

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Karen E Valentine

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

Official School Name Edison Regional Gifted Center

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4929 North Sawyer Avenue

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

Chicago IL 60625-5008  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Cook County

Telephone (773) 534-0540

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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. Janice Jackson

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail CEO-Jackson@cps.edu

District Name City Of Chicago School District 299 Tel. (773) 553-1500

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. Frank Clark

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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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):
- 471 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 181 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 652 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 |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>PreK</b>           | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>K</b>              | 13         | 15           | 28          |
| <b>1</b>              | 13         | 16           | 29          |
| <b>2</b>              | 15         | 13           | 28          |
| <b>3</b>              | 13         | 16           | 29          |
| <b>4</b>              | 13         | 18           | 31          |
| <b>5</b>              | 19         | 13           | 32          |
| <b>6</b>              | 17         | 15           | 32          |
| <b>7</b>              | 13         | 18           | 31          |
| <b>8</b>              | 17         | 14           | 31          |
| <b>9</b>              | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>10</b>             | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>11</b>             | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>12 or higher</b>   | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>Total Students</b> | 133        | 138          | 271         |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 9 % Black or African American
  - 16 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 32 % White
  - 40 % 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: 5%

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.

| <b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>   | <b>Answer</b> |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year   | 0             |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year | 15            |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 15            |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016   | 275           |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.05          |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 5             |

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):

Mandarin/Chinese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8%  
Total number students who qualify: 23

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %  
11 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>1</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.   | 9                      |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.   | 6                      |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.   | 2                      |
| Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 7                      |

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 30:1

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

| <b>Required Information</b> | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance    | 96%       | 96%       | 96%       | 96%       | 96%       |
| High school graduation rate | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        |

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Edison Regional Gifted Center is a welcoming school community that honors individuality. We develop the skills of gifted and talented students through thoughtful learner-driven experiences. We encourage responsible risk-taking, innovation, collaboration, and effective communication.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Edison Regional Gifted Center is a selective-enrollment elementary school in Chicago Public Schools. Students gain admittance based on their score on CPS' gifted assessment which examines students' critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving ability.

Selection for all selective enrollment applicants is in accordance with Chicago Public Schools' tier system. For the entry grade level for Selective Enrollment Elementary Schools, the first 30% of the available seats are filled strictly according to student scores. The remaining seats are equally distributed among the four socio-economic tiers and are filled by the highest-scoring students in each tier. There is no sibling or proximity consideration for these schools.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Edison Regional Gifted Center is a public selective-enrollment school serving 271 students in grades kindergarten through eight. Founded in 1975, Edison was established to provide rigorous educational opportunities for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students who had been identified as gifted per CPS' regional gifted center assessment. Forty-three years later, the school still serves that community. Edison children and families reside in numerous Chicago neighborhoods containing highly-varied socio-economic statuses and cultural make-ups. Originally located in Chicago's Edison Park neighborhood, the school is now located in Albany Park, a notable example of how markedly diverse Chicago neighborhoods can be. Edison shares its building and campus with two CPS neighborhood schools: Hibbard Elementary and Albany Park Multicultural Academy.

Academically, Edison has a long history of exceptionally high performance and has earned CPS' highest rating each year since the inception of the district's School Quality Rating Policy. Although our students come to Edison with a wide variety of skills and abilities, student attainment on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA) has ranked in the 99th percentile for both reading and math for every grade, kindergarten through eight, since CPS began requiring schools to administer the NWEA in the 2012-2013 school year. Given Edison's designation as a regional gifted center, one might expect this tradition of excellence. However, our students regularly surpass expectations. In the 2016-2017 school year, growth metrics on the NWEA assessment remained consistently high: Edison 7th and 8th graders earned a 99% pass rate on the algebra exam which awards students credit for high school Algebra coursework. In addition, Edison sent a greater percentage of students to top selective-enrollment high schools than any other CPS elementary school. Edison students regularly place at district and state History and Science fairs, geography and spelling bees, math and poetry competitions, chess matches and Science Olympiad. This standard of excellence is not limited to academics. Edison students and alumni include internationally-ranked judo players, multiple Junior Olympians, professional dancers, classically-trained musicians and a world-renowned physics phenomenon who built and flew her own airplane at age 16.

It's important to note that despite the common misconception that giftedness is synonymous with academic high-achievement, our students demonstrate an especially wide range of academic needs and strengths. In response, Edison provides an advanced, rigorous and personalized curriculum for all its students. Starting in kindergarten, teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessments to form fluid groups to differentiate instruction according to students' strengths, growth areas, and interests. Nearly all classes are taught in 60-minute blocks with a focus on flexible grouping, hands-on learner-driven experiences, exploration, and high-level discussions. A typical 5th grade social studies class might start with a brief lecture reviewing the most famous law of Hammurabi's Code, commonly referred to as an "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," after which students may debate the philosophical merits of the law as it relates to the teachings of Gandhi and then prepare to discuss their positions in a Socratic seminar the following day.

This learner-driven individualized approach is not limited to academics. What separates Edison from other schools with high achievement, is our commitment to developing the whole child. Edison has partnered with students, families and outside experts to design programs that support the social-emotional and developmental needs of its students. These programs include the implementation of morning meetings, weekly middle school advisory sessions, social-emotional goal setting, the principal's student voice council, weekly art therapy activities, book clubs and "lunch bunches" for new students. In these spaces, the school's core values of empathy, integrity, and open-mindedness are emphasized.

A significant component of Edison's whole child approach includes attention to students' physical well-being. Edison students receive 120 minutes of dedicated physical education each week and participate in morning and afternoon recess. P.E. extends beyond traditional curricula to include dance, yoga and mindfulness exercises. One of the school's largest fundraisers is the annual Walk-A-Thon. Staff vs. student basketball and volleyball games are among the school's most beloved traditions. Edison also partners with Albany Park Multicultural Academy, the neighborhood middle school, to participate in district-wide athletic leagues, including soccer, cross-country, basketball, and volleyball.

Culturally, Edison strives to help each student recognize and use their unique voice to impact positive change within their communities. Project Soapbox gives middle school students the opportunity to issue calls to action regarding personally meaningful problems and the Issues to Action program brings civic action to the classroom, helping students advocate for policy change. Even our kindergarteners actively contribute to the school and local communities by creating blankets for patrons of a local food pantry and by volunteering at a local animal shelter.

The key to this work has been establishing and maintaining proactive channels of communication and engaging in community-building activities with students, their families, and the school. Beyond the previously mentioned staff vs. student sporting events and Track-A-Thon event, most of Edison's traditions involve family activities. The annual Winter Social invites the Edison community to participate in a variety of family-friendly games; the yearly 8th grade play enlists parents in set and costume-design, and the annual Bright Night social helps to raise awareness and funds to support Edison's school-wide priorities. These events contribute to a sense of school community connectedness which bridges differences and geographic divisions.

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

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

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and district frameworks are the basis for Edison Regional Gifted Center's high-quality teacher-created units. Given our designation as a regional gifted center, all students work at least one to two years above grade level in all core content classes. This advanced work is supported by units that are differentiated and scaffolded to support students who need additional intervention or enrichment. At Edison, it is important that all students can access appropriately challenging material in authentic ways.

Edison implements a well-rounded English language arts (ELA) curriculum that builds students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. In the primary grades, teachers employ a modified version of Daily 5 with increased emphasis on learners' independence and degree of choice within the program's five components: read to self, work on writing, read to someone, listen to reading, word work. The Daily 5 is supplemented with regular Guided Reading and author studies, as well as whole and small group reading activities that help students connect with texts in authentic ways and further develop the habits of strong readers. The primary writing curriculum includes Lucy Calkins' Units of Study, which builds students' argumentative, informative and narrative writing ability. Students in third through eighth grade explore all major literary forms (novel, drama, short story, poetry and non-fiction) through literature circles and novel study. These units and learning experiences rely on authentic texts, primary sources and canonical works to challenge students' preconceived notions and broaden their world views. In terms of writing, we emphasize use of the formal writing process which includes planning, organizing, writing, editing and revising. In addition to creative writing pieces, students are expected to craft several argumentative literary analyses in their time at Edison.

In grades kindergarten through six, CCSS-aligned enVisionmath2.0 is Edison's core math curriculum. These curricular materials serve as guides and resources for teachers, rather than basal textbooks. Teachers often supplement enVision2.0 lessons, which consist of project-based and visual learning strategies, with additional math activities and resources that further extend student thinking and connect mathematical concepts to the real world. Primary grade teachers make extensive use of math games, math talks, exploratory math centers and guided math sessions to build students' foundational math skills. Our middle school math teacher uses the high school level CME Project math curriculum to teach Advanced Algebra to our 7th grade students and Geometry to our 8th graders. This middle school math curriculum sets Edison apart from other high-performing CPS schools which offer Advanced Algebra to 8th graders but do not offer formal Geometry classes. Since many of our students are ready to explore even more advanced mathematical concepts, Edison also offers our highest-achieving students the opportunity to participate in independent study using the Khan Academy and The Art of Problem Solving curricula.

Edison's science curriculum is aligned to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and uses FOSS (Full Option Science System), SEPUP (Science Education for Public Understanding Program), and teacher-created materials to engage students in hands-on learning experiences. Students begin learning about the scientific method in kindergarten as they practice composting, observe the lifecycle of butterflies and incubate quail eggs. These opportunities for experimentation and exploration continue through middle school, during which students complete intricate science fair projects. Typical middle school science fair projects might include an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of various types of sunblock or developing and testing a prototype of a safety feature which would assist wheelchair-dependent persons in crossing the street.

Our Social Studies curriculum is aligned to district frameworks and includes teacher-created thematic units. Primary grades teachers emphasize the foundational concepts of culture and community while intermediate and middle school teachers further examine those concepts through political and historical lenses. For example, a recent 7th grade social studies lesson included a Socratic seminar discussing which countries should be indicted for crimes against humanity for the treatment of Native Americans during the colonial era. Edison's social studies curriculum is not limited to history, however. Edison students participate in

multiple programs designed to promote civic-mindedness, such as Project Soapbox, a public speaking competition which challenges students to speak out on issues affecting them and their communities and Issues to Action, which helps students identify issues in their communities and learn about local government and political processes through research, analysis and the creation of action plans to advocate for policy change. Through this social studies curriculum, Edison students learn more than facts about history – they learn that through effective communication, organization and action, they can shape history itself.

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

In addition to rigorous core content offerings, all Edison students receive foreign language, fine arts, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics) and physical education (P.E.) instruction. Each of these courses assists us in realizing our goal of educating the whole child and honoring students' individuality through learner-driven experiences.

All Edison students receive 120 minutes of French language instruction each week. Starting in kindergarten, students begin to increase their global awareness and gain a foundational understanding of the French culture. Explicit language instruction begins with the French pronunciation of the alphabet and evolves into fluent engagement in small group discussions with their peers by the time students reach middle school. Through hands-on learning experiences, students explore the history, cuisine, and geography of France. This coursework prepares Edison middle schoolers to participate in a French student exchange program with our sister school in Toulouse, France. Through this partnership, Edison families can host a French student in their home with Edison students later visiting France and staying with the student they previously hosted. These homestays establish long-lasting international friendships and the immersive nature of this program challenges our students to both become more aware of their own circumstances and to develop a sense of global citizenship.

In fine arts class, students explore the world through a diverse collection of artforms including music, drama, engineering, film, graphic design, and various types of visual art. Students in grades kindergarten through five receive 120 minutes of fine arts instruction, while middle school students receive 180 minutes. As kindergartners, Edison students begin to learn the fundamentals of art history and create original pieces using a variety of artistic techniques. By the time they leave Edison, students will have written and staged an original play, researched and built medieval castles with appropriate scale, participated in African drumming, written and shot a short film and created full models of cities using recyclable materials. This robust, cross-curricular fine arts programming plays a critical role in developing students' creativity and well-roundedness.

In addition to providing outlets for creative expression through fine arts, Edison offers 60 minutes of explicit STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics) instruction for all students in grades kindergarten through eight. The STEAM curriculum challenges students to develop skills that lead to true innovation: critical-thinking and problem-solving ability, collaboration, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, curiosity and imagination. In STEAM class, students are encouraged to tinker, break and rebuild and to use coding techniques to create games and websites. As a culminating activity, our students design and present projects for the annual Edison Maker Faire. Typical Maker Faire projects may include building desktop computers from recycled parts, creating original dramatic and musical compositions, and designing prototypes of robots meant to address a variety of everyday issues.

Our physical education curriculum also embodies Edison's whole child approach to education. All students receive 120 minutes of P.E. in addition to 185 minutes of recess each week. In P.E., students are invited to challenge themselves physically through a variety of activities including weightlifting and cardio workouts, stationary exercises, traditional team sports and team-building games. In addition to skill development, each P.E. unit emphasizes the themes of sportsmanship, effective communication and collaboration. Physical education is also integrated into core content classes through the incorporation of regular movement breaks using the GoNoodle program and yoga techniques. P.E. is also supplemented by Edison's elective program offerings.

These weekly, hour-long elective offerings also demonstrate Edison's commitment to well-roundedness.

Each quarter, students in grades 5-8 elect to participate in high-interest areas of study in addition to the standard curriculum. Teachers design elective offerings based on knowledge of students' interests and passions; students also share suggestions and have often created and led their own electives courses. Classes offered span many disciplines including: debate, film and animation, service learning, yoga and mindfulness, public art, dance, various sports and Science Olympiad.

Other programs and offerings at Edison include yearbook, Girl Scouts, chess team, Battle of the Books team, math team, African drumming, rock band, Louder Than a Bomb (competitive poetry performance) and book clubs. These offerings are dependent on student interest and therefore, vary each year.

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

Edison Regional Gifted Center has maintained a 1+ school rating (highest rating possible) since the inception of CPS' School Quality Rating Policy. Edison is regularly ranked among the highest achieving elementary schools in both the Chicago Public Schools district and the state of Illinois on standardized assessments such as NWEA and PARCC. Student attainment on the NWEA has ranked in the 99th percentile for both reading and math for every grade, kindergarten through eight, since CPS began requiring schools to administer the NWEA in the 2012-2013 school year. Moreover, Edison's emphasis on student growth consistently yields impressive results. In the 2016-2017 school year, students in grades 3-8 ranked in the 95th percentile for math growth and in the 84th percentile for reading growth. At Edison, we are keenly aware that our students expect to be challenged and we believe it to be our obligation to ensure that they continually grow.

Data-driven instruction is the key to Edison's ability to maintain this high-level of growth and attainment and to meet the diverse academic, social-emotional and cultural needs of our students. Weekly grade-band meeting time, in addition to individual and collective data analysis meetings are devoted to systematically improving student outcomes.

Edison teachers administer the district-wide NWEA assessment to grades K-8 in reading and math three times each school year. Each time the NWEA is issued, set protocols are used to assess student attainment and growth, to identify next steps for intervention and enrichment, and to drive daily instruction. These results inform teachers' creation of flexible instructional groups, qualify students for advanced independent study opportunities, help teachers and students set individual attainment and growth goals, and assist staff members in addressing curricular gaps.

NWEA assessment results also assist teachers in the identification of students who may benefit from more intensive support provided by Edison's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team. Once students have been identified, classroom teachers implement a variety of research-based interventions and collect relevant student data with progress-monitoring occurring for at least ten weeks. If the student does not show demonstrable growth within that timeframe, the student is referred to the MTSS team for assistance. The MTSS team then reviews standardized assessment scores, as well as observational and intervention data, using set protocols to assess the student's degree of need and determine next steps. These next steps are unique to each student but may include push-in or pull out supplemental instruction, additional support or coaching for the classroom teacher and the implementation of different research-based interventions.

Twice a year, Edison teachers also issue CCSS-aligned, district-created performance tasks that are reflective of the PARCC assessment's format and content. Data generated from these tasks further develop teachers' understanding of their students' strengths and growth areas. The data-informed instruction that stems from these tasks has contributed to Edison's tradition of high performance since the PARCC exam was introduced in 2015. Edison students' performance on the PARCC assessment has consistently ranked among the top elementary schools in the district for ELA and math proficiency.

Over the course of this year, Edison has also expanded its implementation of data-driven instruction to include the use of social-emotional data. At the beginning of this school year, students in grades 2-8 completed a social-emotional needs assessment using the Panorama program. With the data generated by this tool, our teachers and students measured their SEL perceptions and skill levels, analyzed the results and

identified actionable strategies to build upon growth areas. Students participate in weekly teacher-student conferences examining students' growth toward their SEL goals. This practice has also assisted the MTSS team in the identification of students and families in need of greater support from the school counselor and other related service providers.

In addition to the effective use of academic and SEL data, Edison teachers universally implement best practices that have been shown to challenge and engage high-achieving students. These instructional methods include: the implementation of the workshop model in writing instruction, small-group guided reading or math exercises, regular student-teacher conferences, and inquiry and project-based learning opportunities.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The climate and culture at Edison Regional Gifted Center is often described as familial. Due in large part to our small size and the structure of our master schedule, staff members and students are able to form close bonds over the course of several years. These close relationships empower students to feel safe in celebrating their individuality, to take academic risks and to respectfully challenge the status quo. We also attribute this sense of family to integration of social emotional learning (SEL) into everyday life at Edison. The school's core values of empathy, integrity, and open-mindedness are consistently reflected in staff and student interactions and by the physical environment, with student-created murals and beautification efforts signifying that the students are the heart of our school community. This respectful, relationship-based approach is intentional. Using student and teacher feedback, observational data and survey data, Edison's SEL team designed a school-wide SEL plan that thoughtfully supports our students and addresses each of Illinois' SEL goals.

As part of our SEL plan, Edison's primary teachers have implemented the Second Step program with individual lesson plans and components modified to meet the specific needs of our students. This program is supplemented with the elements of the Responsive Classrooms program, specifically the Closing Meeting, which is an interactive read-aloud session using texts that directly connect to SEL lessons. During the first weeks of each school year, primary students also engage in intensive social thinking "Whole Body Listening" lessons and lessons centered on the "bucket filler" concept. These lessons create the foundation for students' long-term respectful relationships with each other and their teachers. Thematic instructional units focusing on elements of SEL such as empathy, grit and peaceful practices reinforce this foundation.

Intermediate and middle grades teachers implement versions of the Responsive Classroom and advisory models that are also tailored to the specific needs of our students. This includes intermediate grades' Morning Meetings, during which students address issues facing their class, discuss core values and engage in community-building activities. Students in these grades also heavily integrate SEL into their regular curriculum through journaling, SEL-inspired projects and read-aloud activities. In response to staff members' requests for dedicated middle school SEL time, the SEL plan includes the implementation of a weekly middle school advisory block. Middle school teachers use this time to connect with students, to engage in team-building activities and to discuss class-wide issues. Typical advisory sessions also include talking circles, Responsive Classroom activities, and mindfulness activities, such as yoga.

At Edison, we believe that mutually respectful, trusting relationships among staff members form the cornerstone of a strong school culture. Edison teachers model these qualities, as well as kindness and dedication, in informal interactions and in professional collaboration. Teachers often wear several hats, serving as coaches, troop leaders, play directors and teacher leaders. They are widely respected by the school community and administration and are often credited with Edison's success, deservedly so.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Edison believes strongly in the importance of partnering with families and the greater school community to create the best educational opportunities and learning conditions for our students. Since students commute to Edison from multiple Chicago neighborhoods, some traditional opportunities for school-parent communication, such as informal conversations at arrival and dismissal, are limited. However, that does not keep us from creating positive relationships with our stakeholders. Strong systems for two-way communication facilitate this partnership and promote opportunities for family and community engagement. Edison employs a multi-pronged approach to communication with several opportunities for digital and face-to-face interaction. Digitally, parents receive communication from the school through teacher and principal newsletters, class websites, CPS' online grade portal, the school website and school-managed social media accounts. Several opportunities for in-person engagement also exist at Edison. These include monthly "Coffee with the Principal" meetings consisting of informal discussion and feedback sessions with school administration, the annual Curriculum Night and Back to School Bash events, and

twice-yearly parent-teacher conferences. Edison families and the greater school community are also invited to participate in a number of family-friendly school events including music and drama performances, the annual Winter Social and Barnes & Noble book fair, the Track-A-Thon and Bright Night social fundraising events, and the end of the year Fun Fair celebration.

Parents are also encouraged to assume collaborative roles within the school community by serving on one of Edison's two main parent leadership bodies, the Local School Council (LSC) and the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). The LSC is composed of six Edison parents, two community members, two teachers, one non-teaching staff member and the principal. Together these stakeholders work to make decisions regarding principal evaluation, school-based budgeting and the school's continuous improvement work plan (CIWP). The PTO, Edison's largest fundraising arm, supports the Edison school community by hosting several of the previously described family events, actively promoting opportunities for parent involvement and assisting with the management of Edison's many parent volunteers.

Edison is also in the unique position of sharing a building with Albany Park's neighborhood middle school and we make it a point to work with students and staff from Albany Park Multicultural Academy whenever possible. Our middle school students compete on campus-wide sports teams, attend joint school dances, and regularly partner together on community activist and school beautification projects. Fostering this partnership has deepened Edison's relationship with the local community, despite the fact that our families reside all over the city.

Other community partners include local health clinics and shelters, organizations that cultivate student voice, North Park University, local theater companies and Beard Partners in Play, a partnership with a CPS specialty school for diverse learners that engages students in play-based curriculum designed to enhance students' social skills.

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

We at Edison believe that growth in teacher practice is the key lever for improved student outcomes and we are deeply committed to developing our capacity to teach students in effective, innovative ways. Edison's plan for external and internal professional development is robust, drawing on external experts and making use of the school's highly-skilled practitioners and teaming structure to drive instructional improvement efforts. Each of these professional development opportunities ties directly to the school's continuous improvement work plan (CIWP) which is created by teachers, parent leaders and administration.

In terms of external professional development, teachers regularly participate in high-quality workshops, seminars and online coursework facilitated by leaders in the field of education. These include professional development opportunities provided by Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development that focus on best practices for the instruction of gifted learners and professional development provided by Stanford University's Center for Professional Development that focused on developing students' mathematical mindsets. These professional development opportunities typically address common challenges associated with the instruction of high-achieving students, including developing growth mindsets and providing learning opportunities that are both rigorous and developmentally appropriate.

Internally, Edison has multiple professional development opportunities that empower teachers and enhance their instructional practices through collaboration. Each non-tenured staff member is paired with a veteran mentor who provides coaching and thought-partnership in weekly mentorship blocks that are built into teacher schedules. This promotes instructional coherence and builds greater organizational capacity. Edison's teaming structure also serves this purpose.

Grade-band teams (K-2nd, 3rd-5th, 6th-8th) meet weekly during dedicated teacher collaboration blocks and engage in cycles of inquiry aligned with the school's CIWP. This requires teams to closely examine a variety of student achievement data sets, engage in a problem identification process, research and identify teacher practice changes to address the problem, create and implement action and data collection plans, implement the teacher practice change and monitor student outcomes. Often, this work extends well beyond the dedicated grade-band block with teacher teams electing to collaborate during their grade-band's

daily common prep period. Current cycles of inquiry are focused on developing aspects of students' social emotional skills; previous cycles of inquiry have focused on different aspects of writing. Each has yielded measurable gains in its focus area, gains we attribute to this methodical approach to developing teacher practice.

The school's instructional learning team, otherwise known as the personalized learning team, is also engaged in a multi-year cycle of inquiry centered on deepening personalized learning practices in order to more effectively differentiate instruction. Their personalized learning work has been showcased in district professional development and well as in professional development led by our partner organization, The Institute for Personalized Learning. This team regularly analyzes school-wide data, co-designs the scope and sequence of the school's year-long professional development plan and facilitates peer-led professional development sessions during the district's Staff Improvement Days. Members of the team also regularly participate in school visits and instructional rounds activities designed to share best practices between schools across the district and surrounding area.

Similarly, the principal prioritizes her own professional development and continual improvement efforts, having recently completed her doctoral capstone as a member of the Urban Education Leadership Program at University of Illinois-Chicago. She is an active participant in multiple professional learning communities (PLCs) that align with the school's strategic plan and growth goals. These include PLCs focused on developing cultural competency, deepening understanding of personalized learning best practices and supporting school leaders in growing balanced literacy programs.

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

Edison's principal is the sole administrator at the school; however, staff, parents and students all assume key leadership roles on high-impact teams. The principal's active participation in each of these teams ensures coherence and alignment to Edison's strategic goals. This distributive model of leadership demonstrates the principal's unwavering commitment to partnering with the school community and her belief in the power of collective stewardship. Opportunities to engage in school policymaking and to contribute to a variety of leadership functions are thus available to all members of the Edison family.

Teacher leaders are empowered to participate in school-wide instructional decisions in a number of ways. Through their cycle of inquiry work, personalized learning team (PLT) members have designed and piloted a personalized learning model that, over the next several years, will be scaled to each grade level, kindergarten through eight. This team also designs and facilitates much of the teacher-led professional development that occurs on district-wide School Improvement Days. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) teams assist in decisions about SEL, as well as students' attendance and behavioral needs. By joining the Edison's CIWP team, all teachers are able contribute to the creation and implementation of the school's continuous improvement work plan.

Leadership roles also extend to the parents and community members who serve on one of Edison's two main parent leadership bodies, the Local School Council (LSC) and the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). The LSC is the school's governing body and is responsible for partnering with the school principal and staff to make high-level decisions about the school's budget, to provide feedback to the principal about her performance, and to assist in the creation of the school's long-term improvement goals. Edison's PTO members raise funds, and also sponsor and provide volunteers for a variety of Edison events and classroom-based activities. Parents who are unable to serve on the school's LSC or PTO boards also have multiple opportunities to exercise leadership, including participating on hiring committees and partnering with administration to design parent and community programming.

At Edison, leadership opportunities are not reserved exclusively for adults. Students participate in weekly student voice council meetings with the principal and have the opportunity to influence changes in school-wide policies, such as the recent elimination of the school's dress code. Students also serve on grade-level councils, which focus on grade and class-specific issues such as classroom procedures or norms. Additionally, student-created initiatives such as clothing drives and clean-up days have positively reinforced the school's standing in the Albany Park community.



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

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The practice that has been most influential in Edison’s sustained success has been the use of data to drive instruction, most recently through the cycles of inquiry conducted by the grade-band and personalized learning teams. These cycles of inquiry, which require teachers to collaboratively identify roadblocks to student growth, identify relevant teacher practice changes and monitor progress toward shared goals, have developed Edison’s organizational capacity immensely. Moreover, these cycles of inquiry impacted nearly every aspect of school life at Edison from creating a more inclusive learning environment for students to the design of truly rigorous instructional tasks.

As an example, the primary team’s initial cycle of inquiry work centered on developing students’ writing abilities. After teachers engaged in a problem identification process and established a desired focus area, they began to research various writing programs. As a team, they decided to adopt Lucy Calkins’ writers workshop model, and reconfigured their literacy blocks to include two one-hour periods per week dedicated solely to writing. The primary teachers then collaboratively analyzed sample cycle of inquiry project management and action plans and created their own. This cycle of inquiry relied heavily on student work analysis and on monitoring students’ progress toward individualized mastery goals. This methodical, collaborative approach to instructional improvement led to dramatic growth in primary students’ writing ability and enhanced teachers’ ability to think critically about ways in which they can improve their own practice.

Cycles of inquiry have also been used to develop students’ metacognitive and social-emotional skills. The personalized learning team (PLT) engaged in a cycle of inquiry focused on the Learner Profile component of The Institute for Personalized Learning’s honeycomb model. Creation of Learner Profiles requires teachers to gain a deep understanding of each student’s academic skills, social-emotional needs, and interests – and then use those understandings to co-create instructional opportunities that are highly individualized. While this cycle of inquiry has certainly led to improved academic outcomes, it has also cultivated student agency, improved students’ self-efficacy and strengthened their relationships with staff members. Moreover, this cycle of inquiry empowered personalized learning team members by creating space for them in which to rethink their scope of work and better align it to their own passions and interests. This increase in empowerment led to a general feeling of excitement about personalized learning and helped PLT members find new meaning in their work. Through their personalized learning cycle of inquiry, the intersection of purpose and work became clearer, which has led teachers to feel energized, motivated, and valued.