

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Christopher O. Billings

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

Official School Name Summit Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 9500 Windsor Parkway

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

Johnston IA 50131-0000
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Polk County

Telephone (515) 986-0318

Fax (515) 986-0952

Web site/URL

[http://www.johnstoncsd.org/school/s
ummit-middle-school/](http://www.johnstoncsd.org/school/s
ummit-middle-school/)

E-mail chris.billings@johnston.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*Laura Kacer

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail laura.kacer@johnston.k12.ia.us

District Name Johnston Community School District Tel. (515) 278-0470

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Greg Dockum

(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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	277	264	541
7	305	267	572
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	582	531	1113

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 8 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 70 % White
 - 5 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 8%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	40
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	50
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	90
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	1107
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5%
59 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Bantu, Bosnian, Chinese, Creoles, Dinka, French, Grebo, Hindi, Judeo-Arabic, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Kru, Lushai, Mandingo, Middle English, Oriya, Pidgins, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Telugu, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26%
Total number students who qualify: 289

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
119 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>17</u> Autism | <u>11</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>3</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>19</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>12</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>2</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>31</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	61
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	21
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 19:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	98%	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 2017.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Summit Middle School is a safe place where students, families, staff, and the community will partner to nurture students socially, emotionally, and academically.

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

Summit Middle School is located in Johnston, Iowa and serves 1,116 sixth and seventh-grade students (and three eighth-grade students in a special education setting) in the Johnston Community School District. Johnston is a thriving community located in the Des Moines metro area that has seen extraordinary growth and development. Over the past three decades, subdivisions and apartments have replaced farm fields that once dominated our landscape. As a result, Johnston Schools has quickly evolved from a small rural district into a diverse urban district with sharp rises in free and reduced lunch waivers, student diversity, and English language learners. This rapid growth has brought unprecedented opportunities and challenges.

Summit Middle School was created thirteen years ago to meet the growing needs of this growing community. At that time, the existing 6-8 middle school was divided into a sixth and seventh-grade building (Summit) and an eighth and ninth-grade building (Johnston Middle School). Summit was conceived and designed to meet the unique needs of middle school learners, and we continue to provide opportunities for our ever-changing student population by remaining faithful to the middle school philosophy. Sixth-grade is the first year that students from our five district elementary schools converge in one building. This major transition is eased through our commitment to grade level communities. Our three sixth-grade communities function as both a physical gathering space for students and a place that gives students a sense of identity and belonging within our large building. Sixth grade communities are made up of two-person teaching teams (math/science; language arts/social studies). Each team is responsible for academic core instruction for their 60 students in addition to providing homeroom contact for families and a social/emotional “basecamp” for students.

As seventh-graders, our learners also belong to one of three grade-level communities. Seventh-grade teachers, however, work on four-person academic teams that share 120 students each. Each team member teaches one core academic area, and teams provide the same academic support and social/emotional stability as our sixth-grade teams. The transition from two to four-person teams within our building is intended to gradually transition students from a self-contained elementary model to our traditional secondary buildings. On the last day of school each year, our sixth-grade students and teachers line the hallways and cheer our seventh-grade students as they leave Summit Middle School for the last time, well-prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

Summit Middle School is noted for implementing effective initiatives such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and Project-Based Learning. We are in the second year of a 1:1 iPad initiative that is transforming the way staff and students communicate and learn in our building. These initiatives allow our staff and students to thrive in a positive culture focused on high expectations and student well-being.

The success of these initiatives is largely due to a professional development model that embeds high-quality learning opportunities, directly aligned to building and district improvement goals, into the school day. Each Tuesday, teachers engage in new learning during their 42-minute PLC period. Every Wednesday provides an additional 90 minutes of learning as a result of an “early out” schedule. This embedded learning time is in addition to district-provided professional development days during the summer, at the beginning of the year, and throughout the school year.

Summit Middle School exemplifies the Johnston Community School District’s vision: Creating a culture of excellence where students come first. In an effort to support this vision, we have established the following goals: all students will show growth in the areas of reading and math achievement; all students will use instructional technology to express content area understanding; all staff will ensure staff well-being; and all staff will teach, model, reinforce, and acknowledge positive student behaviors.

To support our school improvement goals, Summit has an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) made up of instructional coaches, lead teachers, and model teachers. In addition to providing support for new and career teachers, the ILT leads committees responsible for professional development around our building goals. In our building, teachers regularly take the lead role in planning and delivering professional development for

their peers.

As a result of the above efforts, Summit Middle School has been named an exceptional school on the Iowa School Report Card issued each year by the Iowa Department of Education. Our building enjoys outstanding test scores and a positive climate for all students. Most importantly, students, parents, and staff consistently give positive feedback on surveys, at parent meetings, and via email regarding their experiences at Summit. It is clear that one of the reasons the Johnston Community continues to grow is the reputation we have earned for exceptional schools. People choose to live in our community because they expect excellence, and we make every effort to deliver.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Summit Middle School, curriculum in the four core content areas is aligned to the Iowa Core Curriculum Standards. Core content teachers have professional efficacy in prioritizing, unpacking, sequencing and building units of instruction around these standards. At Summit, the work of designing curricular units of study for our students is on-going. As teachers reflect on evidence of student learning, they revise units to improve engagement and increase achievement. Units of instruction also provide opportunities for Summit students to learn, practice, and master the skills identified in our district's Portrait of a Graduate, an explicit outline of the 21st century skills and dispositions our students need to ensure success in college, careers, and life.

In the English language arts classroom, instructional units integrate the domains of literature, informational text, writing, speaking, and listening. Students examine short literary fiction and learn to think, speak, and write academically in response to questions about text. Complex informational text is used to build background knowledge and cultural literacy, and speaking and listening skills are taught, practiced, and assessed through collaborative group work and the use of accountable talk frameworks. Units are sequenced to build students' reading and writing stamina, with students analyzing a wide variety of poetry, short fiction, and informational text and participating in book studies of longer texts and full-length novels. Students build information literacy through short, frequent research projects, culminating at each grade level with the development of an evidence-based argument presented both orally and in writing. When students leave our school, they possess the foundational skills needed to read, write, and communicate in academic and real-world settings.

In math classrooms at Summit, students develop foundational skills and abstract mathematical reasoning through authentic problem-solving opportunities, regular mathematical discourse, and productive struggle in the practice of mathematics. Math teachers are well-versed in the Principles to Actions framework from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and they build and revise units of instruction around prioritized standards from the Iowa Core, using textbooks and other resources (such as Do the Math and Open Up Math) as needed to provide students with practice and application opportunities. Teachers support student acquisition of essential concepts and skills through the integration of the concrete-representational-abstract approach. Students work cooperatively to solve authentic problems, sharing multiple approaches and evaluating the effectiveness of each one. The content, scope, and sequence of our math curriculum ensures that students leave our building knowing how to think, talk, and work like mathematicians.

Students at Summit Middle School explore scientific concepts and skills in a time of curricular transition. As the state of Iowa implements the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), our teachers support students while pursuing their own professional learning around the new standards. To implement the NGSS with fidelity, science curriculum at Summit is shifting from a concept-based approach to a problem-solving model. In new units of instruction that are being piloted this year, students learn to use available resources to pose and investigate scientific questions. Units are designed to provide hands-on opportunities for students to explore the domains of physical science, life science, Earth and space science, and engineering design. Scientific academic vocabulary instruction is embedded within units of study, and through the creation of scientific investigations, lab reports, and visual models, students learn to apply the language of science in their discussions, writing, and presentations.

Our social studies curriculum is also in a state of transition due to Iowa's recent adoption of new state standards. These standards are derived from the principles contained in the C3 Framework developed by the National Council for the Social Studies and focus on informed inquiry, balance among content strands, and development of active and engaged citizens. The sixth-grade standards focus on geography, history, and culture in global regions, and seventh grade standards shift to building an understanding of global perspectives on contemporary issues and worldwide interdependence. To attain these complex concepts, students at Summit engage in close reading of text, use primary and secondary sources to gain multiple perspectives, develop informed arguments, and analyze and compare past to present. Teachers utilize both

commercially-developed and teacher-created Document-Based Question (DBQ) tasks to engage students in historical investigations and use resources from National Geographic, the DBQ Project, and others as needed to facilitate deep understanding of civic rights and responsibilities and an understanding of the importance of taking informed action.

As a secondary building, administration and staff at Summit value content and ensure that students acquire foundational skills grade level standards. We also recognize that the development of knowledgeable, active citizens who are prepared for the academic and employment challenges of their future is perhaps our most important work. To that end, curriculum across the four core academic areas is intentionally designed to support rigorous inquiry, authentic problem-solving, democratic decision-making, and complex communication.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Summit Middle School, we honor the developmental needs of middle school students by providing ample opportunities to explore multiple content areas that affirm established interest areas and spark new ones. Our related arts team motivates students to learn through relevant and engaging curriculum that teaches content area skills and knowledge while reinforcing the application of essential skills in real-world settings.

Our related arts programs operate on a trimester calendar through an alternating A/B day schedule. Physical education, instrumental and vocal music, digital media literacy, and Project Lead the Way (PLTW) are year-long courses. Art, African Drumming, family-consumer sciences (FCS), Spanish, digital literacy, Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM), and health are 12-week courses. Both sixth and seventh grades are served through our related arts programs.

Over the past two years, our related arts teams have engaged in rigorous unit design work with their content area professional learning communities (PLCs). Teams of secondary teachers meet twice every month to prioritize, unpack, sequence, and build units of instruction based on state and district adopted standards for their content areas. For many of our related arts teams, this has called for intense study of new standards along with attendant shifts in instruction and assessment practices. As a result of this work, our teachers can communicate to students exactly what it is they are expected to know and be able to do in each related arts classroom and deliver instruction that helps students attain those goals. In combination with prioritized standards for each content area, our related arts teachers share a commitment to supporting students' application of essential literacy, math, and science skills and knowledge in real-world settings.

Our related arts courses are also intentionally designed to support students in learning, practicing, and mastering the 21st century skills outlined in our district's Portrait of a Graduate, an explicit outline of the skills and dispositions our students need to ensure success in college, career, and life. Students in all related arts classes are expected to collaborate, to engage in critical thinking, to solve authentic problems, to exhibit community and global-minded dispositions, and to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in applying previously learned content to novel situations. Related arts teachers engage in weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) work to collaborate around strategies for teaching, modeling, providing feedback around, and assessing these critical skills.

In our visual and performing arts pathway, we offer graphic design, band, chorus, and African Drumming (6th grade only). A seventh-grade student recently told a teacher that, "At Summit, art is always about creativity and doing our best." Student in graphic design work in choice-based art studios to explore the use and potential of various media. Instrumental and vocal music students master note-reading, expression, tone, rhythms, and technique while exploring music from various genres and historical periods.

Courses in our health pathway include health (seventh-grade only), physical education, and family and consumer science (FCS). In these courses, students acquire deep understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to maintain healthy and productive lives. Health and physical education students learn and demonstrate understanding of the elements of a healthy lifestyle and activity regimen. Summit Middle School houses the only indoor swimming pool in our district, and swimming and water survival skills are a critical piece of our physical education program. FCS students apply literacy and math skills in

real-world settings through learning activities such as cooking, sewing, household maintenance, and budgeting.

Both sixth and seventh grade students take Spanish which allows them to explore the geography, culture, and language of Spanish-speaking countries around the world. Students learn basic vocabulary including conversational greetings and questions. Students leaving Summit are well-prepared to succeed in foreign language offerings at our other secondary schools.

In our technology pathway, students have a wide variety of courses and options to explore. Digital and information literacy are taught, practiced, and mastered in digital literacy and digital media literacy courses as well as through lessons provided in our centrally located library. PLTW and STEM courses offer students hands-on technology-related explorations of concepts related to science, math, engineering, design, and modeling.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

At Summit Middle School, students' needs are met through our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). In addition to a guaranteed and viable core curriculum, we provide certain access to matched interventions for students performing both above and below grade level. Staff make informed decisions regarding supports students need and leverage the flexibility of our schedule and staffing plan to ensure those needs are met.

Summit's universal core instruction meets the academic needs of at least 80% of our students. Core content area professional learning communities (PLCs) meet five days a week to analyze student data and make instructional decisions that improve student learning. Within heterogeneous classrooms, teachers differentiate instruction to meet academic needs and engage all students in high levels of learning. Common formative assessments—designed, scored, and analyzed through the PLC process—help teachers target small group instruction to specific needs. Whenever possible, teachers, many of whom have been trained in project-based learning, design authentic, real-world learning tasks that engage students deeply in the achievement of grade level standards. PLCs and individual teachers collaborate with special education, English as a second language, and gifted and talented educators as well as other specialists to ensure that appropriate accommodations are made for students with diverse needs.

When data indicate that students' needs go beyond the limitations of universal core, our MTSS provides certain access to appropriate targeted and intensive supports for struggling students and high-ability learners alike. These supports are typically provided through a daily intervention period we call Summit Strong during which students learn in instructional groups targeted to their specific needs. Students' placement during Summit Strong is determined through universal screening, classroom performance, and other diagnostic data. During Summit Strong, students might receive reading or math intervention—from a general education teacher or from a reading or math specialist—or they might be placed in Humanities or STEM-related enrichment groups, taught either by general education teachers or by a gifted and talented-certified staff member. Students who represent under-performing sub-groups receive supplemental instruction during this time, and students who have executive function or other school-success challenges receive targeted instruction from our counseling staff in Social-Academic Intervention Groups (SAIG). In addition to Summit Strong time, students with needs across multiple domains might receive additional intervention during other periods of the day. The higher the student need, the more highly-qualified is the staff member delivering instruction. When Individual Education Plans, 504 accommodation plans, or progress monitoring data from tier two interventions indicate that students have even more intensive needs, individualized tier three interventions are delivered by the most qualified staff in our building.

To support this system of interventions, our instructional leadership team maintains an electronic data wall that allows all school personnel to access whole-student information quickly and easily. The data wall includes district-wide assessment data—Iowa Assessments, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and English Language Proficiency for the 21st Century (ELPA21) scores. In addition, attendance data, disciplinary referrals, and intervention placements are available at-a-glance on the data wall. The convergence of this information—along with classroom data—allows teachers and other Summit personnel

to make data-informed, student-centered decisions quickly and objectively.

The unique partnership we have fostered between our PLCs and our referral team makes Summit's MTSS particularly effective. As referenced above, our PLCs meet frequently and use the data wall, common formative assessments, samples of student work, and additional diagnostic data [e.g.—Basic Reading Inventory (BRI), Math Reasoning Inventory (MRI), Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) assessments in math and reading] to make instructional decisions. At any time during the school year, PLCs refer individual students to the building referral team for additional problem-solving. The referral team consists of building administrators, teacher leaders, school counselors, special education consultants, our school nurse, and other staff who support student learning and well-being in our building. The team meets weekly to discuss the health and viability of our MTSS and individual student referrals and uses all available data to make objective and informed decisions regarding additional supports that referred students might need. This marriage of classroom-level knowledge with system-level perspective allows us to ensure that every student receives the supports needed for academic success. It is what makes Summit Middle School exceptional.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Summit Middle School, all students can learn. Dr. Anthony Muhammad informs our foundational belief that, “All children have the right to have their gifts and talents cultivated through the process of education.” We believe that engaging students in authentic learning builds intrinsic motivation that supports not only to academic growth but social and emotional development. When student engagement goes up, discipline issues are reduced.

Our school is committed to the foundations of quality project design, and the design process is implemented across our building, from classroom instruction to extra-curricular opportunities to building improvement efforts. A commitment to honoring student voice and choice encourages students to make connections between content area standards and their lives and personal interests. Our authentic learning approach provides students with leadership opportunities by asking them to identify problems and develop viable solutions.

We believe that engaging our staff is as important to our success as engaging our students. Our Continuous Improvement Plan was designed with staff engagement in mind. All stakeholders are responsible for identifying needs and inefficiencies in our system, so staff members have access to a comprehensive tracker that lists and describes all on-going programs and initiatives. Any staff member can suggest areas for improvement which instills ownership of the system. Teachers also lead Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) committees that plan and deliver professional development around our four building goals (Well-Being, Academic, Behavior, and Technology). Staff are invited to join a committee that matches their interest, and these building goal teams are responsible for professional development during embedded learning time to build staff capacity and promote efficacy for effecting change.

Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) focuses on the whole student and involves all staff in supporting student needs. Classroom teachers submit academic, behavior, emotional, and social concerns to the referral team which meets weekly. Attendance at this meeting takes precedence over almost any other obligation, and we ensure that the right people are at the table to make timely, decisive, and appropriate decisions regarding extensions, interventions, or other supports for each child referred. Teachers feel empowered to acquire additional supports for students through transparent communication between the classroom and the referral team. Our MTSS Behavior Team regularly reviews staff feedback and works to improve tier one universal behavior instruction. Celebrations occur weekly in homerooms, monthly in grade-level communities, and bi-annually at large grade-level events because celebrating desired behavior is a cornerstone of our universal system.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Summit Middle School, we work to establish and maintain strong relationships with our partnership community of parents, businesses, local non-profits, and institutes of higher education. We solicit academic and behavioral support as well as building-level feedback from our partnership community and provide out-going communication to inform partners via regular emails, social media postings, classroom websites, and resources provided on the school website.

We survey parents annually regarding communication preferences and try to honor their feedback. Classroom teachers communicate students’ achievements and challenges with parents regularly as well as through parent-teacher conferences (scheduled bi-annually and additionally as needed). Johnston community members are engaged in the goings-on at Summit through a monthly school newsletter, online notices, and local media coverage.

At Summit, we leverage our partnership community to provide real-world audiences and expert perspectives for authentic learning experiences. Students plan an annual Veterans’ Day celebration. They issue invitations to local veterans, plan and deliver a program, and host a reception in their guests’ honor.

Social studies students investigating global health issues reach out via e-mail to international experts on topics such as maternal health and food insecurity in developing countries. Parents and other community members listen to students pitch unique school improvement ideas and give feedback about how proposals might be strengthened.

Partnerships with business members from John Deere and Principal Financial Group provide advice and facilitation for after school technology clubs including Girls in STEM, HyperStream, and Technology Student Association. At our annual Code Jam programming event, over fifteen business partners provide authentic problems for students to solve as well as realistic client relationships. We have after-school clubs sponsored by Des Moines Area Community College and the Technology Association of Iowa. These partners provide expertise, equipment funding, and hosting for consortium events.

Community partners are vital supports for on-going school improvement efforts and student well-being supports. We aim to increase our cultural proficiency by developing and providing new approaches for communication and translation with the families of our English Learners (ELs) and advocate for cultural perspective in all school organizations with an emphasis on closing the opportunity gap. In the winter of 2017-18, we hosted an English as a Second Language family event to support communication with our ELs and their families. Members of our partnership community come to our building and serve as mentors for at-risk students in need of connection with a responsible adult role model.

3. Professional Development:

As described in the summary portion of this application, Summit Middle School uses a professional development model that embeds high-quality teacher learning into the school day. In addition, our district provides professional development days during the summer, at the beginning of the school year, and throughout the school year. All embedded and district-provided professional development is designed to support our building and district goals.

Since the 2014-15 school year, professional development in our building has been focused on differentiation for all subgroups, effective reading and math interventions, and high impact universal instruction. This learning was delivered in preparation for implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to meet the needs of all students. In addition, district professional development focused on prioritizing, unpacking, sequencing and building units of instruction using content area standards. At this point, our MTSS is in the third year of implementation, and content area standard work continues to progress. The commonality across all content areas is that our teachers are crystal clear about what students need to know and do to achieve grade level standards.

During the 2017-18 school year, our building shifted to a greater emphasis on teacher-led professional development in support of instruction around 21st century skills as outlined in Johnston's Portrait of a Graduate. This was implemented in the form of new professional development around project based learning and effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) while maintaining an emphasis on refining our MTSS. Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has played a significant role by leading Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) committees that plan and deliver professional development for teachers. ILT members are forward learners in our main initiatives by pursuing Project Based Learning training provided by PBL Consulting and attending Solution Tree's Professional Learning Communities at Work Institute. Teacher leaders are then charged with supporting capacity in our building around these initiatives.

In summary, our professional development efforts are aligned with our state-determined content area standards and the district's Portrait of a Graduate. Our efforts are based on the belief that teachers are the best resource to plan and deliver professional development and improve instructional practices while actively participating in PLCs. The result of these professional development efforts is that despite our ever-changing student demographics, Summit Middle School has been able to maintain high test scores and rigorous learning for all students.

4. School Leadership:

Summit Middle School's leadership philosophy is based squarely on the concept of shared leadership. As a result of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation initiative in our state, our building is able to leverage a powerful partnership among administrators, teacher leaders, career teachers, and other stakeholders to ensure that student achievement is the focus of everything we do.

Principal: The role of the principal is to act as the instructional leader for the building, clearly communicate district initiatives, utilize teacher feedback to establish a shared vision, and communicate vital information to the Instructional Leadership Team.

Associate Principal: The role of the associate principal is to support efforts that ensure effective behavior instruction and intervention, support teachers' instruction and professional growth, and contribute to the shared vision for the building.

Instructional Leadership Team (ILT): The role of the ILT is to contribute to and communicate the building's shared vision, champion the cause of effective initiatives, and model positive culture and climate for students and staff. This group is made up of the following teacher leadership positions—instructional coaches, lead teachers, and model teachers.

Instructional Coaches: The role of instructional coaches is to provide instructional support for beginning and career teachers, support individual teacher career development plans, support the work of effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and ensure the health and viability of Summit's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

Lead Teachers: The role of lead teachers is to serve as professional learning leaders, implement and share effective instructional practices, bring the voice of the building to the ILT, support the work of effective PLCs, and participate in coaching cycles with instructional coaches.

Model Teachers: The role of model teachers is to model effective instructional practices, serve as the voice of the ILT to career teachers, participate in effective PLCs, and engage in coaching cycles with instructional coaches or lead teachers.

Referral Team: The role of referral team is to ensure the health and viability of our MTSS through regular analysis of both system-wide and individual student data.

Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) Committees: The role of CIP Committees is to plan and deliver high quality professional development to teachers that aligns with and supports building and district goals.

This shared leadership structure has been instrumental in Summit's efforts to establish a strong MTSS, engage in meaningful content area standards work, develop and support effective PLCs, initiate a successful 1:1 iPad initiative, and emphasize 21st Century Skills through project based learning.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While Summit Middle School does many things well, the innovation that sets us apart is our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), a system we implemented in 2014 that has fundamentally changed the way we approach student support in our building.

Before we had a vision for MTSS at Summit, curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices at our school were wildly inconsistent. Teacher preferences and textbook resources determined what students were taught, and learning was assessed primarily through publisher-created exams and district-wide yearly assessments. In the 2012-13 school year, our newly-hired principal challenged teams of teacher leaders to engage in a clear-eyed evaluation and re-imagining of our universal core curriculum, challenging us to build it, not from textbooks and favorite resources, but from the Iowa Core standards. This work built the foundation of our MTSS, our tier one universal instruction. It resulted in the development of common units of instruction and common assessments. For the first time, content area teams were asked to honestly assess whether or not 80% or more of our students were meeting or exceeding grade level expectations, and when teams identified units or courses in which students were not, the causes were analyzed and adjustments were made.

In the fall of 2013, our PLCs began a rigorous series of embedded professional development cycles designed to improve instruction in our universal core. Classroom teachers focused professional development efforts on differentiation, small group instruction, and high-yield instructional strategies. Meanwhile, instructional coaches and lead teachers developed targeted tier two academic interventions. New reading and math intervention positions were created and filled, and enrichment units focused on 21st century skills and higher-level academic concepts were written. Staff debated then selected a new master schedule that accommodated four intervention times (two for sixth grade teams; two for seventh). By the spring of 2014, we were ready for implementation.

School year 2014-15 was a year of trial, error, and celebration. What we saw almost immediately through student placement data was that students who previously had relied solely on core classes for support or enrichment were receiving additional time and instruction in the academic areas where it was most needed. Three years later, we continue to refine and improve our system in response to the ever-changing needs of our students, but we do so with confidence that the hard work is indeed worth the effort.