

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Brandi S. Maxedon

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

Official School Name Tri-Valley Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 112 South Highway Avenue

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

Downs IL 61736-9331
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County McLean

Telephone (309) 378-3414

Fax (309) 378-3214

Web site/URL http://www.tri-valley3.org/

E-mail bmaxedon@tri-valley3.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. David Mouser

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail dmouser@tri-valley3.org

District Name Tri-Valley Community Unit School District #3 Tel. (309) 378-2351

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Carl Neubauer

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 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	44	44	88
5	35	39	74
6	31	35	66
7	43	43	86
8	40	37	77
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	193	198	391

*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
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 94 % White
 - 3 % 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: 1%

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	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	366
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10%
Total number students who qualify: 40

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
62 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>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>27</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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

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

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

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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. 2012

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

Tri-Valley Middle School's mission is to educate our students to be successful citizens in the present and future. This is met through strong core curriculum, instruction, social/emotional growth, and assessment goals.

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

Tri-Valley Middle School (TVMS) is a unique building that serves grades four through eight. The Tri-Valley School District is made up of one elementary, one middle, and one high school building that are located on the same campus. Total district enrollment consists of 1145 students. The District has 83 certified staff members, 63 non-certified staff members, and 6 administrative positions.

Over the last several years, the Tri-Valley School District has seen many changes. Previously, Tri-Valley was primarily a rural area with an agriculture focus. With the development of subdivisions between Downs and Bloomington-Normal, the demographics of the district have grown and changed. Tri-Valley has become an area populated by a stable number of middle to upper-income working families with only ten percent qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches and a one percent mobility rate. New families to Tri-Valley often cite the exemplary schools as the main reasons for relocation. This attitude is reflected in the number of parents who take an active role in their child's education.

Academics continue to be a priority at Tri-Valley Middle School as is evident by our continued annual standardized test scores ranking among the highest in the area. Academically, TVMS was recognized as a 2007 Horizon Schools to Watch. The school was also included in the Illinois Honor Roll for Academic Excellence for the 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 school years. TVMS was honored as a 2012 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence.

In addition to academic successes the school supports adolescent social-emotional development through positive and relevant discussions about everyday life choices. The school counselor provides lessons for individual students, in small groups, and within the classroom setting. She was also instrumental in securing, receiving training, and caring for the school therapy dog, Myrtle. TVMS is committed to developing responsible citizens through a socially and emotionally diverse curriculum which stresses transitional growth through teamwork. Through the utilization of the middle school concept, teams are focused on core subjects, organized to ensure success for all students, staffed by highly qualified teachers, and partnered with the community in educating young adolescents. The middle school concept includes teams that are focused on providing a common plan time for implementing cross curricular units, discussing student needs, planning curriculum, and meeting with parents. Families partner with the school staff to promote mutual respect, trust, and communication.

Student development does not solely consist of academic growth and achievement. Track and field, cross-country, baseball, softball, band, choir, basketball, wrestling, volleyball, and cheerleading are some of the extra curricular options at TVMS. Other activities for student participation include student council, scholastic bowl, school musicals, art club, math counts, FCA, and service projects. Student success in these areas is a proud tradition at TVMS. We have celebrated regional, sectional, and state champions in several of our extracurricular activities and strongly believe in recognizing our students for their successes while promoting a balance with their academics. Philosophically, we stress the necessity to help others. Sixth grade students make blankets for Project Linus. All grade level students and staff participate in fundraising for groups such as American Heart Association, St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Cystic Fibrosis, Special Olympics, as well as local community organizations.

TVMS is ever-evolving with technology. The students are provided weekly times on individualized instructional programs such as IXL and Moby Max to allow them to work at their level and develop their skills. The data from these programs is reviewed by educators for re-teaching purposes and lesson planning. This data is also factored with other assessments for student progress monitoring. For curriculum enrichment, chromebook labs are available for fourth through sixth grade, as well as one-to-one technology for our seventh and eighth grade students. The engagement and programming with these devices has allowed students to learn on a current and exciting platform. It is common to walk-through a TVMS classroom and see students engaged with Smartboard activities, chromebooks, cooperative learning, as well as traditional learning groups. TVMS and its community are proud of, and enjoy recognizing, the accomplishments of our students and staff. In today's educational world, there are many distractions, but the focus of TVMS remains on high levels of achievement in all areas. It is our responsibility to equip students

with the knowledge and skills to be productive citizens beyond our four walls. Therefore, our district believes in supporting and providing professional development for our staff. We continue to evaluate our influence on the whole child and critically analyze our own roles so that we can grow and meet the needs of an ever-changing world of education.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The English Language Arts (ELA)/Writing curriculum at TVMS is a vital part of our success. Our school follows the Common Core standards for ELA and Writing. The Language portion focuses on grammar, sentence structure, sentence variety, and organization. Students work on parts of speech and subject/verb agreement as a base for writing. Within the curriculum, the students learn a variety of writing styles: narrative, persuasive, expository, research, and creative. Other units include script writing, debate, poetry, and movie-making using the iMovie technology. The curriculum challenges students to be original, innovative, and resourceful. The students give speeches and participate in debates that challenge them to present information in a variety of ways. Writing is used as a cross-curricular tool, which allows teachers to collaborate with the math, science, reading, and social studies teams. For example, the sixth-grade teachers collaborate on a cross curricular unit where the ELA teacher reads *The Egypt Game* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder in class with students. In Social Studies, they learn about ancient Egypt culture while creating their names in hieroglyphics and a two-dimensional self-portrait art project. Students write and create a powerpoint presentation on various topics about ancient Egypt. They are exposed to whole and small group learning for reading and unit projects.

The Reading curriculum consists of a variety of skill building activities and making connections to the real world. Taking past standardized testing scores and in-house monitoring systems data (RTI, STAR, IXL, MOBY MAX, etc.), programs are designed to teach specific reading skills in comprehension, vocabulary, cause and effect, making predictions and inferences, compare and contrast, main idea and supporting details, and context clues. A variety of assessments are also used to identify struggling students and provide intervention. The staff utilizes short answer, essay response, cooperative learning projects, quick comprehension quizzes, exit surveys, and formal unit or skill assessments. These skills are then put into practical use by reading novels throughout the year, moving students into higher levels of processing. Overall, TVMS takes an exciting, engaging, and inventive approach to ELA/Writing.

1b. Mathematics:

At TVMS, our math curriculum was developed to meet Illinois State Standards based on Common Core Standards. Teachers utilize a variety of instructional strategies, such as scaffolded learning, project-based learning, peer work, technology, math workshop, cooperative learning, manipulatives, and cross curriculum endeavors to reach each child. Differentiated instruction is incorporated throughout lessons and assessments. Using in-house monitoring systems, teachers develop group and individual lessons. Struggling students receive extra opportunities with individual or small group instruction during study hall, Viking Power, or RTI. Students who excel during pre-assessments activities are given challenge projects or problems to explore higher level concepts. Educators use data from different assessments (ex: STAR, IXL) to make these decisions.

Technology is embraced by both staff and students by using videos, Smart boards, and computers. Devices are used for drill and practice, digital learning days, reteaching, and advanced or individualized work. Video devices are used for student and/or teacher led lessons, for substitute teacher use, or for home access for families. Scholastic Math magazine is used in its written and online format.

Manipulatives, such as Hands on Equations, Versa Tiles, fraction bars, and geometric solids, are used to reinforce learning. Hands on Equations teach algebra and is utilized grades 5-7. Lessons are coordinated between grades to ensure optimal learning. Versa Tiles are self-checking manipulatives that allow differentiation.

We recognize the importance of integrating other subjects and real world applications with mathematics. As a result, we create cross curricular units that help make connections between subjects, thereby strengthening

knowledge. One example of this is an owl unit where students dissect an owl pellet, calculate the number and types of bones, create a graph of their data, research the owls' habitat, construct tissue paper and paper mache owls, and read *Capture* by Kathryn Lasky. By integrating multiple subjects and real-world problem solving, students see how mathematics is relevant to their everyday life.

1c. Science:

TVMS follows Next Generation Science Standards. Fourth grade studies energy, plant and animal structures/processes, Earth's changing landscape, and waves including applications of light and sound. Fifth grade focuses on properties of matter as well as energy and change of ecosystems. Sixth through eighth grade each target one broad science band to help foster deep learning. Sixth grade covers Earth and Space, including a culminating assessment at the local Challenger Learning Center. Seventh grade focuses on Life Science. Eighth grade explores Physical Science, Chemistry, Physics, and Engineering. STEM design is incorporated at all grade levels.

Instruction includes project-based learning, experiments, and STEM activities. Experiments and activities introduce topics and further new learning while students gather and analyze data. Resources include science texts and websites that include Steve Spangler Science, Science Spot, Biology Corner, National Geographic, Ducksters, and Science Friday. All grade levels have the scientific method and STEM process displayed in classrooms to build common vocabulary and expectations. Students utilize science equipment at all grade levels.

Scaffolding is used within our curriculum to determine prior knowledge. Assessment is incorporated through informal and formal assessments during the class. Some forms of assessments are performance-based assessments, short answer, experiments, exit slips, and chapter/unit tests. Our 6th-8th grade staff also utilizes data from the Illinois Science Assessment when it is available. This assessment data also helps in aligning curriculum. This data is used to differentiate and advance student mastery. Collaborative STEM projects help all students be successful. A school wide culminating activity is an annual TVMS Science Challenge Night that allows students to showcase their understanding of the scientific method.

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

Social Studies curriculum at TVMS is based on the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Studies. Staff collaborates to ensure Inquiry, Civics, Geography, Economics and State, National and World History standards are covered school wide. Project-based learning, discussions, and critical thinking are integral parts of the curriculum. Daily current events are incorporated into lessons as well, using outlets such as CNN10 and Time for Kids Magazine.

Fourth grade students begin with Illinois history, geography, and civic responsibilities. During the civic unit, the village mayor gives a speech and mock elections are held. The Illinois Wax Museum is an activity where students research a historical figure from Illinois and deliver a speech in time period costume. One area of focus for fifth grade is economics, including U.S. goods and services. In a cross-curricular unit students read *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis, and learn about the Roaring 20s and the Great Depression to contextualize this story. Sixth grade students discover the world and ancient history through inquiry, with units on Medieval Times, China, Greece, and Rome. A cross-curricular unit on Egypt, referenced above, is a highlight.

Seventh grade students study world geography, and focus on Illinois history and government, including the Illinois Constitution. They complete an in-depth research project on an Illinois history topic of their choice. Projects are displayed at the McLean County Historical Museum for the community to enjoy. In Eighth grade, students study the U.S. Constitution, and delve into inquiry-based projects based on immigration, the Civil War, and WWII. One cross curricular project includes learning about the Holocaust by reading and analyzing *The Diary of Anne Frank* and making a presentation.

At TVMS, students travel through the years learning history through inquiry, research, evaluation of evidence, and drawing conclusions. While Illinois does not have a formal state social studies assessment our

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students take a formal assessment on the Illinois and US Constitution during 7th and 8th grade. Teachers also give a large number of research and project based assessments to allow students to demonstrate learning in a variety of formats. Formal assessments such as quizzes and tests are also done through-out the school year. They learn where they fit in the world and the importance of their contribution.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Fine Arts education at TVMS is diverse and encompassing. Each discipline follows the Illinois State Standards based on the Common Core Standards. Visual Art is offered at all grade levels two to five days a week. Student art is displayed in the hallway year-round, and an art fair is held in conjunction with the annual Science Challenge Night. The art curriculum works to align the creative process with the classroom curriculum throughout the year. The visual art classes help our students learn to think critically, using discipline-based art education learning strategies, including visual culture. Performance Arts is offered two to five times a week depending on the grade and discipline. The instrumental music curriculum teaches students the characteristics of an excellent music performance. Students are taught what constitutes a great performance based upon the development of the student's musicianship and performance capabilities. In the vocal music program, the students participate in sectional and full choir settings. The students perform multiple times throughout the school year, helping them build confidence and responsibility. Our drama department produces two productions per year; a fall production for 7th and 8th graders and a spring 4-6th grade production. The 4th-6th grade production utilizes two casts and has four shows to include all interested students. The productions involve the students in all aspects of the show including acting, costuming, props, lights, sound, set design, and set building.

Our Physical Education department helps our students develop an appreciation for the benefits of movement and healthy lifestyle habits. The classes emphasize the relationship between active participation and the improvement of individual fitness. Social responsibility is addressed through cooperative group and team building activities that stimulate growth in leadership skills, cooperative skills, and general discipline. In health classes, students learn that healthy minds and bodies are essential for academic success. This enhances their ability to contribute to a productive work environment, achieve personal goals, and contribute to society. All students attend physical education daily with numerous extracurricular opportunities for each grade level.

A semester of Spanish is offered for all 7th and 8th grade students. The daily lessons incorporate technology through the use of Edmodo assignments along with both Spanish audio and video clips. Students learn the basics of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language. In a cross curricular unit, each choir performs a minimum of one foreign language song per year and discusses the language, culture, countries, and a translation of the lyrics. Early learning of another language prepares students for college requirements and gives them an advantage in today's global society.

In technology, students are exposed to several types of learning software. Through its use, teachers are provided reports identifying what students have not yet mastered. Technology availability, use, and instruction is being increased yearly at TVMS. At this time, 7th and 8th grade students are 1:1 with devices, while 4th-6th grades each have a mobile chromebook lab for classroom use. There are also three stand alone computer labs for classroom instruction. Students in 4th-6th grade attend Instructional Library Services (ILS) one to two times per week to work on typing skills, IXL, as well as return and check out books. Digital learning days, which replace snow days, have created interactive and effective learning for students. These lessons are then built upon when students return to school.

3. Special Populations:

Supporting all students is important at TVMS. Response to Intervention (RtI) services are available for students who need extra academic, emotional, and organizational support. The students are identified for services through our Collaborative Action & Resources for Educational Success team (CARES). Teachers meet monthly with our RtI coordinator, administrators, and school psychologist to discuss data, academic progress, and emotional concerns of students. Qualifying students receive services two to three days a week. Student interventions include individualized instruction/reteaching, Six-Minute Solutions, MobyMax, math fact practice, comprehension activities, etc. Formal and informal in-house monitoring assesses progress and identifies when students have met their goals and are ready to be released.

Our staff fully embraces the importance of ensuring that data are used to determine what interventions students need to succeed. Interventions are targeted and adapted using ongoing in-house progress monitoring systems and data analysis. For some students, despite targeted interventions, extra help, and accommodations from the classroom teachers, more support is needed. An expanded problem-solving meeting is held. This meeting includes teachers, school psychologist, social worker, administrators, related services providers, and parents. The team considers eligibility for special education, analyzes all aspects of the student (e.g. academic, functional, communication, social-emotional, health, and motor), brainstorms, and completes additional assessments and observations. Based on the data, eligibility is determined. Options can be: Individualized Education Program, a 504 plan, RtI, or no additional services. Student IEPs are focused on individual needs and may range from documenting specific classroom/testing accommodations, co-taught learning environment, or pullout instruction. An IEP may also include a vocational component if a student needs more life-skills and experience with a school job to build future employment skills. Additionally, a wide variety of related services are available, such as speech-language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, and assistive technology. TVMS houses the special education administrator of the district and support services from the local special education cooperative (Tri-County), which allows for ongoing support to our special education program.

For all middle school students, Viking Power is a daily time spent extending and supporting the whole child through academic, social, and emotional endeavors. This is a classroom-based intervention where ongoing data are used for flexible grouping. Groups may include study or organizational skills, content area enrichment or support, life skills, research, self-awareness, character building/lessons, technology, and current events. Cross curricular and cross grade level activities are encouraged to foster growth and connections. For example, our 7th-grade students plan, prepare, and present an ELA lesson of their choice, appropriate for their 4th grade audience. The presentations may include collaboration activities and technology such as power points, slide shows, videos, and digital games.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Tri-Valley Middle School engages, motivates, and provides students with a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth. Student growth is supported in a variety of ways. The CARES process recognizes struggling students who are then given academic, emotional, and organizational support through RTI. Students are nominated weekly for outstanding performances in Math, Science, Literacy, Fine Arts, Warrior (PE), Leadership, and Spirit. Another weekly recognition is the Myrtle Merit Award, named after our district therapy dog. This recognition is for a student who is caring, kind, loyal, a friend to everyone, and is “pawsative”! Myrtle comes to school to support the students in their social and emotional needs. Student names are announced, pictures are taken and posted via social media, weekly newsletters, and in the school hallways. The staff plans quarterly school-wide assemblies to recognize students who earned an award during the quarter. Assembly themes are based on character traits our students are encouraged to exhibit.

To help foster social and emotional growth, TVMS participates in an annual all school read to promote cohesiveness and encourage compassion and acceptance. Some past books have been *The Running Dream* by Wendelin Van Draanen and *Chester and Gus* by Cammie McGovern. Each year, incoming 4th grade students listen to a read-aloud of the book *Wonder*, by R.J Palacio. This book helps guide discussions about acceptance of all students and to foster a safe learning environment. To promote citizenship and community awareness among our student body, school-wide events and activities are organized and led by our school’s student council, a group of elected 7th and 8th graders. Such events include a school-wide book drive to collect gently used books for underprivileged schools, clothing and food drives, a donut day to raise money for Special Olympics, and dances to raise funds for local families, the Humane Society, and a local homeless shelter.

The school culture at TVMS creates an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. Our administration supports our staff each day by being available for advice and to help with student, parent, and academic concerns. They meet with the teachers on a weekly basis to discuss classroom goals/expectations, as well as impart building and district information. Our Board of Education has open meetings, visits our school, attends our functions, and speaks to the staff during the district wide meetings at the beginning and end of the school year. In our building, team leaders from each grade level meet monthly for a Building Leadership Meeting (BLT). This group addresses building issues and recommends solutions.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Each school year begins with grade-level parent orientations to help foster a partnership among parents, teachers, students, and administration. Each orientation is specific to the grade level and outlines the material that will be taught during the school year, how technology is used, as well as setting up lines of communication. In addition to orientations, parent-teacher conferences, Science Challenge Night, history fair, art show, and an annual Veterans Day recognition assembly are held. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in our school to help support the academic and extracurricular success of their students. They show support by volunteering their time, talents, as well as donating materials to enhance the school environment and experience for our students.

Technology innovations have improved communication between parents, students, and teachers. With our Skyward grading system, parents are able to check in real time their child’s performance on assignments, assessments, and projects in the classroom. Parents get notifications of missing work or poor performance on individual assignments. Google Documents and Google Classroom allow the students and teachers to communicate while completing assignments. This gives students up to date and accurate feedback in a private manner.

Our district is fortunate to have the support of several community organizations. The Parent Teacher

Organization (PTO) is active in organizing fundraisers to help the staff purchase materials they need for the classroom, as well as doing teacher spoilers, and special treats or meals for the staff throughout the year. This organization also helps promote a sense of community by sponsoring programs that include Kid-to-Kid, school carnival, and most recently, a playground improvement initiative. The profits from events make it possible for teachers to obtain items from their wish lists, enabling the teachers to implement new and exciting programs in their classrooms. Tri-Valley Education Association also gives grant money to teachers in need of supplemental materials to enhance academic opportunities. Moms in Prayer shows support to the staff by bringing special treats throughout the year. Academically, Project Oz provides drug awareness education for 7th and 8th grade students.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development at TVMS is aligned with the district goals set by the Board of Education. The focus areas for the current school year are standards-based grading, curriculum alignment, and school safety. The faculty of TVMS is offered professional development opportunities through the Regional Office of Education and outside presenting groups. In determining curriculum, facility needs, and grading practices, the Building Leadership Team (BLT) reviews past practices and future needs.

Standards-based grading is in the process of being implemented district wide. Staff has studied past grading practices, looked into Ken O'Connor's A Repair Kit for Grading, and worked as grade teams to begin the process. A book study, in-service, and summer course covering this new grading initiative provided opportunities for collaboration and peer learning.

Curriculum alignment throughout the district is an ongoing and long-range goal. Staff has worked to align within our grade levels and has met with the grade level above and below to ensure continuity in student education. A Director of Curriculum and Instruction has been hired to support this alignment. School Safety is a district priority. Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate (ALiCE) training and active shooter drills have occurred. With today's society, understanding that the ways to keep our students safe are ever evolving. It is not only physical safety, it also includes emotional and social safety.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership in Tri-Valley District #3 begins with the Board of Education, Superintendent, and building administrators. The administration team meets weekly to discuss district policies and goals, current issues, and professional development for the district. The compatibility between the district administrators allows for collaborative decision-making when dealing with policies, initiatives, and issues.

TVMS consists of five grade levels spanning grades four to eight and totaling 395 students. Leadership in our building begins with our Principal. The philosophy of the Principal is to work with the staff to make decisions that allow our students to excel in the academic environment, extracurricular activities, social/emotional, and in our community. Our Principal listens to the staff, analyzes the information, decides on a course of action, clearly delivers the information to the staff, and then stands behind and supports the decisions. Other duties include calling staff meetings when needed, meeting weekly with each grade level team, and communicating clearly via email to staff and parents.

Our Building Leadership Team (BLT) is the second level of leadership in the building. Representatives include a member from each grade level and enrichment teachers. Different perspectives covering the entire educational setting are represented. The team meets monthly to bring issues for discussion, identify educational, socio-emotional, financial, and facility needs.

The next leadership level consists of our grade level Team Leader. This person is typically the grade level representative at BLT meetings. Leaders share information from those meetings and lead daily team meetings focusing on matters related to grade level curriculum, student issues, cross curricular planning, scheduling, etc. The team leader works in collaboration with other members and delegates when necessary. Communication is imperative, and we strive for consistent, clear communication between leadership levels to provide a safe and successful student environment.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that has been most instrumental to our success at TVMS is our concentration on the Middle School Concept (MSC) while continually answering the question, “What is best for the child?” Every decision is based on that question. TVMS prides itself on gearing our educational experience toward teaching the whole child. The idea that we must feed the intellect, as well as the physical and emotional child has completely driven the concepts, goals, and vision of our environment.

With the MSC in mind, the building schedule was designed to maximize the time spent on CORE subjects, giving each subject 60 minutes rather than the 45 minutes for instruction. Additionally, there is a time for Viking Power, where students are divided into smaller groups to receive additional support, or to be challenged. This may include: reteaching, discussion of recent issues or events, support for accelerated students, RtI, speech, team building, etc. The MSC incorporates daily team plan time, in addition to personal plan time. This allows all teachers of a grade level to meet and discuss the needs of students, curriculum, cross-curriculum ideas, planning and implementation. Meetings with parents, counselors, speech pathologist, and the principal take place during this time.

Within the MSC, we have added enrichment classes to ensure a well-rounded educational experience. Students receive PE, Music, Library/Typing, Art, Health, Spanish, and Agriculture on a rotational or grade level basis. Vikings of Valor was created to foster and support the social/emotional development of the middle school student. Vikings of Valor is a nomination process that is used by the faculty to nominate students who are doing well in various areas. With our commitment to the Middle School Concept and making decisions based on “what is best for the child”, TVMS’s academic performance remains at the top level of area schools based on standardized assessment scores. There has also been a drastic decline in student discipline referrals. As a result, students are engaged in their learning environment and take pride in their successes.