

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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	68	53	121
5	79	67	146
6	63	71	134
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	210	191	401

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 95 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 15%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	41
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	61
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	414
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 29%
Total number students who qualify: 118

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
50 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>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>44</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</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: 9
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.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 25:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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.

Winterset Community School District exists to empower all within our system towards continuous learning and personal excellence. The vision promises engaged and successful students inspired and supported by caring and professional staff.

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

Winterset Middle School (WMS) is a fourth-sixth grade school in a rural community 30 miles southwest of Iowa’s capitol, Des Moines. Winterset has a population of 5,000 residents, and the district has grown at a steady rate for the past several years. The total enrollment at Winterset Community School District is 1,719 students, and WMS is home to 401 students.

The vision of Winterset Community School District promises engaged and successful students inspired and supported by caring and professional staff. The WMS teachers, through study of *Starting a Movement* by Kenneth Williams, connected with a mantra, “Every Moment Matters,” to remind each other of this critical work. This mantra applies to teaching and learning, building relationships with students, and in supporting peers and a positive culture. WMS staff made a collective commitment to remind each other that “Every Moment Matters!”

Winterset Middle School opened in the fall of 2010 and is the newest building in the Winterset District. The middle school brought students and staff from 2 separate buildings, and they joined together to build the amazing school community that exists today. The opportunity to create the school everyone wanted to become has been an exciting adventure, and the staff has been willing and dedicated to doing “Whatever It Takes” to support the learning of ALL students.

WMS was identified as a School In Need of Assistance (SINA) shortly after moving into the new 4-5-6 building. The designation as a SINA school was embraced by the team as an opportunity to continue to improve the learning for ALL students. With the designation, WMS received funding to support a SINA action plan. WMS utilized these resources for parent events, trainers in our curricular areas, professional literature, and professional development for all staff members. The SINA designation was the catalyst and has been a driving force behind the success at WMS.

WMS had several major shifts over the past 9 years that supported student success. Academically, the team embedded fluency routines in every classroom every day, utilized active engagement strategies throughout our lessons, and planned instruction through the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. Most recently, all teachers on the team at WMS were trained in Reciprocal Teaching with the expectation that students engage with this reading comprehension strategy at least 3 times each week. All academic moves at WMS are research-based, and teachers commit to the expectations of implementation in every classroom.

Teacher and student efficacy is very evident in the classrooms at WMS and students comment about the different culture at this building. A major shift for special education students started approximately 5 years ago. At that time not all students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were held to the same expectations as grade level peers. This shift placed all students with diverse learning needs in the general education classroom for all subject areas. The majority of students with IEPs are in classrooms co-taught by a general education teacher and a special education teacher for reading and math. ALL truly means ALL with the expectation that every student reaches grade level essential standards.

Socially and emotionally, WMS supports students as a Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) school. Common expectations for behavior are taught and positively reinforced. Social and emotional learning curriculum such as MindUp and Zones of Regulation are utilized with the goal of increasing the skillsets of students. Mindup gives children the knowledge and the tools they need to manage stress and regulate emotions. Teachers focus on the social and emotional needs of students throughout the day by using T.U.M.S., a district wide initiative that stands for Touch, Use name positively, Make eye contact, and Smile. Winterset Community School District recognizes the challenges our students face in the 21st century and focuses on building resilience in students. WCSD supports the mental health of students by providing space for community counselors to meet with students during the school day. Five therapists support students on-site, fostering communication and collaboration between the therapist and school staff.

WMS also supports the physical needs of students through an onsite food pantry, The Paw Pantry, sponsored by the Food Bank of Iowa. School supplies and snacks are available to anyone who needs them.

In addition, the district supports a nonprofit organization, Community Resources in Service to People (C.R.I.S.P.). The C.R.I.S.P. team meets with families to prioritize needs and match them with agencies who provide the needed service. Family team meetings are another support available to families with a goal of creating a plan to provide the supports needed. The needs of students have been met in powerful ways through these meetings. By pursuing the mission and vision of Winterset Community School District and fulfilling the mantra that "Every Moment Matters," WMS is able to maintain a positive culture and ensure all students learn at high levels.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

WMS focuses on aligning instruction vertically across grade levels and between classrooms within grade levels. Teachers identify student-friendly learning targets, utilize the Gradual Release of Responsibility instructional framework, and measure growth with varied formative and summative assessments and screeners. The schedule ensures every student participates daily in whole group and small group instruction with highly qualified reading teachers. Many reading classes are co-taught by general and special education teachers.

Grade-level wide intervention time is built into the schedule so students can receive remedial or strengths-based interventions. The schedule is built for an “all hands on deck” response. Classroom teachers, the Title I teacher, the Talented and Gifted (TAG) teacher, reading tutors, and special education teachers work as a team to respond to students’ needs. The ultimate goal is for all students to engage with authentic texts. Huge gains in achievement were met when an in-house version of Battle of the Books (a voluntary competition centered on reading and enjoying books) was implemented.

WMS engages in a continual study of best practice and makes revisions in response to students’ needs. The instructional coaches facilitate ongoing job-embedded professional learning for individuals and small groups. Content specific learning aligned to building goals is provided multiple times throughout the year by instructional coaches and Area Education Agency (AEA) partners. Agreed upon routines and procedures are infused into every classroom regardless of content area. For example, all teachers embed both fluency routines and Reciprocal Teaching in support of building goals. WMS added Being a Writer, a workshop-based curriculum, when students could not apply skills taught in isolation to writing assignments in other content areas. WMS students have benefited from this work, 5 years ago, approximately 10 percent of 6th grade students in the IEP subgroup were proficient. Last year, 72.7 percent of 6th grade students with IEPs were proficient on the Iowa Assessment in the area of reading.

1b. Mathematics:

Approximately 5 years ago, only 30 percent of 6th grade students in the special education subgroup were proficient in mathematics. It was time to make a dramatic change in the understanding of learning and teaching math. Through the study of the Iowa Core State Standards, with a strong emphasis on the Standards of Mathematical Practices, the focus shifted to the conceptual understanding of mathematics instead of a traditional, procedural focus. Last year, 86.3 percent of 6th grade special education students were proficient on Iowa Assessments in the area of mathematics.

After adopting Everyday Math, the math teachers experienced many facets of professional development. The district hired a K-12 Math Instructional Coach to specifically support teachers in the delivery of instruction, encouraging mathematical discourse, with a focus on students justifying and explaining their thinking. Bringing in outside experts to observe and participate in reflective conversations generated a spotlight on how to make small changes that would create big impacts on the math achievement at WMS.

Learning became deeper by identifying math essential standards, providing a clear target on those high-leverage concepts that close the gaps for all students. Meeting the needs of every learner, every day was met through the study of assessment and a systematic approach. This approach uses the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model by beginning with a short focus lesson introducing the topic of the day. The students are then given an exit slip that informs the teacher what a student already knows or areas in which he or she may need help. This allows the teacher to gain formative knowledge about the students’ understanding of math, allowing for differentiated instruction and providing the students with on-time learning to best meet their individual needs. At WMS, the goal is to give students a solid foundation of mathematical

understanding, paving the way for a successful mathematical experience as they continue on through the system.

1c. Science:

Science instruction at WMS is unique compared to most other schools in the state of Iowa. Students at WMS are taught science in a designated science classroom by a certified science specialist. Students at most other schools do not start receiving this type of specialized science instruction until 6th grade.

The WMS science program utilizes a variety of curricular materials that align to our state science standards, which are adopted from the Next Generation Science Standards. Science and Technology Concepts and Building Blocks of Science, both from Carolina Science Company, and Engineering is Elementary, developed by the Museum of Science, Boston, are the main curriculum materials used for instruction and assessment. Additional formative assessments are routinely given utilizing the Uncovering Student Ideas in Science series of probes compiled by Page Keeley and distributed by the National Science Teachers Association.

Data driven instruction is a major focus at WMS. Based on assessment data, essential standards are revisited and explored with more focus, if needed. Individual students, identified through assessment data as not meeting learning targets, may also be selected to receive additional instruction during periodic intervention opportunities. All science teachers in the district meet regularly as a collaborative team to coordinate instructional practices and to prevent learning gaps from developing as science students progress through our district.

When you walk into a science class at Winterset Middle School it is typical to see students immersed in their learning, actively engaged, and talking about scientific concepts. Whether researching and understanding new science topics or developing and refining an engineering project, learning is routinely a collaborative process. Science projects are most often team-based and project oriented. The philosophy of teaching science at WMS is that, “science isn’t just to be taught, it is to be experienced.”

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Winterset Middle School is implementing Iowa’s Social Studies Standards with fidelity. The social studies team at WMS, completed a comprehensive curriculum review in 2017-18. The team had the opportunity to travel to San Francisco to attend the National Council for Social Studies Conference. The purpose of attending the out of state conference was to learn from experts in the field and utilize updated methodology to implement the revised State Social Studies Standards in an engaging and authentic manner.

The social studies instruction at WMS focuses on both United States and World History in order to prepare students to be civic-minded in the present and for the future. Social studies teachers at WMS utilize the Kids Discover curriculum from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in 4th and 5th grade and National Geographic World Cultures and Geography in 6th grade to aid in their implementation of the Iowa Social Studies Standards. Students of social studies learn to read, write, and investigate the curriculum through the lens of a social scientist. Teachers at WMS have truly embraced an interactive approach to teaching social studies. On a typical day students are engaged with new ideas, have meaningful discussions, and are able to share their learning. Local and state history is embedded in each grade level to ensure students gain a local perspective of significant historical events and interpretations. The social studies program is delivered by utilizing both primary and secondary resources to further enhance literacy instruction through the use of informational text in all units. Each unit contains an essential and compelling question that drives inquiry in social studies classrooms.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The mantra at WMS is “Every Moment Matters” and the work of teachers in non-core curriculum areas (specials classes) is no exception. WMS values the multiple benefits non-core classes provide to students; as such, all students at Winterset Middle School engage in multiple experiences outside of the core curriculum. All students participate in visual arts, music, physical education, guidance, and technology opportunities every day for 80 minutes.

In visual arts, students are involved in creating, producing, responding, and connecting based on the National Arts Standards. There are multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills through independent and group projects. Student artwork is shared throughout the building and is part of an annual art show during our community’s Covered Bridge Festival. The K-12 art team at Winterset Community School District is currently in a curriculum review cycle. Part of the process of the curriculum review is to identify essential standards in each grade level and plan for a renewed art curriculum.

Every student participates in vocal music with the focus on the identified essential standards tied in with the National Standards for Music Education. What is uniquely different is the way the music teacher engages students who may not have an affinity to music. He infuses an appreciation for music by utilizing a multitude of modalities (instruments, vocal, rhythm, genres, etc.) that connects all students to something they are interested in relating to music. Students in 5th and 6th grade may elect to join instrumental music. At WMS, 104 students play a musical instrument. The district’s instrumental music teachers for 5th through 12th grade collaborate throughout the day, with all of the teachers in this department participating in all rehearsals, classes, and lessons at every level. This allows students to develop strong relationships with the instrumental instructors and provides for focused instruction in their particular musical instrument based on each teacher’s expertise. All musical programming at Winterset Middle School centers on individual and group performance with foundational skills and beyond. WMS students have the opportunity to perform both vocal and instrumental skills for an audience.

WMS students participate in physical education with the focus on students learning a healthy lifestyle through teamwork and exercise. The goal of the physical education department is for students to make individual growth and obtain lifelong healthy habits. This is achieved through a focus on overall wellness, health, and happiness. Students set individual goals for fitness testing and measure progress throughout the year. Students frequently use pedometers to track steps and movement. To encourage a daily, healthy lifestyle, students are invited and encouraged to “walk and talk” with friends in the gym after lunch.

Guidance class is attended by all WMS students and a certified school counselor follows the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) standards in the development and implementation of the program. The comprehensive guidance curriculum is focused on Life Skills and Career Development. WMS students have the opportunity to meet with the school counselor in both large and small groups, as well as individually. The guidance counselor, in collaboration with the instructional coach, plan MindUp lessons for 5th grade students. WMS is piloting this mindfulness program during the current school year, with the goal of expanding this learning for all students at WMS. For students who need more than the school counselor can provide, there are multiple partnerships with various community agencies. The counselor coordinates and connects families to these resources.

Technology is infused throughout all classrooms at Winterset Middle School. Students collaborate using technology in a 1:1 environment through the use of products such as SeeSaw and Google Classroom to gauge student learning and inform further instruction. In addition, students are explicitly taught technology in a class in order to gain skills for current technology programs and for the future. Keyboarding, coding, and presentation software further enhance student learning through authentic endeavors.

All specials teachers have been trained in the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. This model is evident in every classroom. The teachers involve students with learning targets for their subject areas and utilize assessments and observations to gain valuable information in regard to how students are progressing

toward the standards. The teachers collaborated over the past year to develop an intervention time for specials classes. The team designed a WIN (Whatever I Need) time, modeled after the WIN intervention time scheduled at WMS to support learning for all students in reading and math. The teachers of non-core curriculum classes strive to provide meaningful learning opportunities for students by promoting high levels of learning around the identified essential standards in their curriculum as well as support for core standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. Ultimately, student learning in non-core curriculum classes supports high levels of learning in core curriculum.

3. Special Populations:

Winterset Middle School (WMS) authentically implements an “all means all” approach to supporting every student, every day no matter what any particular students’ needs are: special education, English Language Learners, advanced learners, or students with 504s. WMS utilizes a Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) approach, which ensures all students receive strong core instruction with supplemental and intensive supports provided as data indicates a need. The focus of this approach is to provide supports for all students, no matter their achievement level, to attain at least their expected growth in learning. Collaborative grade level teams regularly review common formative assessments and other curriculum-based measures to group students according to their needs. This analysis gives teachers the information necessary to inform instruction, extend learning, and/or remediate deficit skills.

In an effort to close the achievement gap for students in special education, the building schedule is based on the needs of the most diverse learners, the special education population. The special education teachers meet with the principal and a team from the district to first outline what each special education student needs, then the master schedule is built around the needs of these students. The first focus for the special education students’ schedules is to ensure they have full-time access to the core. Next, time is built in for students to receive specially designed instruction (SDI), this ensures that the special education students are truly receiving core plus more.

It is the combination of including students in all core instruction and providing targeted SDI that provides students in special education at WMS the ability to make significant gains both in IEP goals and statewide assessments. SDI is provided in the areas of reading, writing, math, and behavior. Additionally, over the past three years special education teachers have seen success with social skills programming such as Social Thinking, Think Social!, and Zones of Regulation. The curriculums teach students to understand expected behaviors, identify how they are feeling, and to employ tools to regulate their emotions.

Along with preferential scheduling for our students in special education and targeted SDI, the special education teachers have a laser-like focus on the data of their students to ensure they are closing the achievement gap. Special education teachers meet as a team once a month to analyze the progress their students are making towards closing the gap on their IEP goals. Teachers collaborate on ways to intensify the instruction for any student not making adequate progress. The data review process and targeted SDI, along with the focus on making sure all students receive core plus more guarantees that students at Winterset Middle School are closing the achievement gap.

Students who do not have IEPs but are struggling to succeed in core reading instruction receive support from the Title I Reading teacher. Support aligns directly to the classroom, providing students with a “double dose” of instruction toward the same learning outcomes. Students are identified for Title I support with multiple data points and progress is reviewed every 4-6 weeks. Certified tutors provide similar support for reading and math.

Students achieving above grade level are served in a variety of ways. A Talented and Gifted (TAG) teacher provides pull-out support for identified students and collaborates with other teachers to design extension opportunities within core classrooms. Students meeting grade level standards participate in extension groups during intervention times; the TAG teacher leads some of these groups.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Winterset Middle School (WMS) takes pride in a positive school climate/culture and focuses on multiple ways to achieve this for all students. WMS is a Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) school. As a PBIS school, “Dawg Pound Laws” (the expected behaviors for students) are taught and reinforced throughout the building with PBIS tickets. WMS plans monthly celebrations of positive behavior with the entire student body. Students use their tickets for the classroom or grade level drawing at each assembly. A big part of the monthly celebration is celebrating the WMS belief statements created and submitted by students: We believe in hard work. We believe in kindness. We believe every moment matters. We believe anyone can do anything.

In addition to PBIS, staff focus on providing T.U.M.S. for all students. T.U.M.S. stands for Touch, Use Name, Make Eye Contact, and Smile. T.U.M.S. represents efforts as a staff to reach every student in positive ways, multiple times throughout each day.

WMS hires each staff member with intention - bringing in team members who value collaboration, focus on achievement, use of data, and those who truly enjoy the work of an educator. The focus is on valuing and supporting teachers. Winterset Community School District is a professional learning community (PLC). Teachers are provided with protected collaborative team time daily (40 minutes) for grade level teams and at least monthly (60 minutes) for content teams. The WMS staff truly cares about one another and the leadership team plans fun activities each month to enjoy and celebrate the team and the success. The responsibilities for a teacher can be extremely overwhelming, however, all opportunities are approached in a practical, reasonable, and doable manner.

From the moment they walk through the doors at WMS, guests report a positive vibe that is difficult to describe. This hasn't happened by accident, it is due to all committing to establishing and maintaining positive relationships with anyone who is part of the WMS school community. There is a buzz and a hum that emulates a truly special atmosphere that has been created by the people within the WMS school community. Relationships and a true belief in each other are the keys to success of WMS students and staff.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

WMS received a Promising Practices award from the Iowa Department of Education for the focus on engagement with families and with the community. The Administrative Leadership Team (ALT) in the Winterset District is currently studying the work of Steve Constantino and reading his book, *Engaging Every Family*. The ALT is working with Drake University to formalize a plan for increasing the engagement of families.

WMS provides families with a connection on the school webpage called “What We Did Today.” During the 2018-19 school year, WMS made a slight change that has great potential for increasing meaningful conversations at home about “What We Did Today.” Instead of listing only the page numbers and the problems that were to be completed each day, the teachers list a brief description of the skill/standard for each lesson. Parents are able to ask specifically about a skill or standard instead of the generic question, “What did you learn at school today?”

Family Night Out (FNO) is an event held at the Winterset Middle School (WMS) for the past 8 years. Families are invited to join the school community for an evening of fellowship, learning, and fun. The local Kiwanis Club provides a free pancake supper. Many different activities are offered for families to enjoy together. The learning sessions at FNO build a better understanding of how families can support their student's learning at WMS.

Parent-Teacher conferences provide opportunities to promote learning for families. WMS recently held an Everyday Math (EDM) Game Night that was student-led during conferences. Families came to play the

games together and learned how to access the games at home. The games all support the standards/learning happening in classrooms.

The community of Winterset is supportive of efforts at WMS. Community Resources in Support of People (C.R.I.S.P.) exists to provide students and their families with basic needs such as clothing, rent assistance, emergency financial support, etc. Volunteers work at the WMS on-site food pantry bi-weekly. Whenever there is a need, a request is sent and the local banks, grocery stores, Farm Bureau, Winterset Parks and Recreation, and service organizations such as the Rotary Club step-up to provide. The county hospital sponsors a Health Fair every three years. The police department participates in a “Cocoa with a Cop” event. Having a community that is supportive of students and the work at WMS models lifelong lessons for students.

3. Professional Development:

All Professional Development (PD) at WMS is backed by research, and the PD selected by the leadership team is required to have high effect sizes in the research outlined in *Visible Learning* by John Hattie. The first year in our new building (2010), the principal invited the Building Leadership Team (BLT) to attend Instructional Decision Making (IDM) training as a team. The Area Education Agency (AEA) leader of this training became a key player in building the capacity of the WMS teachers over the next 9 years. The AEA trainer for IDM began visiting and spending time with staff, as well as digging into student data. Shortly after beginning the IDM training, WMS was identified as a School In Need of Assistance (SINA) which intensified the need to improve practices and provide better instruction and learning for students.

The next several years a focus was placed on the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRR) and active engagement. In the 9 years at WMS, referring back to past learning and building upon the success each year has remained a priority. The goal at WMS has always been to make learning for teachers practical, reasonable, and doable.

After studying the GRR model, John Hattie’s research underscored the need to study, *Making Thinking Visible*. The AEA trainer collaboratively planned for implementation of these strategies into daily classroom routines, and she led the learning for the staff. The K-12 Math and ELA Coaches built routines from *Making Thinking Visible* into content PD as well. During the study of *Making Thinking Visible*, active engagement and GRR was interwoven to continue the implementation of previous learning.

At the district level, a focus has been placed on the Iowa Core Standards, GRR, and becoming an effective professional learning community (PLC). Most recently the district began a study of the book *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning*. This work has been the perfect next step for teachers. As a professional learning community, collaborative teams have now identified the essential standards for their content areas and WMS teachers are busy doing the work of a PLC in their teams.

WMS is extremely fortunate to have the support of the superintendent and the director of teaching and learning. The central office is focused on instructional leadership. Without this leadership, the focus would drift away from WMS's core values.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership at Winterset Middle School (WMS) actively serves the school community with an exceptionally positive and supportive leadership style. Celebrations and having fun are key elements at WMS. In addition there is a keen focus on learning. The principal has been leading the staff since the school was developed in the fall of 2010, carefully melding staff from the junior high and elementary to establish an upper elementary program. From the beginning, the building has been led with purpose and the staff has been held accountable to high expectations from their leadership. The principal is present and involved in all professional development, learning alongside the teachers. The message to the staff is as a team working together, we can accomplish anything. The principal has been recognized as an outstanding administrator from the School Administrators of Iowa.

The framework of leadership at WMS is layered in a systematic way to provide support for the staff at multiple levels. WMS has a Building Leadership Team (BLT) that plans for and supports increased learning for students. The leadership team collaborates with the principal to assure that WMS is focused on best practices to enhance student learning. Each school year the BLT, alongside the principal, creates a professional development plan.

Instructional coaches, an additional layer of leadership, are actively involved with all parts of the work at WMS. These include a building coach, alongside district coaches in reading, math, and special education. The coaches have been trained extensively over the past 4 years, and are an integral part of the success at WMS. The coaches model lessons/strategies, attend collaborative team meetings, lead professional development, implement new learning from professional development, support data reviews and help plan responses, and support new teachers. Coaching cycles have been utilized by staff, and these more intensive coaching sessions are reaping great results. Beyond full-release coaches, WMS empowers teacher leaders in the following roles: mentor, PLC facilitator, and lab classroom teacher. These positions are vital to ensure that leadership is distributed throughout the entire school system.

Most importantly, all WMS teachers are empowered to be leaders of learning in their classrooms and within the building. Some examples include: leading the learning through active engagement, modeling the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, facilitating professional learning communities, and implementing the Iowa Core Standards. Without collective leadership, the level of WMS' success would not have occurred.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that has been the most instrumental in the success of students at Winterset Middle School (WMS) is the focus on building the capacity of collaborative teams in the professional learning community (PLC). In Winterset Community School District (WCSD) the whole system is viewed as a PLC. Within this system, the collaborative teams at WMS are focused on doing “Whatever it Takes” to guarantee that ALL students achieve at high levels.

WCSD supports the PLC model by providing time, support, and funding for professional development for every teacher. Each year a group of teachers and their administrator attend the Solution Tree PLC Institute. To further the learning at WCSD, we have had multiple Solution Tree trainings for the entire staff on site. WMS grade level collaborative teams have time to meet which is built into the daily schedule. Other collaborative teams meet at least monthly, including K-12 teams for science, music, art, PE, counselors, and technology. WMS teams each have an identified team leader who has received additional training in the PLC process.

Collaborative teams have written common formative assessments tied to essential standards. WMS has scheduled intervention time for ALL students in both reading and math. WMS definitely supports a collective commitment to high levels of learning for ALL!

The collaborative teams at WMS focus on “The Five BIG Questions”: What do we want all students to know and be able to do? How will we instruct? How will we know that the students are learning? How will we respond when the students are not learning? How will we respond when students already know what we intend to teach?

WMS has additionally embraced the work of Kenneth Williams and his book, *Starting a Movement*. WMS was introduced to Mr. Williams and his work through Solution Tree training at the PLC Institute. He has led PD in our district for all staff. The WMS Building Leadership Team (BLT) has studied his book and led this learning with all WMS teachers. WMS has a shared consensus that “All students can learn at high levels,” by achieving our identified grade level essential standards. WMS has embraced the mantra, “Every Moment Matters.” WMS strongly believes that collaboration in the PLC process is the one thing that has been the most instrumental to the success at WMS.