

U.S. Department of Education
2016 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. Destiny Rutzel

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

Official School Name South Ripley Junior High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1589 South Benham Road

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

City Versailles State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 47042-8412

County Ripley

Telephone (812) 689-0909 Fax (812) 689-6970

Web site/URL http://www.sripley.k12.in.us/ E-mail drutzel@sripley.k12.in.us

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/SR_Raiders Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Rob Moorhead E-mail rmoorhead@sripley.k12.in.us

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

District Name South Ripley Community Schools Tel. (812) 689-6282

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. Tim Taylor

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school 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 (2015-2016) 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 with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 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	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	54	43	97
8	57	49	106
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	111	92	203

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 97 % White
 - 1 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 23%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	26
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	193
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.233
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	23

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

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 55 %
Total number students who qualify: 111

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
33 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.

- 4 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 4 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 10 Other Health Impaired
- 13 Specific Learning Disability
- 1 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

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	10
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance 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 21:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	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 2015.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

South Ripley educates students today, to become responsible citizens of tomorrow.

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

N/A

PART III – SUMMARY

South Ripley Junior-Senior High School was formed in 1966 by consolidating Cross Plains High School, Holton High School, New Marion High School, and Versailles High School on the farmlands near the small town of Benham.

In 2007, the community supported a renovation project that would make South Ripley Junior-Senior High School into two separate schools to better meet the unique needs of junior high students. Thus, South Ripley Junior High School became a reality during the 2009-2010 school year.

South Ripley Junior High School is located in the center of Ripley County, Indiana. The school is 1/4 mile southeast of Versailles, a conservative community with a population of approximately 2,000. Versailles is the county seat of Ripley County. This area is composed primarily of farms, small businesses, factories, and retired residents. Many of the families work outside the school district. The school district covers an area of 220 square miles and has a population of approximately 7,500.

South Ripley Junior High School consists of a two-year comprehensive junior high school. The enrollment is 200 students, averaging 100 students per grade level, with 12 full time staff, as well as several staff members who work primarily at the high school but teach some classes at the Junior High. SRJHS provides a rich curriculum aligned with the Indiana State Standards. It has curricular offerings for students in E/LA, reading, math, science, social studies, Engineering, Spanish, art, physical education, health, career exploration, choir, band, and computers. At-risk and high ability programs help students achieve at all levels. Special education is available for those in need of this service.

Over 50% of the total student population is on free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs. A portion of the population is transient, due primarily to the lack of industry in the immediate area. Last year, the attendance rate was approximately 96%.

The school year is divided into two semesters with each composed of two nine-week grading periods. The educational day is an eight-period traditional schedule, with seven periods consisting of 49 minute periods and 4 minute passing periods. The schedule also includes an advisory period. School is in session for 180 days for students, and 185 days for the faculty. Six professional development, late arrival days were added this year to provide professional development for faculty, in addition to the professional development activities during the school year and summer.

As a building, our philosophy of education is to build the expectancy of success in all our students. Our free and reduced population means that parents are often working hard just to make ends meet, and we understand that education is not always the priority for the family, even though every parent wants his or her child to be successful. Everything we do is built around helping each student develop some individual success academically and personally. To help struggling students become successful, teachers offer after-school tutoring for free, provide snacks, and transport students home via school mini-buses. This allows staff to learn more about our students as a whole, including their family life and living conditions. It also provides a way to take clothing, food, or other needed materials home to our students. Ultimately, all of this hard work resulted in the school earning an “A” rating from the state, along with Four-Star Status. However, we are constantly looking for ways to better fulfill the emotional and educational needs of our students.

Our guidance department also strives to build solid foundations for students. The guidance department was designated as an Indiana Gold Star school by the Department of Education in 2012. Schools that have obtained the Indiana Gold Star status have demonstrated that they have a comprehensive and accountable school counseling and guidance program, aligned to Indiana School Counselor and Student Standards, as well as ASCA standards. School counseling programs will implement a plan that includes the data-based accountability, student guidance activities, counseling and advocacy, alignment of resources, and an annual improvement plan. This process allowed our school to evaluate different ways to meet the social and emotional needs of our students. One of the many positives that came out of the evaluation process was the

addition to our corporation of a “one-call now system,” so that parents would receive automated calls about attendance and other important information relating to the school.

To help students learn that part of success is helping out others, our advisory classes are required to complete service-learning projects. This year, the classes have donated to the local humane society with their time as well as collected goods, taught the student body basic sign language in order to communicate with a nonverbal 7th grader, sent care packages to troops, donated to the local senior citizen center, donated to our school’s food pantry, and organized a culture fair.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our school's core curriculum is centered around the 2010 and 2014 Indiana Academic Standards and Blueprints. These established guidelines set the foundation for what our students learn in each subject area. In the reading/English language arts content, our school has a unique feature in having reading and English divided into two separate class rotations. This way, our lower-performing learners will see power standards and ideas multiple times throughout the year, and the above-grade level students can be challenged with more extensive reading and writing assignments designed specifically for them.

Our English teachers use a variety of resources to make sure that the students are acquiring foundational skills, such as Acuity Readiness and custom tests and Accelerated Reader comprehension tests. All the data taken from these show which standards are being mastered and which standards need to be revisited. Writing, reading, and vocabulary are at the forefront of the English standards. Building on already taught writing skills allows for students to develop their writing skills and styles. At least two written assignments per quarter challenge the students, and having students repeatedly practice the writing process—organizing ideas through planning, fully developing ideas, and revising final drafts—keep students involved in the writing process. Our students read a variety of nonfiction and informational texts throughout the year in all subject areas. This way, students can encounter reading in a variety of contexts with a variety of academic and grade-level vocabulary. Using vocabulary-in-context assignments make students develop their context clue skills, which is essential to building a solid personal vocabulary.

In the math content, teachers utilize various assessment avenues like Study Island Pre- and Diagnostic tests, Accelerated Math STAR tests, and bell ringers to determine which students need remediation on certain standards. Also in our math classes, college and career readiness is stressed. Our school participates in a yearly “Reality Check” with other local schools. The students are able to get a taste of the real world by visiting booths that simulate real-world situations. Students receive a monthly income in a career of their choosing and pay bills that individuals usually have. The Reality Check gives students the opportunity to effectively manage money like adults. In addition to the Reality Check, students deal with real-world problems through the creation of a “Mathematical Applied Problem Solving Book,” in which students use a variety of strategies to solve problems in the categories of number sense, computational, geometry, algebra and functions, statistics, and probability.

In addition to the math content, our science teachers strive to teach their concepts while incorporating cross-curricular assignments and projects. Science classes use teacher-developed assessments to measure student learning throughout the year, such as formative final exams. This data-driven instruction allows for teachers to determine which students are performing above, at, or below grade level. The science teachers include informational reading assignments that not only present important science ideas, but they also allow the students to practice good reading comprehension skills. Math concepts are also pulled into science classes on a daily basis. For example, slope is reviewed during the science lesson over speed and energy; therefore, this gives students a double-dose of a very difficult standard. Lab report writing and in-class writing applications, like a compare/contrast essay on plant and animal cells, keep the writing curriculum alive in other subjects throughout the school.

Finally, our social studies content also extends its reach into other subject areas to ensure students are improving or mastering necessary skills. The social studies/history curriculum includes an extensive amount of reading and remembering historical data; therefore, the social studies teacher reinforce good reading practices. All students are challenged by reading a variety of documents: historical fiction, informational text, and short excerpts. In these documents, students see historical vocabulary that they might not know, and learning this vocabulary through activities like acrostic poems and play-doh models allow the teachers to see whether or not students are mastering the necessary skills. Also, the social studies/history teachers include historically-based writing prompts into the curriculum, whether this be through locally-sponsored essay contests or essay topics on end-of-unit assessments. Ultimately, our school's core curriculum allows for students to fully develop essential skills to use later in life.

This core curriculum supports college and career readiness in many ways. Our school strives to develop necessary skills like reading complex texts, communicating efficiently in writing, and solving real-world problems. Reading and writing effectively are integral components of being a successful citizen in society. Furthermore, being able to solve situations through step-by-step processes can benefit individuals in any post-secondary environment, whether in a college classroom or career field. To further support our efforts, the guidance department also incorporates various activities during our advisory period to help students identify possible future plans and ways to be prosperous wherever they may go.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

South Ripley Junior High provides students the opportunity for a well-rounded education by offering a variety of required courses and optional electives. Student are required to take physical education, health, computers, and Life & Careers during their junior high careers. The option is available for them to take band, choir, art, Exploratory Spanish, or Introduction to Engineering Design.

During 7th and 8th grade years, students are required to take a nine week rotation each of physical education, health, computers, and Life & Careers. The physical education course provides students with the skills to participate in a variety of physical and exercise activities. For example, students must learn the rules and teammate skills for a variety of games such as bowling, volleyball, football, badminton, and soccer. They learn about the importance of physical activity and the many benefits, like stress reduction. Furthermore, students practice basic stretching exercises that will help them retain flexibility throughout their lives.

The health course teaches students a variety of essential life skills. Students learn how to practice basic nutrition, to make good life decisions, to resolve conflicts, to set goals, and to use hunter's safety. They also discuss how to seek help when needed, whether from the physical issues, social effects, or emotional distress from unhealthy or dangerous life choices. The course also teaches students how to read charts, determine central ideas, draw conclusions, and cite textual evidence.

The computers course allows us to teach digital citizenship, along with helping students develop technology skills to benefit core curriculum courses. This includes learning ways to search for material more effectively, to identify trustworthy sources, and to use GAFE like Slides, Sheets, and Docs.

The Life & Careers class helps students set personal goals about possible career interests. They also learn about the study habits and grades needed now to reach these goals; also, the students investigate information on the education or training required for these careers. The students practice public speaking, reading informational text, and calculating income and tax information. This class was added in response to students' requests for more assistance in their futures and career planning.

Our students are also able to choose some courses in their schedules. For instance, sixty-seven students chose to take band this year. Besides the normal band practice, the students use their Chromebooks to log practice time, analyze music, critique music pieces through writing, and read informational texts. Thirty-three students chose to take choir. In this class, they use their Chromebooks to log practice singing and dance time, read text for information, and critique music pieces. Thirty-six of our eighth grade students chose to take art. This class allows them to explore their creativity by painting, drawing, molding clay, learning about art history, and analyzing pieces of art. Forty students chose to take Exploratory Spanish. This class allows the students to learn basic listening and speaking skills and to develop more cultural awareness. Cultures are overlapping more and more, so it is important that all students are exposed to a foreign language and develop a desire to learn more. The school counselor encourages all students, no matter what their future goals are, to take multiple years of a foreign language since their worlds, due to technology, are becoming smaller. Twenty-one of our eighth graders take Introduction to Engineering Design. This is a hands-on, problem-based learning class that allows the students to develop real-world, problem-solving skills. The class uses computer-aided and hand sketched designs for possible solutions. These eighth grade students are able to receive a high school credit and an Ivy Tech dual credit for this elective.

These other curriculum courses support our overall goal to help students be successful. The courses help the students meet social goals by teaching them the skills necessary to work cooperatively with peers. The courses also support the emotional growth of our students by teaching them critical thinking, decision making, goal setting, and self-reflecting skills. All the courses focus on developing reading skills by having students read a variety of content for information to support answers with textual evidence. Writing, listening, and speaking skills are also taught as part of these curriculums. Math content is included in real-world situations in these various courses and electives as well.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Throughout the various subjects, a variety of instructional methods and interventions are used. By utilizing test data, prior-year performance, and teacher recommendations, we are able to place our students in the best class rotation possible. High ability students are identified at the beginning of the year, so extension activities can be designed specifically for them. Our school's inclusion classes give extra support to struggling learners, and in the afternoon, RTI opportunities are in place. We offer struggling students a resource period, English Study Skills, and Math Topics in order to fill in any learning gaps through individualized instruction.

In the Language Arts core classes, teachers use Accelerated Reader, GAFE, Socrative, Quizlet, Thinglink, and Kahoot to better engage learners through technology usage. Practices such as guided note-taking, modeled writings, and collaborative learning also allow us to meet each student's academic needs. The math classes include a variety of methods to ensure high levels of learning and achievement as well. Study Island and Accelerated Math challenge students to reach goals, while also allow teachers to collect data on weak areas. To teach the math content, the teachers go beyond the textbook. Hands-on projects and technology tools, like an ELMO camera and the Doceri app, allow for a better structured, step-by-step system to ensure each student is following and learning the mathematical process. Fifty percent of high ability 8th grade students are enrolled in Algebra I, where they complete the 8th grade Indiana math curriculum as well as earning high school credit. To extend our reach even further, our science classes also strive to include all types of learners, especially those visual and tactile. Inquiry-based labs and project-based learning units engage all different types of students. Hot-air balloon creations, atom models, rock representations, and medical brochures are a few of the many projects and learning opportunities in which students get to participate. Students are able to try new experiences that cannot always be done in a four-wall classroom. Finally, the social studies classes use various methods to help all learners achieve. Differentiation is evident in activities like bell ringers and lessons that include music, videos, and interactive timelines and maps. Cross-curricular projects like the 8th grade Innovation and Discovery Unit and the Americanism and DAR Essay Contests allow for students to show their strengths in a variety of avenues. With every lesson, we truly strive to meet students at all levels of learning.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

SRJHS utilizes state assessment scores—usually received in May—to be a data-driven school. The scores are analyzed for student weaknesses and strengths and are provided for teachers to prepare tiered lesson plans targeting identified deficient areas. By using test scores and grades, the guidance counselor schedules students into remediation or enrichment classes. COGAT high ability testing results are also evaluated at this time to address the needs of our top-performing students. Staff post data, both online and on a data wall, which allow all staff members to visualize individual and group student progress throughout the year.

We begin the school year by having the students take the STAR Reading and Math tests, which are formative assessments. These assessments provide staff with more data on individual students' skill levels. The strengths/weaknesses obtained from these tests are used to further refine the instruction for each student. The next step in our data process is to analyze ISTEP scores with students and set goals for the upcoming school year. Plans are devised with each student to assist him/her in meeting this personal goal. Students are provided the training to explain scores to his/her parents, and the information will also be shared with parents at parent-teacher conferences. This is all discussed in our monthly data meetings where the staff analyzes how to best meet the unique needs of individual students.

Students take Acuity, another formative assessment, three times per year. After each assessment, the data wall is updated to evaluate the effectiveness of our instruction. These tests also provide us with areas of improvement in all subject areas and allow the staff to focus on those areas as we progress throughout the year. At this time, the staff discusses individual progress to decide what steps need to be taken to help students obtain success. These steps can include mentoring, tutoring, scheduling change, or individual counseling. This testing, along with classroom assessments, helps the staff evaluate instructional effectiveness as the year progresses.

The data wall allows us to analyze subgroups, such as special education students, who have struggled. As a result of the data analysis, we added a supervised homework instruction period to reteach and assist special education students in completing work and mastering standards. We also focus on low-performing general education students who need extra assistance with staff or after-school tutoring. Data analysis allows us to maintain high-performing standards.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

South Ripley Junior High believes that our success as a school is directly related to the positive atmosphere in the building. The students are rewarded and recognized in a variety of ways for their achievements. We build what we see as a “family relationship” with our students, so that they have at least one person in the building with whom they feel comfortable telling problems or concerns. Our staff not only acts as mentors and support services for students but also for each other.

Our students are recognized in a variety of ways for all their positive contributions to the building. We recognize students for honor roll, perfect attendance, positive behavior, no office referrals, and being an overall good student. Students are rewarded with such things as going to lunch early, prizes, treat rewards, locker decorations, certificates, newspaper write-ups, positive phone calls, and compliments for the positive contributions they make to our school.

For advisory period, we have divided our students. These groups allow the staff to do relationship-building activities with the students. The students do various exercises in order to learn friendship, conflict, and refusal skills, as well as discussions on anti-bullying, stress management, college and career-readiness, and goals. The advisory groups get to compete against each other at school pep sessions, complete service-learning projects, and have a representative on the principal’s council to voice concerns and successes.

In addition, the staff is recognized at staff meetings with positive comments listed on a shared padlet. Luncheons, staff outings, shirts, and surprise treats are provided for all staff to show appreciation for the hard work in making our students successful. Both grade levels operate as teams, so the teachers also have the team’s support if they are struggling in any way. This helps build a trustworthy staff culture.

As a large, extended family, we also will help anyone in need at our school. This can be by contacting outside resources such as community mental health, churches, businesses, or other organizations when one of our school family members needs help. This also may involve raising funds through contributions from various school stakeholders in order to help an individual in need, whether that be the staff or students. An example of this occurs every Christmas when our staff adopts several families to help them provide basic essentials or other presents to their own family members.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

South Ripley Junior High believes that parents and the community are vital to our success with students. They provide ways for us to acknowledge our students’ accomplishments, as well as interventions or support to assist students in reaching their full potential. As a small, rural community, it takes everyone guiding our students to succeed in all areas of life.

The junior high connects to families by hosting an open house night to begin the year, which gives staff and families an opportunity to interact. This event establishes the tone that we want our families involved in our school. The staff also makes three positive calls per week to build a rapport with parents. A major emphasis is always placed on encouraging and rewarding positive behavior. If a student fails to complete an assignment, that student serves a lunch recovery, and parents are notified by teachers about the missing work. At this time, the teacher emphasizes the need for homework completion to the parent. Before parent-teacher conferences, staff members call parents/guardians to set up appointments and to encourage attendance of those parents whose children are not performing up to their potential. Technology plays an integral role in our communication processes. The teachers post homework assignments, due dates, and grades online to keep parents constantly informed of their students’ progress. A digital monthly newsletter, the school website, Twitter, emails, and automated phone calls are all used to keep parents informed about the activities in the building.

Parents and the community help our school in a variety of ways. One of the most successful avenues in

which parents and community members assist us is through committees. These committees are generally geared toward improving our building, and committees like the Gold Star Counseling Committee and PBIS give us a chance to get outside opinions. In addition, community members, such as police officers, serve as guest speakers during the school year. Every year, our school has an end-of-the-year character celebration; throughout the year, students earn tickets for displaying good character traits that can be used for raffle prizes. Last year, our local businesses donated over 1000 prizes to be given away to our students. Furthermore, our local community organizations provide eye exams and glasses; they also financially support our clubs and school fundraisers. During our school renovation, the community also committed to pay for updated facilities, which provides a technology-rich environment for students.

3. Professional Development:

South Ripley Junior High provides teachers the opportunity to improve their professional educator skills by attending workshops or conferences, both during the school year and summer. The administration can choose or the staff can self-select activities that are either based on the needs of our students or designed for improving certain teaching skills. The district and school also offer specific professional development that addresses areas of surveyed or perceived teacher need.

Administrators and staff are encouraged to attend trainings and conferences that will have direct impact on students, such as the Orton-Gillingham training, Smecken English workshops, Positive Behavior Intervention and Support workshops, Conference for Middle Level Education, Inclusion State Conference, Counseling State Conference, Summer Grief Workshop, Music Conference, School Safety Specialist Training, Accelerated Reader Training, and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Conference. All of these provide an opportunity to meet the many needs of our student body.

An example of our district's process of professional development is shown by our recent technology initiative to a 1:1 building. The staff piloted Chromebook and iPad devices in the first year of the transition; the staff received training during the school day to evaluate which tool would best meet the needs of our student population. After deciding Chromebooks would benefit our students the most, we focused on implementation during the second year. All staff received additional training during the school year and the following summer on ways to effectively use technology in individual content areas in order to optimize the classroom learning experience. This training has been ongoing with access to online training, after-school training, late arrival day workshops, and an on-site technology coach. With district support, the entire corporation has transitioned to 1:1 with devices at all levels.

Another example of our commitment to improving the education we provide is through multiple years of Accelerated Reader training for our staff. They received an initial training, along with follow-up instruction later on to address further questions. All of our staff is familiar with the program since it is one of the main tools used to improve our students' reading skills. This program is aligned with our academic standards that requires students to read not only fiction, but a variety of nonfiction as well. We strive to constantly ensure that our staff has the best trainings available that are both up-to-date and been proven to work.

4. School Leadership:

South Ripley Junior High School is made up of one administrator (principal) and one guidance counselor, fifteen teachers, three support staff, one secretary, and 203 students. A school leader has the greatest ability to make a school successful. There are many personal qualities that effective school leaders must possess. Effective leaders should be well-rounded, knowledgeable individuals with strong problem-solving skills. They must have good moral character and should conduct themselves with pride, fairness, and integrity. Ethics, performance, and quality are never compromised.

The relationship an administrator has with his or her staff is a key component of an effective school. Working to ensure that relationships with staff are positive is a top priority to the principal. She trusts and respects the staff in order to gain their trust and respect in return.

A school is as good as the leader and the staff collaboration within it. Our school is successful due to the ownership that all stakeholders take within our school. It is truly one that showcases the family environment. Keeping the small community atmosphere is essential to who we are at South Ripley. Our guidance counselor works with our students on character education, scheduling, counseling, and mentoring. She works with the administration and staff on individual and student data. Classroom teachers have a common planning time where monthly data meetings, team meetings, and professional development take place. The principal leads the monthly meetings, working with staff in the best interests of the students. The programs put into place are shared and discussed with staff to gain staff input and ownership. The principal leads the school, but with the understanding that staff input is valued. Policies and procedures are reviewed annually and discussed with staff.

A positive school climate is crucial to its success. The atmosphere of our school is one of caring and trust, with a supportive environment that is conducive to learning. Both students and staff feel comfortable and safe at our school, where positive interpersonal relationships also help create a positive school culture. These relationships are fostered when both staff and students are encouraged to work collaboratively. An effective staff will work together to create a safe and supportive learning environment, and the staff at SRJHS is one that will always go above and beyond to do what is best for our students.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The overarching practice that serves as the basis for all that we do is the teaming concept. Before the decision to have separate junior high teams, we had a variety of shared staff working with students, which led to a lack of consistency in the instruction, discipline, and educational environment; this definitely impacted our ISTEP+ pass rate. The introduction of teaming led to many improvements for students.

The teaming concept has not only made instruction more consistent, but also more impactful. Due to the teaming, teachers have a common planning time, which they use to discuss instruction effectiveness and ways to improve. Data from the many assessments used by the school drives those discussions at planning time meetings. Also, the teachers can now work collaboratively on cross-curricular projects or assignments, so the students can dive deeper into the content. This gives students an opportunity to connect multiple subjects' content together, therefore, allowing them to master many standards and skills at once.

Furthermore, rules and consequences are consistent across the team. Because of this, office referrals decreased by fifty percent. The team works together on discipline concerns of individual students and serve as a resource for each other when there are concerns about behavior. One teacher may have an intervention strategy that was successful, so he/she shares it with the entire team. The team also uses a positive reward system that is supported by the entire school in order to address issues that arise during the year. For example, when a group of students is tardy more often than prior years, the team will institute procedures and rewards to decrease the tardies.

The overall environment for students has become more personalized in order to meet their social, emotional, and academic needs. Teachers work to develop rapport with students by learning more about individual students and their personal issues that might impede learning. Interactive games are used during advisory time to develop more knowledge about students. By working as a team, the teachers are able to build relationships with all students, as well as learn about academic supports that the students need to be successful. Also in team meetings, the team can discuss if a student needs a referral to the counselor or principal for additional support, if a schedule change is necessary, or if behavioral/development daily check-ins are needed for students to find success.