing our children to be productive members of society.

## **3. Professional Development:**

At Miamitown Elementary, the students are not the only ones expected to learn and grow. The staff understands that this is an important part of our job also. Miamitown Elementary offers many opportunities for professional development to our staff, including teachers, aids, secretaries, custodians, cooks, and administrators. Professional development courses are offered through the Southwest Local School District, and staff may also attend conferences, visit other schools to witness examples of different ways to implement academic standards, and seek out new strategies to assist students to master the curriculum.

The staff is given two days of in-service training in August before students arrive for the school year to further develop their skills with new innovations for instruction and intervention. These training days are broken into sessions that apply to the staffs' area of certification and subject area they teach. Curriculum Maps are developed and revised for ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Teachers are trained for online content that relates to the areas, according to adopted curriculum materials. Many of the sessions are presented by fellow staff members who are working with the teachers daily. The staff members are trained in the curriculum area and then come back to train the staff, using the "Train the Trainer" model.

One day in November is dedicated to professional development based on a similar format as the August in-service. Grade level teams meet on this day to discuss strategies and brainstorm as a group how to best meet the needs of the students in our building.

Miamitown Elementary, at the building level, also offers professional development. We hold staff

meetings, bring in guest speakers, and encourage teachers to seek out ways to develop their skills. We have formed book studies and learning communities. Teachers have been given time to attend workshops through our Hamilton County Education Services Center and other local organizations. This year our second and third grade teachers attended a conference at the HCESC to gain more knowledge on identifying and planning for brain-based strategies that have a positive impact on student achievement and learning. During our first staff meeting, our principal invited a brain research professional to inform us on how the act of writing develops different parts of the brain and helps students retain information for a longer period of time. Our technology team attended workshops on using computers and other forms of technology to enhance the instruction in the room.

Safety is a continuous training topic to ensure all staff know how to help prevent possible dangerous situations and how to respond to crisis. The entire staff knows their role and what to do to keep the students and adults safe in the building.

We are educators. Teaching and learning is our vocation and our passion. We will continue to learn and grow to better serve our students and our community.

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

The Miamitown Elementary school leadership philosophy is that teachers are highly trained professionals who know what is best for their students. The teachers and support staff work and collaborate as teams to gather data and make data driven decisions. Grade level team meetings are held when a team member feels it is necessary. The teams also meet twice per quarter.

Families can participate in the decision-making process through the executive parent/teacher board. The board meets monthly to discuss programs and issues that need support. Parents also participate in the intervention assistance team meetings under the counselor's leadership.

The Principal is the liaison between all the different teams and provides guidance and support. He helps work out conflicts between the different teams. He will make the final decision when necessary, but expects the staff to maintain a high level of professionalism. The principal is also the liaison between the building and district office. In this leadership role, he makes sure the district mission and goals are clearly communicated to the staff. The principal holds monthly staff meetings to discuss building wide organization.

The team leadership approach ensures that student achievement is the focus of all decisions. A good example that illustrates this is the response to intervention (RtI) program. A team will meet to decide what instructions are best for a group of students. The parent teacher organization and local businesses will supply materials or home support. The Principal will adjust support staff or bring issues to the appropriate teams to make it happen. This process ensures that all the child's needs are met, which makes them better equipped to achieve their goals.

Students are given the opportunity to practice their leadership skills. Teams of students under the supervision of a staff sponsor take responsibility for certain tasks. For example, a team organizes and delivers the school announcements. Another team organizes the school's canned food drive. The sponsors meet with the principal to discuss student selection and future projects.

In summary, having the professionals that work most closely with the students take a major leadership role leads to a more in-depth, data-driven process. Therefore, resources can be re-allocated in an efficient way that improves student achievement. This process allows for staff buy-in and ownership of the academic decision-making process.

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

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The single practice that is the most influential in our school's success is how much our staff truly cares for our students. Being a low-income school, where 70% of our students receive free or reduced lunch, we are often confronted with the challenges associated with poverty and neglect. We don't see our students as collections of statistics, though—we strive to see the whole, miraculous child. Our school has a small room filled with new shoes to give to students when a teacher sees an obvious need. None of our students will go without a coat in the winter. We have arranged to get propane for families in the winter and make sure the kids eat on the weekend with our Backpack Program. By teaming with a local church, we give the neediest kids of the school nonperishable items to eat over the weekend. For many of our students, school is the only place where they receive a decent meal.

Our Starfish Program is for students who struggle emotionally or behaviorally. Teachers identify students who are at risk for behavior problems, and another staff member commits to check in daily with that student to let them know someone in the building, outside their regular classroom teacher, cares about them. We have also teamed with Talbert House, an organization that comes to help our students with anger management. When a student has chronic absence issues, the principal and another teacher will pick that student up and bring them to school. Free tutoring is given to some struggling students. All the clubs and opportunities after school are provided by staff who are not making any extra money. From Running Club to Cursive Writing Club, it's all done because we care. Many times we talk about how in our building, our role is not just to teach the ABC's; we are the people who feed, clothe, listen to, and show our students we care. We send at risk kids, with the help of our local Sheriff's Department, to a Cincinnati Reds game. Again, all of this is done after school by volunteer staff.

We feel that by showing our students how much we care, our students repay us in the only way some of them can: effort. Our students try extremely hard because they don't want to let us down. It's not uncommon to hear a student say they wish they didn't have to go home over the weekend. That's the magic of our building: it is the magic of showing love through hard work.