

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Mrs. Kara Marie Jackson

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

Official School Name Toll Gate Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 12089 Tollgate Road

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

City Pickerington State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 43147-7863

County Fairfield County

Telephone (614) 834-6400 Fax (614) 834-6410

Web site/URL http://www.pickerington.k12.oh.us/toll-gate-middle-school/ E-mail Kara Jackson@plsd.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 Chris Briggs E-mail chris_briggs@plsd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Pickerington Local School District Tel. (614) 833-2110

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. Vanessa Niekamp
(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. 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

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):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 14 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	137	119	256
6	151	116	267
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
Total Students	288	235	523

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 12 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 76 % White
 - 6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 6%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	29
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	523
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.055
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %
Total number students who qualify: 99

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
101 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>9</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>50</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>3</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>7</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>8</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> 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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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 X
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 mission is to provide an engaging, innovative and holistic experience that empowers all students to become responsible, productive citizens.

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

Toll Gate Middle School is a 5-6 middle school serving a population of 523 students. Ground was broken for this third middle school in the Pickerington Local School District in 2007. The school officially opened in August 2009 welcoming its first group of 496 students. Pickerington, Ohio is located east of Columbus, our state's capital. Pickerington has been identified as one of Central Ohio's premier communities and one of the fastest growing cities in the State of Ohio. Toll Gate Middle School embraces our distinct population of students, ranging from those classified as gifted to those that have been identified with a wide variety of physical and mental disabilities. Our Toll Gate Middle School staff works diligently to provide engaging, innovative and holistic experiences that empower all students to become responsible, productive citizens. Mirroring the vision statement of the Pickerington Local School District, together the students and staff of Toll Gate Middle School endeavor to create an atmosphere where we are continually "improving our community and society".

Although Toll Gate Middle School has only been in existence for eight years, we have created an environment filled with traditions. Every fall we participate in a challenge with the "team up North" by running a food and sock drive during the week of the Ohio State vs. Michigan football game. The collected donations go to the Pickerington Food Pantry. During the winter holiday months students and staff join the Violet Township Fire Department to help provide assistance for families in need. Projects to raise money are held in individual classrooms. Our student council has established a yearly candy cane sale with all profits going toward this worthy cause. Other "giving back" projects include our annual Recycling Drive, student-led Leadership Teams that create blankets for Nationwide Children's Hospital and cards for those in senior living facilities, pop tab collections for the Ronald McDonald House and student fundraising for Autism Speaks.

Additionally, incoming Toll Gate Middle School 5th graders and their parents are invited to attend a summer evening barbecue, where they meet and get to know the 5th grade staff. Our 6th grade students attend a three-day, two-night Outdoor Education experience. They learn to appreciate their environment in ways not attainable through a typical classroom setting. Toll Gate Middle School hosts a Family Fun Night in the early fall free of charge. Families enjoy a night of fun activities organized by the Toll Gate Middle school staff. In partnering with our community we offer afterschool activities for both students and parents. These include Coffee with a Counselor, after-school clubs, PTO sponsored Lock-In Night, Parent Advisory Boards, professional speakers and staff-led book studies for parents.

Our staff cultivates an environment where work and learning are infused with passion and commitment, always keeping in mind that students are our number one priority. To meet the learning demands of our students who exhibit superior abilities in intelligence, mathematics, and reading and language arts, Gateway Academy is housed at Toll Gate Middle School. Gateway Academy is a comprehensive program with compacted and accelerated instruction that provides for a deep and interconnected level of understanding of content, process, and conceptual framework. To establish a learning climate that provides diversified and relevant instruction, our professional opportunities have focused on such books as Heacox's "Making Differentiation a Habit" and training centered on Ruby Payne's "A Framework for Understanding Poverty." In addition, to better serve our students with special needs, experts in the field of autism have trained our staff with evidence-based practices for use with individuals with autism.

What is most impressive about Toll Gate Middle School is the connection between the staff and students. Every day our students come to a school where they know they're valued. Our staff invests daily in our students' social, emotional and academic well-being. Our students respect the staff and endeavor to perform their best. As a result, Toll Gate Middle School has received the State of Ohio Momentum Award for the last two years. This award is given only to schools who achieve a value added "A" status in all reportable subgroups. Hand-in-hand, the staff and students walk down a path where we both seek to learn more, do more and become more. Toll Gate Middle School embraces the motto of, "Every child, Every day, Whatever it takes."

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Toll Gate Middle School offers a robust curriculum that is aligned with Ohio's Learning Standards in reading, math, science, and social studies. Research-based instructional practices are implemented in daily instruction. Lesson planning is based on data collected frequently through various types of assessments. Specific learning targets are posted in classrooms and allow students to focus on the standards being taught and to check their own progress in meeting those standards.

Toll Gate Middle School staff support the literacy curriculum adopted by the Pickerington Local School district. The focus at the 5th and 6th grade level is to deepen students' ability to comprehend more complex texts, to improve their writing skills, and to help them develop a range of useful speaking and listening skills needed to prepare them for college or a career after high school. Fifth grade students use Expeditionary Learning as their English language arts curriculum while sixth grade students use Springboard. English language arts standards are reinforced by the content area teachers in social studies and science with a particular focus on improving students' comprehension of informational text. The literacy curriculum provides our students with complex reading and writing tasks that are aligned with the Ohio Learning Standards.

Toll Gate Middle School teachers realize the importance of increasing students' conceptual understanding of mathematics and the importance of being able to communicate that understanding, so we use Springboard, the district adopted text. This resource provides students with multiple ways to explore and represent their comprehension of mathematics and gives them a foundation to build upon for taking higher level mathematics classes in the future. Furthermore, the mathematical curriculum focuses on real-world problem solving opportunities that align with the Ohio Learning Standards in order to promote 21st century skills.

A science laboratory provides teachers and students the space to do hands on learning experiments and projects that may be a challenge to do in a regular classroom. An online program called Defined STEM allows students to imagine, design, create, and problem solve as they collaborate on projects related to math and science concepts. Furthermore, sixth grade students attend a three day, two night Outdoor Education program that allows for the students to experience science concepts in a non traditional school setting.

Social studies classes offer students the chance to see a wider view of the world and their place in it. Forging community partnerships is one way our students learn to become involved citizens. The holiday toy drive, a book drive to benefit our local children's hospital, collections for the food pantry, working at a soup kitchen, and sending supplies to troops who are deployed are opportunities that allow us to make a difference in our world. Gateway Academy students also participate in Junior Model United Nations. Finally, every student is a member of a Leadership Team. Leadership Teams enhance our social studies curriculum and school culture through service learning.

Toll Gate Middle School is also home to the Gateway Academy for students who are gifted. This is a program provided for students in our district in fourth through sixth grade who have a superior cognitive score in the gifted range or a gifted score in reading and math on a test approved for identification of gifted students. Students receive accelerated instruction in reading and math for three years which enables them to take eighth grade English language arts and Algebra in seventh grade. An enriched curriculum in social studies and science is tailored to their needs.

Students are active participants in their learning and have the opportunity to further track and analyze their progress through the use of data notebooks where they keep a record of their progress throughout the year. They record scores from district-wide common assessments, classroom formative and summative assessments and projects, as well as personal written reflections on their learning process. These data notebooks are frequently shared with parents to involve them in their child's educational process as well.

Teachers collect and examine data as they meet in Teacher Based Teams and use that data to inform their

instruction. Students benefit from blended learning, small group reteaching or enrichment during daily Academic Work Time, and other instructional strategies that are tailored to meet the needs of every child. Going one-to-one with Chromebooks has also provided teachers with more opportunities to engage students in personalized learning using ST Math and MobyMax that can be used to differentiate instruction by allowing students to learn at their own pace.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Toll Gate Middle School students are provided many other curricular opportunities that enrich and support the core academic areas. All students in grades 4-6 receive instruction in art, music, physical education, library, guidance, technology, and health. Classes are rotated on a 4 day weekly schedule.

Art instruction is provided by an experienced certified art teacher approximately 16 weeks of the year. Art projects are aligned to the Ohio Department of Education standards. Students learn basic art skills while studying famous artists and exploring various art materials and techniques. Many art projects enhance the cultural studies taking place in the social studies' classrooms as well as support the math curriculum as students explore geometric shapes, dimension, and proportion. Artwork is prominently displayed throughout the year.

Additionally, students receive music instruction on the opposite quarters they receive art. The class is taught by a certified music teacher. Students learn rhythms and how to read music. They also have an opportunity to experiment with playing various drums as they listen to music and learn about the cultures that use these drums. Sixth-grade students may also elect to play a band or orchestra instrument. They receive instruction before school three days a week and perform in band concerts during the school year. Approximately, 25% of our sixth-grade students participate in band or orchestra.

Students have physical education at least once a week throughout the entire school year. Depending on the rotation cycle for the week, some classes may have it twice in one week. Students learn how to play organized sports, playground games, and learn various exercises for keeping fit and to support cardiovascular health. Ohio Department of Education Physical Education Assessments are administered to 5th graders, and student progress towards the benchmarks is reported to the Department of Education. Force and motion concepts taught in both fifth and sixth-grade science are reinforced through physical education classes.

Students receive bi-weekly instruction in drug and alcohol abuse prevention for one-quarter of the school year from an outside agency. Students learn about the various types of drugs and alcohol and their side effects and participate in activities to help them gain the knowledge and self-confidence needed to avoid peer pressure which may lead to potentially dangerous situations or long term health issues.

Technology classes are provided for students for approximately 21 weeks of the school year. Students meet with a certified technology teacher to explore new computer applications and to learn about internet safety. Per teacher request, students work on projects that incorporate various applications and support the academic standards in the core subject areas. Increased creativity and technology exploration by our students has been a byproduct of every student now having his or her own Chromebook. In addition, our school innovation lab allows students to collaborate and share projects with each other on large screen T.V.s, and a green screen allows students to broadcast their own videos just as they would in a real studio.

Sixth-grade Gateway Academy students take one semester of Spanish from a certified Spanish teacher. This class is an enrichment class which allows students to explore another language without the pressure of taking it for credit. Students learn basic greetings and common vocabulary. This class provides them with the opportunity to get a head start and to decide if they wish to take Spanish in seventh grade for high school credit.

Students visit the library at least once a week for a forty-minute period. The library aide instructs them in how to use the online catalog, may introduce new books to them, and supports the classroom teachers in helping students choose books. In addition, the library is open at various times throughout the day for

individual student visits as needed.

A full-time guidance counselor lends support to students in many ways. Once a month during the scheduled library time, she meets with students for a lesson tailored to the needs of that particular grade level or the particular group. For example, lessons for the Gateway Academy students may focus on perfectionism, anxiety, or on social skills that students may need to develop. Also, once a month she has an “open lunch” where she invites any students who want to join her for lunch to just come and chat.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Toll Gate Middle School is known in the district for having exemplary test scores. This is accomplished through the combined work by administrators, teachers, and coaches to continually review our instructional procedures to ensure that students are receiving the educational experience that meets their individual needs. The needs of our students are determined through different assessments that are administered throughout the year, and then examined through data analysis to adjust the instruction to suit each child. Once student needs are identified through data analysis, a building improvement plan is written by the building leadership team. Within the building improvement plan, action steps are written to include researched-based interventions put into place to make sure each child is provided with every opportunity to succeed. For example, one area of improvement for Toll Gate Middle School is closing the achievement gap with our students with special needs. In order to close the achievement gap, we have adopted a full inclusion model that allows for students with special needs to be fully included in regular education classroom. They are pulled out during the enrichment and intervention period in order to address their specific learning deficits using programs such as Leveled Literacy or the Orton Gillamham method. Finally, our students with disabilities are progress monitored once every two weeks in order to plot student progress. We make adjustments based upon student progress monitoring data.

Pickerington Local Schools has moved towards a blended learning model, where each student in grades 5-6 is piloting a 1:1 Chromebook program. Many teachers at Toll Gate Middle School have begun to fully implement blended learning as a means to provide content through many different avenues, such as stations, which allow teachers to work with small groups to provide more individualized support. Having the technology readily available allows teachers to more easily provide differentiation options for students. Several teachers have even incorporated self-paced learning, which allows learners to move through the content at their own pace.

Assessment is used to inform instruction at Toll Gate Middle School. Teachers meet weekly at Teacher Based Team meetings to discuss common assessments and STAR data that are given at each grade level to determine which skills need to be reinforced and focused on in upcoming lessons. Once this data is analyzed, students that are identified at risk in certain areas are referred to Response to Intervention (RTI) services for Math or ELA. This ensures that no students are falling into gaps without the necessary supports put into place. Additionally, teacher based team data is discussed at building leadership team meetings to make the needed adjustments at the building level. Finally, STAR data of the most at-risk students is also discussed at monthly RTI meetings. These meetings also serve as an avenue to develop a personalized learning path for our most struggling students.

Academic Work Time (AWT) is scheduled regularly into the day to provide teachers with more opportunities to meet with students to accelerate or provide additional interventions for those students not participating in RTI services. During this time, teachers meet one-on-one or with small groups to provide additional practice/enrichment for students depending on the need of the student. If students are not working with the teacher during this time, they are continuing to make improvement and growth with their academics through the use of ST Math or MobyMax. These computer programs are designed to meet the individual needs of the child under the guidance and support of the classroom teacher. Accelerated Reader is also used to encourage students to read and comprehend what they are reading. Incentives are provided for students who meet goals determined by the teacher and the school.

Our core curriculum is designed around content and standards that are rigorous and relevant, and provide opportunities to stretch critical thinking abilities and prepare students to be career-ready. Toll Gate Middle

School also houses the Gateway Academy, our Gifted program. The Gateway program primarily serves grades five and six. However, the school district has also placed a cohort of fourth graders at Toll Gate Middle School, so they can receive the full benefits of the program. Students in this program receive an enriched curriculum that is accelerated and grade advanced. Through this program, students have the opportunity to participate in many project-based learning experiences, as well as a yearlong economy simulation that provides real life experiences.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Toll Gate Middle School is a place where teachers love to come to work, students look forward to coming to school, and parents feel included. This environment is cultivated through the varied activities that take place during and after the school day.

Students are greeted with a simple hello and a smile at the building and classroom doors. Students need to feel safe and secure in order to maximize learning.

On Mondays and Fridays, the entire building comes together for a school wide assembly called ROAR. Not only is this an opportunity to celebrate our student and teacher successes, it allows the students to see the staff including teachers, administrators, kitchen staff, and custodial staff all as one. Bringing the entire student population together promotes the unity amongst one another so they feel a part of something bigger. There is a level of respect that is seen throughout the building because of the purposeful integration of all members of our building.

Students are encouraged and supported emotionally and academically through the building-wide use of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework, where teachers acknowledge and encourage positive character traits. In order to promote a positive school culture, students are provided with the opportunity to earn tickets every day for demonstrating the expected behaviors of Toll Gate Middle School. The tickets can be redeemed for weekly prizes at school wide ticket drawing.

The staff recognizes the importance of building relationships surrounding similar interests and branching out from the usual routine, therefore here at TGMS, the first Friday of every month, teachers hold a Leadership Team that suits their unique interest, and students sign up to be a part of that team for the semester. This wonderful opportunity provides students a chance to socialize and interact with other peers and teachers, with whom they may not have had without this experience.

Not only does the staff recognize building relationships with the students, but they also value the importance of supporting one. Teachers support one another through a Staff of Awesome recognition program, after school staff events, and weekly staff breakfast. The essence of Toll Gate Middle School is family.

The principal is the inspiration behind such cohesion among the staff. Her positive attitude and her welcoming approach set the tone for everyone at the school. Above all, the principal listens and hears what teachers are saying and recognizes their needs. Between ice cream snacks, the hot chocolate bar, the jeans days, and other incentives, she keeps the building's spirit up. The principal at Toll Gate Middle School is the key to establishing and maintaining the wonderful climate that inspires and impacts both students and teachers.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Toll Gate Middle School understands that to be a truly successful school, it must engage the whole child. The principal, the school counselor, and the teachers strive each day to make the necessary connection to families and the community.

The school hosts an Open House to meet with all students and parents. This helps establish the climate and rapport needed to make those initial connections. Our school also hosts a Family Fun Night, where teachers organize games and activities for our families.

The Watch D.O.G. Dads program has been implemented in our building to support the school-based involvement of our fathers. The Watch Dog Dad program promotes student success through one on one tutoring or through building positive school relationships with all students.

As the school year continues, Toll Gate Middle School reaches out to the community to participate in an array of charitable causes. The students and staff collect nonperishables for the local food pantry drive, partners with Violet Township to raise money for those in need during the holidays, donates to the United Way fund, and gathers books for patients at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

In addition, Toll Gate Middle School sponsors a blood drive through the Red Cross Organization. Our school has received the Heart Safe School Accreditation. Students and staff are hands-only CPR trained and conduct frequent medical drills.

The school counselor is a vital component in any connection between the home and the school. Monthly lessons on character building often incorporate projects that help the community. There are "Open Lunch" opportunities for the students to have lunch and chat with the school counselor about life. The counselor reaches out to the parents by hosting Coffee with the Counselor several times a year. She also organizes a career day that brings in various community professionals. A recent endeavor was participating in the "Start with Hello" outreach program to reduce student isolation.

The Parent-Teacher Organization meets monthly in the evenings to promote participation from all parents. They organize overnights for the different grade levels and ask community members along with high school students to assist. This organization also puts together talent shows and offers after school clubs.

To enhance our family and community relationship, a variety of social media platforms are used to keep parents abreast of the happenings within our building. The building has both a Facebook page and a Twitter account. It also sends home a monthly newsletter.

All of these connections are made to help build a relationship that allows the staff to support the students in the best way possible. The culture of collaboration increases student success because when students and families feel safe then they are more willing to reach out for all academic resources.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is a vital component of any learning community. Toll Gate Middle School prides itself on providing opportunities for its teachers to consistently reflect upon their instructional strategies and their impact on student learning. It is evident there is a commitment to learning through weekly meetings either in a Professional Learning Community or a Teacher Based Team. During these meetings, teachers collaborate and align their focus with the Building Continuous Improvement Plan. Standards are addressed by grade level and by content. District level meetings also periodically occur to allow for vertical alignment to make sure the pace and the progression is working for the students.

Whole building professional development also occurs when needing to address more specific building goals. These are able to occur once a month with a two-hour delay scheduled into the district's school calendar. These meetings then tend to provide a yearlong focus for teachers. In recent years, the teachers have studied Robert Marzano's, "Instructional Strategies That Work" and Ken O'Connor's, "A Repair Kit for Grading." Teachers have also worked together to implement standards based reporting for the fifth grade. Currently, blended learning has been the forefront of our collaboration as the district implemented one-to-one technology. Much discussion and collaboration between teachers and the principal take place to ensure a meaningful change is happening within the classrooms.

Toll Gate Middle School houses several special education units and the gifted program. Teachers recognize that more students in the regular classroom require special services or consideration. Using the expertise of these unit teachers, some of the professional development has been geared towards how to best meet the needs of these diverse learners within a regular classroom.

Pickerington Local Schools, as a whole, has provided several unique opportunities for its teachers throughout the year. Its aim is on incorporating and understanding the effectiveness of blended learning within one's classroom. To address the multitude of needs and understanding of their adult learners, the

district has created several professional development days that allow teachers choice of sessions to attend. The format and structure is modeled after the instructional strategies teachers use within their own classrooms to meet the needs of their individual learners

4. School Leadership:

The leadership at Toll Gate Middle School takes on many forms and is driven by a transformational approach. At the school, groups of teachers form two different leadership groups: the Building Leadership Team and the Faculty Leadership Team. The purpose of these two leadership teams are vastly different. The building leadership team is responsible for making decisions about teaching and learning, data driven decision making to increase student achievement, and how to close the achievement gap with our most at risk students. The faculty leadership team makes managerial decisions about the operation of the building such as the master schedule. Both of these teams are under the direction of the building principal. Since the adoption of these two leadership teams, student achievement and value added have soared as indicated by the school report card issued by the Ohio Department of Education.

In addition to using a distributed leadership style, the principal is authentic and supportive to all staff members. The principal empowers staff members and distributes responsibility to staff members rather than making exclusive decisions without staff input. Authentic leaders are role models for their followers because followers perceive their behavior as authentic and transparent. At the school, the emphasis is on transparency, because transparent relationships trigger trust in followers.

As the instructional leader of the building, the principal of the school empowers the staff to make instructionally sound decisions by analyzing data and using best practices. The school uses the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System and the building principal regards this model as an improvement model rather than a punitive model. Working collaboratively, the building principal and the instructional team help set areas of reinforcement and refinement for all teachers. At the school, the principal and other key personnel serve as instructional leaders, artfully combining expectation and support to achieve school and district goals, engage parents and other caretakers in the education of their children, and establish partnerships with key community institutions that promote the welfare of all students. By using a transformational, distributed and authentic leadership approach, the principal is clear about the set values and beliefs and the effects these values and beliefs have on others and on the achievement of organizational and school goals. The principal is the heart of the school's culture, making certain that the attitudes and behavior represent the values and practices promoted throughout the school and district.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Toll Gate Middle School is an innovative learning environment with personalized learning through one-to-one devices. During 2015-2016, staff began receiving Chromebooks, participating in professional development, and learning Google programs. At the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, students received Google Chromebooks. The implementation of technology at a one-to-one ratio has allowed students, teachers and parents to engage collaboratively personalizing the learning experience.

When deciding to implement personalized learning, outdated computer labs were transformed into innovative learning centers. Students now enter the innovation lab with bright colors and modern accommodations. Flexible seating allows for furniture that can be moved around the room to give access to a green screen and collaborative work stations that include 43 inch monitors. Students are able to connect their Chromebooks to the monitors to collaboratively engage in activities and develop cooperative learning skills.

In the classroom, one-to-one devices are used to personalize and improve the learning process. Students regularly have access to Google Classroom to see assignments and monitor their grades. In addition, students are able to collaborate with teachers and other students on projects and assignments. Teachers are able to provide immediate feedback to students in documents as students work. Students are able to communicate with teachers and classmates from home, allowing an alternative working environment where they are able to ask questions. Teachers can use an endless variety of programs from the internet. Programs go right along with the core curriculum and enhance both student learning and achievement. Students are able to monitor their own progress and set personal goals with the help from teachers. This set-up allows the opportunity for problem-based learning where students are able to collaboratively solve open-ended problems through technology. This approach challenges students to use deeper thinking skills to solve problems and creativity is fostered.

The Building Leadership Team has created a Google Classroom that is being used to post practice state assessment test questions for parents and struggling students. For our gifted population, teachers are providing opportunities for enrichment through problem-based learning and exploratory online research. All students are able to easily practice testing tools because of the one-to-one technology.

The practices that Toll Gate Middle School has put into place through the use of one-to-one devices is preparing students for a technology based world. They are making real-life connections by integrating technology into their everyday learning. Students are able to go deeper into the content and classroom rigor is achieved. Students are taking ownership of their achievement through technology since that is their language. The results we are seeing are student driven and teacher facilitated. Student mindsets have shifted to a learning environment of endless opportunities and pathways.