

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 Mrs. Rebecca Hansen

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

Official School Name Tremont Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 200 S. James Street PO Box 1208

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

Tremont IL 61568-1208
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Tazewell

Telephone (309) 925-4841

Fax (309) 925-3849

Web site/URL http://www.tremont702.net

E-mail becky.hansen@d702.org

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*Mr. Jeff Hinman

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jeff.hinman@d702.org

District Name Tremont Community Unit School District 702 Tel. (309) 925-3461

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 Dr. Volkan Sumer

(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - 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	2	2	4
K	33	36	69
1	37	39	76
2	37	32	69
3	32	39	71
4	37	28	65
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	178	176	354

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 93 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 6%

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	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	345
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
1 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 12 %
Total number students who qualify: 42

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
47 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>3</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>10</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>21</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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	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.

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.

Tremont Grade School upholds a challenging and safe environment, providing the skills and knowledge necessary for successful, life-long learning.

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

Tremont is a rural, farming community situated in Central Illinois sixteen miles southeast of Peoria. Approximately 5,000 people reside in the town of Tremont, rural subdivisions, and the surrounding rural farming area. While still predominantly a farming community, many families choose Tremont as their home specifically for the school district, commuting to Peoria and Bloomington-Normal.

Tremont Grade School is an elementary building that serves early childhood through fourth grade. The elementary school is separate from Tremont Middle School and Tremont High School, although all are in close proximity. The total enrollment for the district is 974, which has been steadily increasing during the past several years. The District employs 74 certified staff and 26 noncertified instructional staff.

The staff's high personal expectations (both for themselves and for their students) along with extremely dedicated and involved parents is the driving force behind our achievement. Looking back at the history of our school, we have always striven to be on the cutting edge when it comes to preparing our students to meet future challenges. Over the years our school board and administration have worked tirelessly to stay on the forefront of excellence in education. Most recently, we have begun implementing standards based grading in order to better communicate our students' achievements with their parents and to more effectively address our commitment to the Common Core Academic Standards. From our earliest beginnings as scattered one-room schoolhouses to our current cutting-edge STEM training program, Tremont staff, administration, and school board members have always sought to be the best providers of education in the state.

Tremont Grade School embodies a challenging and safe environment, providing the skills and knowledge necessary for successful, life-long learning. Our rigorous curriculum is student-centered, with delivery in English language arts (ELA) and math through small groups to provide instruction that is tailored to individual students. Our science curriculum is inquiry based, allowing students to use their natural curiosity to problem solve and develop practical solutions to both academic and real-world questions. Rich in American and Illinois history, Tremont provides a natural pathway for students to develop an understanding of political science, history, and geography. For students who demonstrate need for further instruction and differentiation, we provide academic and behavioral support through our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) program. In addition to our strong academic program, we provide a physical education program that is based on an action-based learning model for kindergarten students and SPARK for our first through fourth grade students. This action-based learning program increases student engagement, learning, and physical wellness. Finally, Tremont Grade School participates in several community outreach programs, including partnerships with the Tremont Public Library, the Tremont High School FFA program, and the Tremont High School Coop Program. These instructional enhancements provide students with real-world opportunities not otherwise available to them.

Beyond the core content in the classroom, Tremont Grade School recognizes the need to educate the whole child, both as an individual and as a part of a close-knit, caring community of learners. TGS is committed to creating a student-centered environment where students' social-emotional health and self-awareness learning are as important as their academic learning. In order to foster this growth, students have the opportunity to join various social clubs, including Yearbook, Garden Club, and Kids' Club, a program sponsored by a local church. Students also participate in many sports programs offered by the local park district. In addition to these opportunities for personal and social development, we also stress the need to help others both within our immediate community and beyond. Students assist with and fundraise for groups such as St. Jude and Nets for Vets. Throughout the year, students also create cards for community members who may be struggling with health issues or who are just in need of a thoughtful note. In these ways, we strive to help our students develop a sense of personal integrity and responsibility to the world around them. Through our Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program and character lessons, students learn to monitor their actions and feelings in relation to others within the school community. We also use student recognition through our positive office referrals to highlight and celebrate those students who demonstrate compassion, empathy, and kindness to fellow students. All of these programs and activities combine to underscore the value we place on social awareness and positive community involvement at Tremont Grade School.

Tremont Grade School is proud of its students and staff, and is grateful for the relentless parental support that makes all of our achievements possible. Despite the distractions that occur, our focus remains constant. We continually evaluate our programs and the effectiveness they have on the whole child.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Tremont Grade School, we are committed to providing a core curriculum that is rigorous yet attainable. Utilizing the Illinois Learning Standards and our core curriculum as a guide, our teachers use their professional knowledge and judgment to create lessons tailored to the students in their individual classrooms. While the delivery of instruction varies by teacher, creating student-centered instruction is the common goal binding all our teachers together. During our transition to standards based grading, teachers have identified quarterly targets in English language arts and math. Common assessments and individual student progress are key components to our curriculum.

During the 2015-2016 school year, in an effort to align reading foundation skills, developing a cohesive guided reading program was the central theme to the building's professional development focus. Although it is important to know a child's reading level, what is more important is tailoring instruction to students' developmental needs. During our guided reading instruction, students have the opportunity to apply the skills learned in whole group instruction to texts at their individual levels. While the teacher works with small groups of students, the rest of the students are practicing language and/or reading skills that can be completed independently. Reading station work is typically an extension of skills previously taught in either reading or language. During the 2016-2017 school year, the book *Who's Doing the Work* provided our teachers with skills to hold students accountable during guided reading and independent reading stations. We continue to strive to educate our students to be active participants and take responsibility for their own learning.

Through horizontal and vertical alignment, all TGS students are provided with a rigorous math curriculum that is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards. Given the success with our guided reading groups, we extended this teaching philosophy to all math classes during the 2017-2018 school year. Using this method, teachers deliver a mini lesson to the whole classroom and then allow for individualized instruction and independent practice during station time. This style of instruction provides hands-on learning activities and allows our students to be actively engaged with the curriculum, leading to higher levels of learning. These higher levels of learning are evident in our PARCC scores and local STAR data.

During our transition to the Next Generation Science Standards, the teachers at Tremont Grade School altered their teaching styles to reflect the inquiry-based nature of the standards. Students now investigate grade appropriate science concepts, initiating learning through exploration and developing a personal foundation of background knowledge prior to learning content. This approach has increased engagement in class and fostered an increased interest in science related topics.

Our social studies curriculum incorporates local history and landmarks within a broader national and worldwide focus, allowing students to relate historical events to what is happening in their world today. Sites such as the Jones-Menard Mansion, which is believed to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad as well as a place where Abraham Lincoln stayed while practicing law, and the Tremont Historical Museum are just two of the stops students make on walking field trips designed to enhance our history curriculum. In addition, we invite community members, including the mayor of Tremont and local business owners, to speak to the students about their jobs and Tremont's various commercial offerings. All of these activities are crucial to giving our students the unique sense of place and community we value so highly.

Our early childhood program serves students who are identified as at-risk and/or qualify for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Using creative curriculum, students receive instruction in the following content areas: English language arts, math, science, social studies, physical development and health, art, and social/emotional. This curriculum is aligned to the kindergarten common core standards and our early childhood staff collaborates with our kindergarten teachers regularly, ensuring a smooth transition from early childhood to kindergarten.

Early childhood students that demonstrate readiness, both socially and academically, visit a local preschool

two days a week to participate in inclusion activities with other preschoolers of the same age.

Given that most children have an IEP, student progress is closely monitored through ongoing data collection. Recent kindergarten screening data suggests students in our early childhood program demonstrate an increased readiness for kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Cuts in school funding and budget constraints have impacted the non-core curriculum areas. Despite the lack of funding, Tremont Grade School embraces the current educational research that shows the profound importance of arts and physical movement on student motivation, attitudes, attendance, and overall ability to learn. Providing avenues for learning beyond the core content also honors our commitment to educate the whole child, recognizing and fostering their differing strengths and unique abilities in ways impossible to address with the core curriculum alone.

Tremont Grade School is proud to offer an ever-expanding visual and performing arts program. Currently, all students in kindergarten through fourth grades receive fifty minutes of music each week through classes focused on both vocal and instrumental music. Students are always excited to present all they've learned during our annual Christmas and spring music programs. Third and fourth graders also have the opportunity to participate in the Arts in Education festival each spring at the Peoria County Courthouse. In addition to regular music class, these older students also have the opportunity to participate in optional enrichment music classes. These semester-long classes include more in-depth vocal study, as well as drum and ukulele fundamentals designed to provide the foundation for participation in middle school band.

Our visual arts program, which began three years ago, is largely driven by parent volunteers. Each month, parents join our students to teach lessons on specific artists, techniques, and media. Following the lessons, students are given the opportunity to implement what they learned into their own projects during a designated art time. In addition to the artwork being displayed in the hallways, all students display one piece of artwork in our annual Art Fair, held in conjunction with our open house in February.

Physical education is an integral component of the curriculum at Tremont Grade School. Students receive twenty-five minutes of physical education each day. However, in keeping with our commitment to educate the whole child, the lessons focus not only on the importance of movement to students' health but also on the importance of a balanced diet and healthy habits. Kindergarten P.E. is based on research through action based learning, while the first through fourth grade curriculum integrates strategies of the SPARK program. Each of these curriculums focuses on whole-body learning and lifelong wellness. Given the recent research regarding the impact of play and movement on learning, for the 2017-2018 school year, Tremont Grade School has committed to offering all students an extra fifteen-minute recess every day.

Because of its unique multidisciplinary importance, technology is one of the core specialist classes offered at Tremont Grade School. Kindergarten and first grade students receive fifty minutes of instruction each week; while second through fourth grades receive seventy-five minutes. Lessons focus on integrating content from the general education classroom and implementing STEM activities taking place in core classes. However our technology program is not just isolated to the computer lab. In each classroom, students have access to iPads and Chrome books to support their learning. Teachers utilize the technology to further individualize instruction and foster a student's ownership of his or her learning. To this end, students are taught how to use Google Classroom to manage collaboration projects and assignments. In addition, students also learn how to use iPads to create video journalism projects as an extension of their language arts curriculum.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

TGS utilizes a multi-tiered approach to learning (MTSS). The academic tiers have an explicit process that students move through consisting of six to eight week intervals before evaluating and changing the

intervention or moving on to the next tier. The progression begins with tier one for all students and then moves to a unique intervention designated as “targeted tier one.” This intervention provides quick, explicit instruction to students in such areas as alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, reading, comprehension, math concepts, and fact fluency. This is a preventative measure that minimizes the learning performance gap between students who lack experience or readiness to learn and those performing at grade level. This approach helps maintain continued learning for all students, ensuring that no student gets so far behind that s/he cannot achieve grade level standards. Although achievement gaps may reflect ten percentage points or more, when looking at actual students affected at our small school, this translates into less than three students per potential sub-group. For example, the gap for the low-income sub-group measures 13%; however, this translates to approximately two students due to our population. All students, regardless of socio-economic level or ethnic background, who fall below the benchmark in any area, including special education students, have specific deficits that are identified through STAR and Individualized Education Plans, and interventions are administered to assist the student in reaching grade-level standards.

The process then goes on to the standard tier two and tier three interventions that typically occur at K-4 levels in the MTSS model. Tier one instruction includes standards based grading rubrics for the Common Core State Standards for math and English language arts. Instructional practices to meet these standards include K-4 guided reading, guided math, and explicit phonics instruction through the Foundations curriculum. Instruction is not only differentiated through guided instruction, but also through the use of learning centers. An enrichment program that utilizes problem-based learning strategies for students performing above grade level has also been implemented at the third and fourth grade levels in collaboration with the technology teacher and library aide. Classroom teachers also collaborate with each other independently to provide paired/buddy reading and STEM activities throughout the year.

As part of the 2017-18 school improvement plan, in an effort to improve the skills of students performing below academic grade level, the social-emotional learning tiers were identified as an instructional target that needed strengthening. The level two academic tier was becoming saturated with students who did not demonstrate a true academic deficit. Through discussions in our district council, RtI team, and administration, we determined that the reason for this is an increasing number of students who are not ready to learn on the social-emotional level. We are currently utilizing PBIS strategies as a part of a plan to strengthen social-emotional learning in order to support academic achievement for these students.

We use multiple forms of assessment throughout the school to monitor student growth. At all grade levels, teachers strive to use authentic assessments and have been working to develop standards based rubrics. We broadly monitor student progress through the use of STAR, but teachers use more specific assessments (such as Aimsweb, daily journaling, guided reading, running records, sight word assessment, and classroom assessments) to assess targeted skills. This multi-assessment approach allows early identification of skill deficits and allows teachers to close gaps sooner. Student-involved assessment through the use of data binders and student-led conferences is also a new initiative that teachers are taking part in to increase student achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

TGS staff creates a positive school climate based on building positive relationships with students. This is not limited to classroom teachers. Administrators, cafeteria staff, custodians, and bus drivers are included in the engagement and motivation of students in our district. For example, the district superintendent regularly visits elementary classrooms and reads aloud to students, modeling an enthusiasm for reading. Students are greeted by staff every day at the door, often by name, upon arrival, and then again on their way to the morning assembly. These greetings provide a sense of belonging and welcome into the school. Each morning the entire school gathers together in a morning assembly where we start our day as a community. During this time, teachers are able to socialize and get to know their students as well as other students in the building. In addition, we have developed a relationship with the local veterans of Tremont. Every Thursday morning, the veterans greet our students and join us during our morning assembly to say the pledge. This experience has become invaluable to the learning at Tremont Grade School. The amount of respect shown on behalf of the students to the veterans and vice versa is truly inspiring. Teachers at TGS are successful because they make a commitment to ongoing education. Not only do approximately fifty percent of our teachers hold a master's degree, many stay up to date with professional literature and engage in book studies in order to utilize best practices to engage and motivate all students.

Strategies for Positive Behavior Interventions and supports (PBIS) have been implemented in order to improve academic achievement through creating social and emotional growth. Through this system, clear expectations are in place, and are taught and reinforced regularly. This allows us to prevent negative behaviors before they occur. Monthly celebrations are held for all students to acknowledge the positive choices students have made. During these celebrations, we acknowledge these positive choices to motivate students and encourage them to continue to make good choices and maintain our positive environment. Students are also individually recognized during morning assembly through positive office referrals. Students who receive positive office referrals have exhibited positive behavior examples by going above and beyond the expectations in building relationships with their peers or teachers. Often students are recognized for including others that may have been left out at recess or for using kind words when in a difficult situation. Recently a positive office referral was made when a student showed compassion to a student who is unable to go outside for recess. The student offered to stay inside and play a board game. Students are also motivated through the use of special programs including the use of the district's therapy dog, Remy. In addition to therapy, students are able to earn time with Remy by making positive choices based on identified targeted behaviors.

Classrooms also provide a supportive environment through differentiated learning. This is evident as our teachers rely on essential practices such as individualized instruction and guided groups to ensure individual needs are met. Flexible seating, student involved assessment, and alternative assessment are also used to promote this setting. This can be seen in both regular classrooms as well as in special education classes.

The district administration and community creates a culture where staff feels valued and supported by using effective communication and transparency. Collaborative leadership practices are used, and staff is included in decision-making processes such as adopting and developing new curricula and creating annual school improvement plans. The administration also provides internal professional development opportunities as well as support for continuing education. Building and district council committees meet regularly to provide the opportunity for multiple perspectives to be heard and considered in the decision-making process. Although maintaining high standards is a must, TGS teachers are also given their own autonomy to deliver curriculum in a way that is best for their students. By allowing teachers to make decisions about creating the best learning environment for their students, a feeling of trust is created.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Tremont Grade School is what it is today due to our parents, extended families, and the community that supports our efforts each day. We believe that the education of our children is only as successful as the partnerships between home and school.

At the heart of this partnership is the relationship between our teachers and the parents of our students. Teachers utilize various methods of communication in their efforts to keep parents informed of their students' achievements or challenges. In addition to phone conversations, emails, and smartphone apps, it is not unusual to see parents being invited in for meetings during the day or quick conversations at the after school pickup line. For students that demonstrate a need for more intensive intervention, our school Response to Intervention (RtI) team meets individually with the students' parents to discuss how to best meet their needs.

Beyond these essential home-school connections, Tremont Grade School also seeks to maintain a close connection with the community around us. The district superintendent meets monthly with a community organization, Tremont Winning Communities in order to engage with community members. The purpose of these meetings is to allow community members the opportunity to ask questions as well as to provide feedback and input into future planning such as building and staffing needs. At the building level, parents provide input on strengths and areas for improvement through monthly Parent Teacher Organization meetings. Through a collaborative community effort, we are able to ensure our students are receiving the highest level of education we can provide.

The Tremont community has opened its doors and embraced the students of TGS. The Tremont Public Library hosts our students for lessons and book checkout and issues them each a personal library card. TGS, along with the Tremont Library, is hosting an author for students and the general public. Business owners invite our students in their doors to explain how their business benefits the community. In addition, our students visit the Tremont water facility and local fire and emergency stations to learn how these services benefit the community. Finally, given that we are a rural community, local farmers invite students to their farms learn how local farming impacts the community, state, and nation.

To meet the demands of society and to extend our presence beyond the village of Tremont, TGS has an active Facebook page. Many of our students' successes, as well as simple glimpses into the daily life at TGS, are proudly shared on our page.

3. Professional Development:

The Tremont District typically allots four half-day professional development days and one full professional development day in the spring. These days focus on major initiatives of the district as well as topics that are recommended by staff through surveys and most recently Ed Camps. Professional development is of utmost importance to all staff at Tremont Grade School as is evident in the number of staff that participate in book studies each year. We strive to be on the forefront of trends in education, while maintaining our atmosphere of doing what is best for our students.

Most recently, the transition to a standards based reporting system has been the focus of much of our professional development. Led by the school administrator, alignment of the curriculum, development of power standards and common assessments has occurred at every grade level. Through this alignment, we have more consistent academic expectations throughout the building as well as a clearer reporting system for parents.

Beyond standards based grading we also work to ensure that teaching methods and classroom practices are current with research and meet the needs of students. Tremont Grade School holds at least one book study each year. It is important to school administration that the book studies are practical and can easily be implemented in the classroom. For the past two years, the focus of our learning was implementation of reading stations coupled with a book study on Who's Doing the Work, which fosters independence and

promotes the use of shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading strategies. Today, guided reading can be seen at all grade levels throughout the building

Professional growth, however, is not limited to book studies and teacher institute days. Professional learning also occurs as an ongoing daily practice. School administration is present in classrooms every day. This presence facilitates immediate feedback and support, whether it pertains to a particular student's academic or behavior concerns. Due to the school administrator's involvement, teachers are supported and empowered to recognize the individual student's developmental stage and are encouraged to meet the needs of the students where they are, rather than where they should be.

4. School Leadership:

Tremont School District fosters a culture that promotes collaboration between administrators and teachers. Teachers are involved in decisions through a variety of team meetings. At the administrative level, the superintendent and building principals meet regularly to discuss the needs of the district including but not limited to budget and personnel matters. A district level council also exists where all administrators are present along with 3 representatives from each building. Recently the district council has developed a fiscally responsible method of providing professional development, improved our teacher hiring, and induction program, as well as reviewed and adopted curriculum. Finally, the TGS council, comprising of grade-level and specialist representatives, meet monthly with the principal to discuss building level curriculum issues and provide an opportunity for teachers to provide feedback on what is happening with the school.

This shared leadership philosophy of both our district and building empowers teachers to be leaders. Through council meetings and committees, such as curriculum development teams, multiple perspectives are taken into consideration and opinions are valued. Administrators encourage open communication, feedback and discussion.

Our building administrator is respectful of our time, but keeps lines of communication open by sharing information with the staff through weekly news via email. Building meetings are also held monthly to convey more intensive information that cannot be shared via email.

The mutual trust between the principal and staff enables and encourages teachers to take risks and implement innovative ideas into classrooms. Teachers are inspired to be pioneers, and pave the way to providing an environment where all students can achieve. This is evident in several examples during the past few school years. When the need for a more cohesive and consistent instruction across classrooms in the same grade level came to light, the teachers and the principal met and together were able to create a more systematic curriculum for our students. This change led to fewer students being referred for Tier 2 services the following year. Another example occurred this past fall when several teachers piloted student led conferences which included student involved assessment. The feedback from parents and teachers was positive, and this practice will continue in more classrooms throughout the building next year.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Research shows that when schools focus on relationships, student achievement, attendance, and social-emotional health are positively impacted. While there are many strategies being implemented at Tremont Grade School that have contributed to our success, the one practice with the greatest impact is the sense of empowerment students and teachers have because of the relationships built. These relationships between staff, students, and our families, are a critical component of the culture and climate at TGS and a direct contributor to our success.

Because of the trusting relationship between administrators and staff, TGS teachers are empowered to deliver their curricula in a manner that meets the needs of each student. This enables our teachers to take individual needs into account, understanding each student's experiences outside the classroom and their impact in an effort to maximize learning. Teachers are encouraged to take risks to adapt curricula for individual student interests and developmental needs. By considering these interests, learning becomes personal and enthusiastic. As with many aspects of our close-knit, student-centered school, a 'one size fits all' approach is nonexistent.

Empowerment is also extended to students as we encourage students to celebrate their successes and continue to work on their weaknesses. As new concepts and strategies are introduced in the classroom, students are not forced into utilizing a specific method. Students are allowed to choose which approach works for them. Beyond academics, our behavior philosophy provides students with the necessary tools to monitor themselves in relation to self and others. Students also learn to regulate their actions based on situations. Through our strong relationships, weaknesses are viewed as opportunities for growth rather than acknowledged with punishment. Students are expected to identify the skills they need to improve upon and encouraged to take responsibility for their learning whether it be social- emotional or academic.

There is substantial research to support our belief that the feeling of connectedness is key for student achievement. Therefore, as educational initiatives evolve, we will continue to value our commitment to building and sustaining relationships.