



## 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. 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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - Middle/Junior high schools
  - High schools
  - K-12 schools
- 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	27	23	50
K	17	14	31
1	12	12	24
2	8	18	26
3	8	9	17
4	16	9	25
5	7	14	21
6	16	8	24
7	16	3	19
8	16	10	26
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	143	120	263

\*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
  - 6 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 66 % White
  - 19 % 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: 3%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	286
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Chinese, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
5 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %  
51 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>6</u> Autism                  | <u>9</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>10</u> Emotional Disturbance  | <u>13</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: 14

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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 12:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
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.

<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. 2013

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

OLMCA offers top-tier academics in a nurturing Catholic environment. The curriculum and student life at OLMCA emphasize the holistic development and growth of each student.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Currently celebrating its 130th Anniversary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy (OLMCA), in Chicago's Lakeview East neighborhood, serves 263 students from Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish and 20 zip code areas across the city of Chicago.

OLMCA attracts a vibrant cross-section of Chicago families who share its vision. OLMCA's mission is to serve a diverse student body, inspire lifelong learning by empowering teachers to innovate, collaborate, and provide a foundation of Christ-like love to support high expectations of service, self-discipline and academic success.

OLMCA's diversity can be measured along several axes, including ethnic and income-related criteria. Operating on an open admissions policy, OLMCA accepts students regardless of academic ability or financial status. Though Catholic, OLMCA also attracts families of the Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, and Sikh faiths.

OLMCA has a long tradition of celebrating diversity through its annual week-long Cultural Fair, comprising a week of in-school learning activities and culminating in a school-wide multicultural potluck dinner and cultural performance. Each year a different region or nation is highlighted.

OLMCA's commitment to academic diversity is evidenced by The Learning Center, affectionately known as "TLC," a program pioneered twenty years ago to support students with learning differences. TLC is a self-funding program supported by participant fees, federal grants, and tuition assistance. TLC teachers work closely with parents and classroom teachers to identify at-risk students as early as possible, understanding that early intervention and support make all the difference. TLC students comprise 19% of the OLMCA student body and enjoy levels of success in standardized testing and high school admissions comparable to those of their non-TLC peers. OLMCA gives parents of children with special needs the option of a small faith-based school where their needs are met.

Diversity brings a variety of students to OLMCA, but what propels them successfully through eighth grade and into high school? There can be only one answer: gifted teachers empowered to innovate and collaborate around best educational practices, creating a supportive and rewarding work environment that inspires excellence. Teacher collaboration and professional development focus on curriculum issues, classroom strategies and instructional methods designed to engage and excite students.

OLMCA's accomplishments include an exemplary level of success on standardized tests, achieved without disaggregating low performing students, and remarkably high rates of acceptance to Chicago's most selective Catholic and public high schools. Specials instruction at OLMCA includes two classes weekly of Spanish, technology, art, physical education and music.

In 2013, OLMCA was named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education. Following this prestigious recognition, OLMCA undertook a number of remarkable advances. Prior to being named a Blue Ribbon School, OLMCA was often characterized by families as a hidden gem in the city and neighborhood. News of the recognition helped propel OLMCA's name into the local and broader communities, leading to an increase in enrollment and visibility. The energy which followed the Blue Ribbon announcement inspired concrete changes to take place at OLMCA's historic 1888 building. A successful capital campaign was launched, with the first phase reaching completion in the fall of 2015. The construction brought two new classrooms to OLMCA, providing state of the art facilities for our first grade classes. Along with new classrooms, the construction allowed for the transfer of the art room to a much larger, beautiful location in the building. Along with the art room, the construction allowed for the relocation of the middle school science classroom to a space better equipped to handle large class activities and experiments while also providing a home base for the Science Olympiad program. The move of the science room also paved the way for the implementation of weekly Science Lab visits for grades one through eight as a supplemental experience to their regular studies. An unforeseen opportunity altered our students' outdoor experience in the creation of a nature playspace, made possible as a result of the excavation

surrounding the construction. The playspace, built entirely by OLMCA teachers, volunteers, and staff, is a beautiful location for students of all ages to play, explore, or just relax among nature. This addition was welcomed with great enthusiasm, and understandably so when one considers the urban environment in which the students live. Today, middle school students can often be found reading a book in the shade of a tree while a group of youngsters let their imaginations transform the stones and bark into an ever new adventure. Plans are well underway for a second phase of construction at OLMCA which would provide a new gymnasium and community center.

OLMCA is an historic school, but it is also a modern school with a 21st-century mission and a proven record of exemplary performance among a diverse student body, making it worthy, once again, to receive recognition as a Blue Ribbon School.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

#### 1a. Reading/English language arts:

OLMCA utilizes Four Block literacy for grades kindergarten through fifth. The curriculum encompasses guided reading, phonics and word patterns, and self-selected reading. The lessons are teacher created to fit students' needs and abilities and can be cross-curricular to better build retention of concepts. High frequency words and spelling patterns are a focus in the lessons and displayed through word walls in each classroom. Teachers use conferences to guide independent reading and identify individual strengths and areas for improvement. Word roots are taught in grades kindergarten through four by a Rooted Mind program where students can practice and explore the meanings of roots and how they form different words. Students in grades five through eight advance and practice their vocabulary and Greek and Latin roots through Membean. Membean was chosen as it is an individualized, online vocabulary program that helps students to learn, interact, and retain vocabulary through a multimodal program.

Writing is taught through the Lucy Calkins Writer's Workshop program. There are four main genres of writing to be taught, one per quarter: narratives, persuasive, informational, and the last is varied by grade level. Students are then given substantial time to write while teachers conference with individuals or small groups to provide differentiation. Students are always given opportunities to interact and share their writing with their peers. Through this they are taught the writing process. Students' reading is carefully monitored by varied assessments at grade levels with grades kindergarten through three using the Diagnostic Reading Assessment #2 to evaluate individual reading level and to guide instruction. Grades four through five utilize the MAP online assessment to do the same.

A primary reading goal for sixth grade is to build confident readers that develop a lifelong love of literature. This is accomplished through a balance of student choice and teacher assigned readings. In addition, students are assigned leveled readings through Scope Magazine and ThinkCERCA to help reinforce instruction.

In seventh grade reading classes, students focus on strengthening reading strategies and skills through positive reading experiences. Students are exposed to a variety of texts, some student selected and some teacher assigned. Students are also assigned leveled readings through Scope Magazine and ThinkCERCA to help reinforce skills. Students in grades six and seven follow the Lucy Calkins units that offer a creative approach to the narrative, informative, and argumentative writing styles. The units are full of personal connections, mentor texts, conferring, and sharing time.

In eighth grade reading classes, the goal is to support and encourage continual development as readers and critical thinkers while preparing students for high school. Students work closely with a variety of texts and genres and practice supporting their analysis of reading and their opinions through text evidence in the form of paraphrases and direct quotations. New to the middle school curriculum for this year are the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading: A Deep Study of Character.

The primary goal of eighth grade writing class is to prepare students to write in a variety of genres with confidence in their ability to share and express their ideas on paper. The Lucy Calkins units of study (Investigative Journalism, the Literary Essay and Position Papers) are used as the foundation of our lessons and larger writing assignments. Each lesson begins with direct instruction through a mini lesson and includes active engagement activities as well as conferring and small group work. Units focus on Narrative Writing, Informational Writing, and Argumentative Writing.

#### 1b. Mathematics:

OLMCA uses the University of Chicago program EveryDay Mathematics for grades kindergarten through five. This spiral curriculum, aligned with common core standards, covers concepts in a way where students

will be able to gradually build upon their skills toward mastery. This curriculum enables our teachers to provide reinforcement and enrichment through games, critical thinking activities, differentiated instruction, and hands on materials. It also provides students with an online portal that allows them to freely practice games and access their materials anywhere. Both the program and individual teachers incorporate visuals such as charts, number lines, place value grids, and math word walls. There is an emphasis on building number sense so that mathematic concepts are integral to students' learning.

Students in grades six through eight use the Pearson Mathematics programs, with a pre-algebra focus in Connected Mathematics for grades six and seven and Algebra 1 for grade eight. The Pearson mathematics curriculum aligns with common core standards. The math curriculum is designed to develop critical thinking, creative problem solving abilities, and a depth of knowledge in each student. Teachers use a problem-based exploratory approach that encourages students to combine computational skills with real-life problems. Every day, students write about the methods they use to solve problems in their math journals, which deepens their understanding of mathematics vocabulary. The curriculum provides reinforcement and enrichment through games, critical thinking activities, differentiated instruction, and hands-on materials. Students use a wide variety of mathematical tools in the classroom, including rulers, protractors, compasses, manipulatives, measuring tape, probability dice, two and three-dimensional shapes, and calculators. Students use supplementary online resources such as Pearson Realize, MathXL, Desmos, and Mathcounts to deepen and expand their knowledge of the content areas. These programs, as well as formative and summative assessments, keep students and teachers aware of progress and challenges. Additionally, math resource teachers are available for extra assistance.

Although small group explorations and manipulatives are used extensively in the lower grades, a Smartboard is favored in middle school, grades six through eight. The teacher supplements lessons with challenge exercises especially intended for the benefit of more advanced students, and as noted above, both programs feature online exercises and instructional videos that the students are encouraged to use at home.

### **1c. Science:**

OLMCA utilizes the TCI science curriculum for grades kindergarten through five. This curriculum was chosen by the instructors for its interactive qualities and alignment with the Next Gen Science Standards. Each lesson has a preview, investigation, reading component, and processing activity. The preview exposes students to what they will learn and begins to engage their thought process. The investigation guides students through discovery or model of a science concept. The reading component combines grade level appropriate text, comprehension, and writing aspects varied by grade level. The processing allows students to show what they have learned from the other aspects in the lesson.

Each week, students in grades one through five are given an opportunity to visit our science lab to experience activities related to what they are learning in class or supplemental activities guided by seasons, interests, or current events.

The middle school science curriculum at OLMCA is NGSS and CCSS aligned, within the framework of the Holt Short Course Online Curriculum which specifically targets the earth, life, and physical sciences. This content knowledge provides a foundation for in-class labs and projects which extends students' scientific inquiry and engineering skills. Students maintain a science journal to convey their thoughts and actualize writing across the curriculum. In their journals, students generate claims, provide explanations and supporting evidence, conduct research and offer written interpretations of phenomena and/or scientific laws. Students also use their journals to record lab data, compare and share information and reinforce learning strategies by teaching one another as a study tool. Online teaching tools such as Google Classroom, Quizlet, and ThinkCerca are employed to enhance student learning, as well as video resources such as BrainPop, CCC Streaming Video, Schlessinger Media, CrashCourse, Khan Academy, and YouTube. Students also explore current science events through the monthly Science Scope Magazine subscription. Middle Schoolers attend a three-day field trip at the Lorado Taft Field Campus of Northern Illinois University to learn about the geology, water quality, and wildlife of the temperate forest ecosystem along the Rock River. Students also visit the Shedd Aquarium taking part in a Great Lakes Fish Study and squid dissection. As part of the regular curriculum, students have the option of participating in virtual or real dissections of a frog and

an eyeball.

In addition to foundational content learning, each grade constructs a different semester-long, hands-on, engineering project. Within these projects, using recycled materials, teams of students collaborate to design, build, and test a device that must meet explicit criteria for a specific purpose. During the process, many redesigns, adjustments, and material replacements take place and the entire process is thoroughly explained in an extensive final report. These long term projects lay the groundwork for future success in careers related to science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM).

Over thirty middle school students comprise varsity and junior varsity teams that participate in the Illinois Science Olympiad competition at both the Regional and State levels. This competition includes twenty-three specific science topics that encompass five general areas of science: Inquiry and Nature of Science, Technology and Engineering, Physical Science and Chemistry, Earth and Space Science and Life, Personal and Social Science. Besides achieving success in almost every event, very often these team members continue their experience with Science Olympiad in high school and later in life with a science-based career.

Both formative and summative assessments provide students with many opportunities to demonstrate learning and excel by their own efforts. Rubrics are utilized for the science journal and long term projects. Daily shared journal entries and class discussions provide oral assessments along with lab reports. Quizzes and tests furnish written assessments.

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

OLMCA implements the TCI social studies curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight. This is an inquiry-based and project-based curriculum that engages students in history and the world around them. TCI allows for students to play a role in their studies, by working in groups for Act-It-Outs, stations, and games. Instead of tests, the students complete a Processing at the end of each chapter to process the information gained. Examples include anything from choosing the most significant cultural influence to writing a story about hunting in the American frontier.

The elementary grades begin by learning about their community and its place in the world. By fourth grade, students begin learning the different regions of the country, and by fifth, they are studying America's past. Once the students reach middle school, grades six through eight, they are studying the genesis of civilizations through the medieval world. By eighth grade, students are ready to tackle the history of America through contemporary times. Eighth grade students also learn about and take the Federal and Illinois Constitution tests. Students in middle school regularly study current events through NEWSELA, an educational online news source.

#### **1e. For secondary schools:**

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

OLMCA's preschool program supports a child-centered, constructivist approach to learning. Students are encouraged to learn through play-based, hands-on exploration facilitated by teachers. There is a strong focus on creating a foundation for lifelong learning: social-emotional skills, independence, curiosity, and creativity. The curriculum is developed through teacher observations, utilizing Illinois Early Learning Standards as a framework to encompass all developmental domains and subject areas. Each student receives an individualized portfolio detailing his or her learning journey throughout the year, which serves as an assessment tool for teachers and a bridge between home and school environments. Students who attend preschool at OLMCA have a higher success rate when transitioning into kindergarten as they are familiar with the school, staff, and peers. Preschool builds the necessary foundation of school routine, expectations, and interpersonal skills that help to create a community of learners. Preschool teachers collaborate with kindergarten teachers to incorporate lessons and centers that reflect the skills needed for kindergarten readiness.

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

Visual and Performing Arts: OLMCA prioritizes the study and practice of the visual and performing arts to improve all students' creative and cognitive skills, provide inspiration, and enliven the spiritual and educational experience. Students in grades kindergarten through eight attend two sessions weekly of visual arts and music theory/vocal instruction. Preschool students attend music classes twice per week while visual arts instruction occurs in the classroom. After-school arts programs include ballroom dancing, ballet, instrumental music lessons (guitar, piano, violin), and drama classes. Additionally, more than sixty students participate in parish choirs directed by a nationally known conductor.

Physical Education: Every student in grades kindergarten through eight participate in two gym periods weekly and have access to an array of after-school sports and fitness programs including volleyball, basketball, flag football, cross country, baseball, dancing, and fitness classes.

Health/Nutrition: OLMCA employs a school nurse to assist and educate students and families on health-related matters. The Archdiocesan health curricula are incorporated in the delivery of health and nutrition-related concepts, goals, and skills across all grade levels.

Technology: OLMCA maintains a fully equipped technology lab. Students in grades kindergarten through eight spend one session per week in technology class learning and applying skills such as internet research, word processing, spreadsheet data analysis, use of presentation software, and programming using the MIT-developed Scratch program. They spend a second technology session in Lab, often experimenting with the use of science-related technology including microscopes, probes, and scales to supplement their classroom science curriculum. LCD projectors and wifi are used to stream video from an onsite media server and to access web-based content. Each classroom in grades one through eight regularly utilize Smartboards in daily instruction. OLMCA has also adopted 1:1 Google Chromebooks for grades five through eight. The availability of laptops and iPads for use in the classroom aid the teachers' lessons and ability to engage through technology.

Foreign Language: OLMCA is in compliance with the program's foreign language requirements. All students, including those in grades seven and eight, participate in a 30-minute, twice weekly Spanish immersion class.

Religion: OLMCA educates students in the Catholic tradition, providing a spiritual foundation encompassing daily prayer and weekly worship at Mass, sacramental preparation, and extensive service opportunities.

## **3. Special Populations:**

OLMCA prides itself on being a community large enough to offer an abundance of academic and enrichment options, but small enough so that each child receives individual support. We have a diverse population of learners, including students who are gifted, students who have mild to moderate learning disabilities, students whose first language is not English, students with autism, students with coordination disorders, students with anxiety, and students who are right in the middle of the Bell Curve. We are able to support the individual needs of all our students with our inclusive education program.

Working to meet the needs of diverse learners has a long history at OLMCA. Twenty years ago, OLMCA became the first Catholic school in Chicago and one of the first private schools in Illinois to add a department to meet the needs of diverse learners. The program was entitled The Learning Center, or TLC for short. We like to say: "Everyone needs a little TLC once in awhile."

For many years, students in the program would get pulled from class and taught separately in another room. As the years have progressed, and we have learned better ways to teach diverse learners, there is much less pulling students out of classes than there was in the past. Today we have a combination of services that include pushing into the general education class to provide support and/or co-teach, pulling students from a special for direct instruction, and/or providing accommodations/modifications for students within the general education classroom.

In the early grades, we do pull students for direct instruction in reading using the Wilson Reading System (WRS) or Foundations (WRS for grades K-2) which complements the general education reading program. WRS is a Tier 3 intervention program for students with deficits in decoding and encoding. It is a linear, structured program based on the phonological-coding research and the Orton-Gillingham principles. This program systematically teaches the structure of the English language and we have seen impressive results. Therefore, we find that if we pull the students who are struggling with reading early on to take part in this research-based intervention, they are able to return to the general education classroom where they are provided academically rigorous opportunities.

In addition to improving how we teach students with special needs, we have also improved our support system by growing the number of service providers by more than 230% in the past seven years. Today we have ABA therapists, a speech therapist, a hearing itinerant, and an additional learning specialist provided through proportionate share. In addition, we tap into Title II and Title IV funds to improve how students with special needs are included in the preschool classrooms, as well as working with students who demonstrate social emotional support. We also welcome private service providers who are funded by families, including a private occupational therapist, two speech therapists, and a learning specialist.

Because we have a panoply of supports at OLMCA, when teachers notice that a student is struggling, we are able to quickly respond to needs. Furthermore, because our overall philosophy is to include students, all of our students are exposed to high academic standards within the classroom, and enriching challenges outside the classroom, such as Science Olympiad, Math Club, Journal Writing, Choir, and more.

Today, although 19% of our school's population is identified as having special needs, every single grade tested on the ACT Aspire summative assessment met or exceeded expectations for the past three years in both reading and math. We attribute some of this success to our TLC program.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

OLMCA believes the school environment plays a significant role in a child's development. While our academics are certainly strong, there is much more that contributes to a student's success. Programs such as reading buddies in which the older and younger students are paired together for a monthly story time provide the older students with an opportunity to demonstrate responsibility while the younger students find good role models. Knowing that younger students are welcomed and cared for by the older students says a great deal.

This community experience is truly a hallmark of an OLMCA education. Special events throughout the school year solidify our vibrant community such as our annual Cultural Fair celebration, Halloween parade, Christmas festivities, Mardi Gras, and pep rallies, to name a few.

Our recent graduates often tell us that the first word that comes to mind when thinking of OLMCA is family. This sense of being among family strongly encourages aspects of a student's social and emotional development. Achieving this environment is very much a team effort. The teachers and staff approach teaching as a matter of the heart, and the students can tell. It is OLMCA's mission to ensure each student experiences that sense of loving community which results in responsible, confident, and compassionate students.

This experience of being among family filters not only through the lives of the students but also to the teachers and staff. A strong pattern of communication between teachers and families build unique, positive relationships which last long past a student's time in a particular teacher's class. Teachers at OLMCA are admired by both students and parents alike for their commitment to each child's success and the overall good of the school. In recent years, teachers seized the opportunity to create a new outdoor playspace geared toward the preschool and kindergarten students. The project involved carting in logs from the suburbs, planting trees, and arranging a delivery of authentic tipi poles from Canada. While this project was certainly not taken on as an expectation, the love and time willingly poured into it by the teachers gave physical evidence to their absolute dedication to the students and their experience at school. The teachers' efforts both in the classroom and beyond through special projects and efforts as previously mentioned, inspire a culture of thankfulness for the teachers from students, families, and fellow staff. Teachers turn to one another and administration for advice, conversation, and fellowship on a daily basis. The environment at OLMCA for a staff member is one of striving toward professional excellence, but also one with a sense of belonging and value.

OLMCA students, staff, and families are active members in the local community. Middle school students participate in multiple service days each year in which students travels to various sites around the city and participate in service projects ranging from time spent socializing with senior citizens to restoring local prairie lands. Middle school students are also required to complete a number of service hours on a quarterly basis. A spirit of service to one's neighbor and the local community is infused into the culture and student experience at OLMCA.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

At OLMCA, student success and school improvement is a shared responsibility between school, family, and community, characterized by community-building events, open communication, and jointly developed goals.

OLMCA encourages relationships among students and families in support of academic achievement through its Reading Buddies program, whereby older students read to, befriend and often inspire younger students throughout an entire school year. Inter-family bonds are also forged, for example, when the middle school students accompany their Reading Buddy to the Book Buddy Ball, an all school dance, or when the third grade families host a reception for the second grade students following their First Communion. These

cross-grade events nurture a school-wide sense of community that is extended to the parish at the Family Mass and reception sponsored each month by a different grade. OLMCA reaches out to the entire neighborhood via the Wildcat Den, a weekly playgroup gathering of infants, toddlers and their parents, serving as both a social opportunity and a marketing tool to introduce prospective families to the school. OLMCA is a participating member of the local Chamber of Commerce and actively collaborates with local Government officials and organizations, including the Chicago Cubs. Most recently, staff have teamed up to provide visual displays on the exterior of the building celebrating Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and Independence Day. The decorations have been met with such enjoyment by the local community that we were asked to decorate the local community park.

Successful communication strategies to engage families include a policy of accessibility to faculty and teachers. The principal and assistant principal are present daily on the sidewalk at drop-off and pick-up. Teachers are responsive to telephone and email inquiries from parents and maintain homework web pages and class blogs. Parents attend Curriculum Night, a comprehensive annual presentation of academic programs, and are kept updated on school matters via the HomeLink bi-weekly email newsletter.

The reward for this emphasis on family and community engagement is the tremendous participation of parents in a broad array of volunteer activities supporting OLMCA's programs. Parents help formulate school policies and goals and advise on all issues relating to school management via their participation on the School Board. Parents also contribute to the HomeLink newsletter, run the Wildcat Den, organize fundraisers, community service days, give tours during monthly open house events, coach athletic teams, lead scouting groups, and donate marketing, communications and development expertise, all of which enable the school administration and teachers to focus time and treasure on programs and academics.

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

Ongoing and high-quality professional development (PD) is a priority at OLMCA and has had a significant positive impact on student achievement. The school implements a PD model known as the Professional Partnership Model, pursuant to which OLMCA regularly partners with professional consultants. Over time, OLMCA has established sustainable professional relationships with a limited number of national and local consultants in key curriculum areas including math, reading, early childhood, and social emotional learning.

For language arts, the teachers in grades preschool through eight participate in PDs focused on Four Blocks Literacy and the Lucy Calkins Units of Study writing program. Kindergarten, first grade, and special education teachers participated in PDs focused on Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, including Foundations, the Wilson Reading System and SQ Writing.

For math, teachers in grades kindergarten through five participate in Everyday Math PDs while the middle school math teacher participates in Connected Math PDs.

For early childhood, preschool teachers and paraprofessionals as well as the school nurse and special education teachers participate in PDs geared toward creating inclusive preschool classrooms, implementing universal screeners and interventions for students demonstrating special needs. Moreover, a consultant with a doctorate degree in early childhood education worked collaboratively with the faculty to create our current pre-kindergarten program.

To address social-emotional skills, teachers have participated in Love & Logic training as well as Dr. McEvoy's "Helping Kids Get Along" program.

In addition to providing school-based PDs, OLMCA budgets \$1,800 annually for each teacher's individual PD needs and taps into federal funds to implement professional development opportunities for the staff.

Regardless of how or when teachers participate in PDs, all programs are geared toward promoting student success as lifelong learners and well-rounded citizens.

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

OLMCA embraces a philosophy of distributed leadership within the leadership framework established by the Archdiocese of Chicago for parish schools. Leadership authority is vested in the pastor and delegated to the principal, who empowers teachers and parents to develop and contribute their skills to promote student achievement.

Leadership authority is distributed to individuals and teams who are continuously investigating ways to improve all aspects of the school for the betterment of its students. The principal, in his 14th year at OLMCA, focuses on curricular improvement, communications, teacher recruitment and retention, enrollment, board development, technology investment, and development of a vibrant pre-kindergarten program.

The assistant principal develops the technology program, which has grown to include a 1:1 student:Chromebook ratio for grades five through eight with plans for expansion. In addition, the Assistant Principal coordinates the athletic programs which provides opportunities for all students in grades three through eight to participate, including flag football, volleyball, soccer, baseball, cross country, and basketball.

The AdvancED School Improvement Team is composed of the principal, assistant principal, and three teachers. They are responsible for working with faculty teams to gather and examine data to assess progress on the School Improvement Plan (SIP), as well as to seek and propose adjustments to the curriculum as necessary to ensure that OLMCA's curriculum choices are both consistent with best educational practices and tailored to fit students' needs.

The Curriculum Team comprises the principal and teachers from each grade cluster. The team works to analyze and discuss proposed curriculum enhancements that are encountered in the course of professional development or sought based on needs disclosed by testing and other assessments.

A School-Based Early Intervention team consisting of general education teachers, paraprofessionals, the school nurse, a special education teacher, and an outside early childhood consultant work together to create an inclusive environment that promotes the success of all students. In addition, the team analyzes data including information gathered from universal screeners to identify students who would benefit from special education services.

## PART VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The one practice at OLMCA that most influences our success is our purposeful monitoring of student progress throughout all our grades. From preschool through eighth grade, the teachers and staff are constantly making sure that students are responding to curriculum and demonstrating progress. Professional development provided by an early intervention specialist has focused on how to better identify students in the early grades who may be struggling and classroom interventions that contribute to the success of all students. In grades kindergarten through four, teachers monitor reading progress with the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and math progress Everyday Math unit tests. In grades five through eight, teachers use the MAP several times a year to monitor progress and adjust curriculum as needed. And in grades three through eight, students participate in ACT Aspire interim assessments to monitor progress.

Whenever a student or group of students demonstrate difficulty in understanding the curriculum, we are able to quickly mediate with research-based strategies that have progress monitoring built into the interventions, including but not limited to the Wilson Reading Program, Touch Math, Visualizing/Verbalizing, among others. For students who receive such Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, we use both the ACT Aspire interim and MAP scores to monitor progress in addition to the progress monitoring assessments built into each intervention.

Not only do teachers monitor their own students' progress, the entire school comes together to review how students are progressing in the ACT Aspire summative assessments. At OLMCA, we like to say that preschool provides the building blocks to learning. As such, we include all grades, including preschool, when we meet to review and analyze our scores.

Our constant monitoring of all our students' progress is the most important practice contributing to our success as a school. As noted on previous parts of the application, every single grade that is tested on the ACT Aspire summative assessment for the last three years has met or exceeded standards in reading and math. But, we are not a school that rests on its laurels. Rather, we have deeply dived into the data as a school to identify our "weakest" strands to come together to determine a problem of practice that we can improve. Even though our "weakest" strands still meet or exceed the benchmark, we are committed to lifting our students up in every area. Therefore, even though we believe we will one day exceed standards in all areas, we will continue to monitor progress to ensure that all students are learning and being given opportunities to excel.

## PART VII – NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

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1. Non-public school association(s): Catholic

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status?      Yes X      No

3. What is the educational cost per student?      \$9923  
(School budget divided by enrollment)

4. What is the average financial aid per student?      \$3493

5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?      4%

6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?      11%

**PART VIII – ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR NORM-REFERENCED TESTS**

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**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire  
LLC

**Grade:** 3  
**Scores are reported here**  
**as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	417
Number of students tested	23
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 4  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	420
Number of students tested	22
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 5  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	423
Number of students tested	24
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 6  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	426
Number of students tested	20
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 7  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	430
Number of students tested	26
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Math  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 8  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	432
Number of students tested	29
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 3  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	418
Number of students tested	23
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 4  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	423
Number of students tested	22
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 5  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	423
Number of students tested	24
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 6  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	424
Number of students tested	20
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 7  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	428
Number of students tested	26
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**

**REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS**

**Subject:** Reading/ELA  
**Edition/Publication Year:** 2018

**Test:** ACT Aspire  
**Publisher:** ACT Aspire LLC

**Grade:** 8  
**Scores are reported here as:** Scaled scores

School Year	2017-2018
Testing month	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>	
Average Score	430
Number of students tested	29
Percent of total students tested	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>	
<b>1. Other 1</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>2. Other 2</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	
<b>3. Other 3</b>	
Average Score	
Number of students tested	

**NOTES:**