

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 Mr. Paul Goodwin

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

Official School Name Leighton Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 121 Aurora Hudson Road

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

City Aurora State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 44202-9236

County Portage County

Telephone (330) 562-2209 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.aurora-schools.org/3/Home E-mail pgoodwin@aurora-schools.org

Twitter Handle _____ 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. Pat Ciccantelli E-mail pciccantelli@aurora-schools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Aurora City School District Tel. (330) 562-6106

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. Gerald Kohanski
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	99	94	193
4	108	89	197
5	128	102	230
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	335	285	620

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 89 % 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: 3%

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	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	626
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.032
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

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

Arabic, German, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Hungarian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9 %
Total number students who qualify: 58
8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
56 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.

- 1 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 2 Mental Retardation
- 3 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 10 Other Health Impaired
- 34 Specific Learning Disability
- 4 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	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	16
Paraprofessionals	5
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 25:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

To ensure that, with a nurturing environment, high expectations, and effective programs, all students reach their full potential and are prepared to become responsible, productive members of society.

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

We at Leighton Elementary School, believe that schools should function like a greenhouse in which our students' individual needs are assiduously nurtured over the course of their third through fifth grade education. As the final step in our students' journey, we strive to strengthen the knowledge and skills they have gained in the early elementary grades, while preparing them for middle school and their future school years. As a team, we support our students academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. The staff at Leighton Elementary School focuses on student learning as the fundamental purpose of our school. Although high achievement is the expectation, we also recognize the need to connect with every learner at their individual level. We strive to support all students to reach their personal and academic goals.

The Leighton school community is built on a foundation of solid family support, committed students, and dedicated staff members who have a passion for teaching and learning. Our doors first opened in the fall of 2001, when our district population exceeded our original building space. Leighton was built as a keystone between the primary grades, kindergarten through second grades and sixth through eighth grades in our middle school. This unique setting of a building with grades three through five was not found in many other districts at that time. Leighton was built and grade levels in the district moved around. Third and fourth grades came from Craddock Elementary School and 5th grade came from Harmon Middle School. The middle school assistant principal moved to Leighton to become the principal and oversaw the integration of staffs from two different structures. Team building and getting-to-know-you activities were held to get the two staffs acquainted before the opening of the building. Leighton was named in honor of a prominent community member, Ken Leighton, an outstanding leader who helped lay the foundation that developed Aurora into the community it is today. Mr. Leighton served on the Aurora Board of Education for over 20 years and was named Aurora Citizen of the Year in 1990.

As a new building, we were challenged to distinguish ourselves as a vital component of the Aurora City Schools. We established our school wide behavior plan, intervention process, community engagement values, professional learning communities, educational services for special education and gifted education, technology integration, and much more. We worked with the district leadership team to create systematic approaches with common expectations that linked the lower elementary building, Craddock, to Leighton Elementary, to Harmon Middle School. We as a staff are continually learning from each other, attending and sharing outside professional development, and implementing new ideas regularly. In our continued, enriching visions for change, our staff has read and collaborated on the professional text, Mindset, and continues this professional development with our new text, Rick DuFour's In Praise of Educators that will be assimilated by the staff into next fall. These current reads keep us alive and not stagnant, as we are instilling growth in every aspect of our greenhouse yearly as a Leighton School Community.

In the past five years, student growth at Leighton Elementary has continued to climb. In our greenhouse, students are measured by the strength of their roots and the production of their flowers. Our solid curriculum values continue to build on foundational skills that instill a future for being students who are college and career ready. We are creating a climate to look at the whole child and offer "stems and roots" which are our supports to level the playing field for all learners to be successful. We have developed Professional Learning Communities, have worked collaboratively on curriculum mapping along with common assessments, and we have created an intervention piece built into our daily schedules to make our students feel the intrinsic rewards of being a problem solver, showing responsibility, and being respectful. We have shifted our insights into a Google doc community that instills 21st century skills to carry out these ideas. Everyone blooms here at Leighton in their own unique way and with all the supports in academics, interventions, gifted, extracurricular, and social supports, we have put into place vibrant and engaging opportunities to help create a strong, well-balanced individual who is continuously learning and ready for the next stages of their learning career.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Leighton Elementary will always focus on student learning as the fundamental purpose of our school. Teachers continually meet to review best practices in education, curriculum mapping, assessment design, and student growth. As they begin to exit our building and move to the next level, student's 21st century skills continue to flourish as they develop skills for college and careers. Our solid curriculum vision and goals ensure that our students will be held to high achievement standards and provide a structure to reach all students. Our standards-based curriculum is centered on the Ohio Learning Standards using the process of backwards design to develop curriculum maps, assessments, and learning activities as well as best practices in education.

Language Arts

Our Language Arts focus is a balanced literacy approach where students fluidly move from reading, to writing, and word work throughout their educational day. Guided Reading is one of our teaching methodologies that we utilize to help students grow as readers. We work closely with students to help them move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Students begin to use a variety of strategies, such as close reading and annotating, which help them begin to synthesize key understandings from the text. The integration of reading and writing is key to student success and building connections between the content areas. Two years ago our district adopted a writing program that encompasses K-5. Our focus is based on a writing workshop approach which facilitates the development of thinking. Writing workshop embodies mini-lessons followed by independent student-centered writing, along with conferencing throughout the writing process. Students continue to add literacy skills to their tool kit and the teachers continually call upon students to rely on their tools and skills.

Math

Our mathematics focus is on developing a conceptual understanding of numbers for all students. The use of daily number talks allows learners to access, engage in, and acquire foundational mathematical skills. We encourage students to become flexible thinkers of numbers and use efficient and accurate strategies when problem solving. We use the eight mathematical practices to guide instruction and pull in a variety of resources to accomplish our math curriculum. We believe all children can learn mathematics and that productive struggle is important. Making and understanding mistakes is what leads to higher levels of growth in math, and we use this to drive our instruction each day. Finally and most important, we teach by listening to students. We realize that math is reactive. Our questioning techniques come straight from listening to the students. When they converse orally about math in a classroom setting, the teachers question their ideas, processes, and wrong and right answers to best help them to grow as mathematical thinkers.

Science

Hands-on inquiry and investigation creates a foundation for student interest and understanding of science concepts, and are performed in a science lab setting which allows students to apply the steps of the scientific method. Students develop predicting and hypothesizing skills, as well as observation, data collection, and graphing skills. Students use those skills to analyze and draw conclusions and inferences about the results of their investigations and experiments. The hands-on investigations are enhanced with virtual labs, such as Explore Learning Gizmos, that further test their knowledge and analysis skills. Each year students construct and observe a variety of projects that put their science skills into action.

Social Studies

An understanding of the social sciences is key for students as they develop a lens through which they understand their world. Across grade levels we focus on local, state and world content standards. Our social studies curriculum is enhanced by problem-based learning as students apply what they've learned to real world events. We focus on the essential questions which align with the format of backward design. Students use research and technology to learn both historical perspectives and modern examples of culture, geography and government. Field trips and Skype connect our students to the real world. We strive to integrate writing and language arts skills into our social studies curriculum. Historic fiction and nonfiction

texts set authentic purposes for both reading and writing. Students learn to be careful consumers and creators of information including graphical representations of information and reports. They also begin to develop the ability to vet primary and secondary resources for accuracy and reliability.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Leighton Elementary School participate in a variety of Specials classes each week, including music, visual art, media and technology, and physical education classes.

Leighton Elementary School students attend Music class twice a week for forty-five minutes. All Music classes are aligned with the latest ODE State Standards. In General Music, the students learn to read music, perform on recorders as well as authentic African drums, compose music pieces using technology, and also attend a concert at Severance Hall. In Choir, vocal warm-ups start the process of being able to sing a wide variety of musical styles, both individually and in choral groups. The Leighton Choir performs during the holidays for various community nursing homes in addition to a holiday show in the winter and talent show in the spring. Students can choose their music area preference in fifth grade: General Music, Band, or Orchestra. In each area, the three different instructors work closely together to ensure students of all ability levels can perform with their chosen instrument via careful scaffolding and differentiation strategies. The Leighton Band and Leighton Orchestra perform twice a year for the community and also at school assemblies. The strength of the Aurora Music program is built upon the dedicated, choice-based curriculum and instruction at grades third through fifth.

All three grades have Art at least once a week for forty-five minutes. The Leighton Art curriculum is aligned with both ODE State Standards and National Visual Arts Standards with a focus on authentic media and integration with content areas. Each grade level has projects that combine math and writing skills with artistic creative processes including “Design Thinking” (Stanford dSchool). Fourth and fifth grade artists use Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to design on computers. Students explore animation, graphic design, and visual note taking in Art as well as in the LES Art Club. A robust annual clay unit has included projects like a collaborative tile mural and fundraising for the local food bank (“Empty Bowls”). The entire student body created art for a digital photo-mosaic mural at Akron Children’s Hospital in spring 2015. Yearly identification for giftedness in Visual Art is done by the Art Department, with thirteen Leighton portfolios scored as gifted in spring 2016.

Centrally located in the hub of the school, the media center is the location for technology based media classes, which are held once a week for forty-five minutes and attended by all students. Designed and instructed by a certified media specialist, media classes support the national technology standards from ISTE, the state school library standards as defined by the Ohio Department of Education, and the district core curricula. The overall goal of the program, then, is to create citizens who gather, use, and create information efficiently and successfully. Using a mobile cart of Chromebooks and taking advantage of our being a Google Apps for Education district, students collaborate on and participate in solving real-life problems. Initiatives such as Genius Hour, STEAM, and brain-based learning are the foci of media classes, as students are given opportunities to develop independent learning paths, work with creative thinking tools such as Strawbees and littleBits, and work through relevant research questions.

The 3rd grade students at Leighton Elementary have Physical Education 2 times a week for 45 minutes and our 4th & 5th grade students receive PE once a week for 45 minutes. We are preparing our students for a lifetime of activity by ensuring that they gain proficiency in both health-related and skill-related fitness components, movement experience that leads to physical competence and confidence, and the content knowledge to be an informed consumer of health, fitness, and activity-related situations throughout their lives. We also focus on wanting students to learn about problem solving, being team players, communicating and collaborating with others, and being good citizens. We utilize problem solving skills in activities and communication skills every day. Our school-wide expectations are to be responsible and respectful and to give their best effort every day.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Leighton Elementary School utilizes multiple tiers of support to develop the academic and behavioral skills of all students. Many students begin the school year with intervention plans already in place; however, teachers can refer students as candidates for intervention at any time. Referrals are reviewed with members of Leighton's Response-to-Intervention team which is a multidisciplinary group of staff members designed to review student data and to help coordinate interventions. When students are identified as needing intervention, an intervention plan is developed that outlines the student's primary area of difficulty, the research-based intervention to be implemented, a description of progress monitoring procedures, and a goal for intervention. Reviews of student progress typically occur each quarter to determine if the intervention should be continued or changed. In addition to school staff, the parents of students are often invited to participate in the process of planning interventions.

Teachers have time built into their daily schedules that is designated for intervention and enrichment activities. This is a time that whole group instruction is paused, and teachers prepare various learning activities for small groups of students. This is also a time that tutors, intervention specialists, therapists, and other teachers can provide additional instruction that targets areas of specific skill development. Many of the interventions are focused on mathematics and literacy skill development. Mathematics interventions may focus on developing number sense, computation, or problem solving skills. The use of Math Add+Vantage numeracy activities, hands-on manipulatives, explicit problem solving instruction, modeling, repeated practice, and re-teaching outline the framework of math intervention. Literacy interventions focus on reading decoding, reading fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and written expression skills. One of the primary literacy interventions used is the Leveled Literacy Intervention. The Leveled Literacy Intervention consists of systematic, small group instruction using leveled books for reading, writing, and phonics skill development. Additional instructional supports include behavioral interventions, gifted and talented instruction, and integration of technology. Behavior interventions vary; however, they often include discussing, modeling, and role-playing specific behaviors associated with student success and having a reinforcement schedule for students when they demonstrate those behaviors. The gifted and talented instruction is designed to facilitate the extension of student learning in a supported problem-based and technology-centered approach. Students are also provided instruction using Google Apps for Education. Google Classroom is commonly used for projects, assessments, communication with parents and students, and to provide additional learning resources.

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

A variety of assessment methods are implemented in all classrooms throughout our school in order to measure student knowledge and performance. These assessment include pre-assessment, formative and summative assessments, along with culminating project/problem-based demonstrations of understanding.

Common benchmark assessments are used in Math and Language Arts. These assessments are used to help identify students who may benefit from differentiated instruction and targeted intervention. Benchmarks such as Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, AIMSweb, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory are given three times each year to measure student progress. If a student is identified as needing intervention, these assessments are often used to set goals and to monitor student progress. Common formative and summative assessments have been developed across grade levels to ensure the Common Core Standards are being taught and assessed with the ultimate goal of mastery. Assessments are all created based on district pacing guides that are aligned to state and national standards. To ensure that all students make growth in the content areas, Student Learning Objectives (similar to a unit pre/posttest) are implemented. If students are unable to show mastery of the standards, they are given targeted interventions and reassessed to show progression and eventual mastery.

As assessment data is gathered, it is discussed within grade level Professional Learning Communities and Response to Intervention Teams. Following data analysis, differentiated instruction is developed and strengthened to meet the learning needs. Teachers share and compare methodologies along with strategies to best help all of our learners be successful. Assessments are reviewed and changed based on student performance and feedback. For example, after summative assessments are given to the entire grade level, teachers complete an item analysis of their students' performance and base their future instruction on areas that need more in-depth instruction.

Due to the importance of parents being our partners in learning, student performance is communicated in a variety of ways. For example, all students and parents have access to the Parent Internet Viewer, which gives them updated and accurate information related to their child's progress including grades and detailed teacher comments. Students receive immediate feedback for projects submitted through Google Classroom. Parents are encouraged to contact teachers in a variety of ways such as email, phone, or in person to address any questions or concerns. To open the school year, we hold a Parent Meeting during which we share curriculum and expectations per grade level allowing parents to travel between content area teachers.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We believe that nurturing a positive school climate for our students is the backbone for effective learning. It takes a village to raise our children. This encompasses every professional in and outside of our building spanning from our parents, bus drivers, nurses, secretaries, janitorial staff, cafeteria aides, cooks, etc. in order for students to have a successful day. It is important to have a strong foundation and support each student's emotional needs. We begin our daily activities by re-enforcing our building motto of "Work Hard and Play Fair." Students understand that persistence and perseverance are essential to their growth. They also understand the need to treat everyone as they would like to be treated and that respecting one another is an essential life skill. We focus on the underlying health of the student. Our occupational therapist provides many opportunities for students to feel good about their school and the hard work they put into their academics. Additionally, our OT trained many staff members on how to use a calm moments approach. It was part of Ohio Department of Education's Every Moment Counts: Promoting Mental Health Throughout the Day initiative under the leadership of Cleveland State Professor, Susan Bazyk, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA. There are task cards designed to offer quick solutions for any school personnel to help all students develop positive coping strategies. These strategies have helped students to become familiar with positive thinking and, sensory and focusing/calming strategies. We work together each year to provide students with the power to feel good about showing what they know on their state tests. We ease testing anxiety by organizing school-wide assemblies, a student-led group created a yoga breathing technique video, and more.

We have high expectations for every single student at Leighton Elementary. We recognize that students come from a variety of backgrounds and upbringings, but also that all students are capable learners. Our staff's belief in setting the bar high allows our students to succeed at higher levels.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Engaging our families and community is an extremely important component to student achievement at Leighton Elementary. Staff works closely with families in a variety of ways throughout the school year. One important interaction with families occurs before school begins with our "Meet & Greet/Curriculum Night." This gives students a chance to meet and interact with their new teachers, but it also allows parents an opportunity to meet the teachers and learn about the upcoming school year. Parents stay engaged and contribute to school culture and student success by decorating the building entrance, serving as "career day" speakers, volunteering for the school-wide PBS program, participating in the district 5-year planning process, supporting teachers in classrooms, and operating our PTO organization.

Our partnership with the community of Aurora also contributes significantly to the growth and development of students and staff alike. We are fortunate to have two dedicated School Resources Officers assigned to our district by the Aurora Police Department. Our staff works directly with the Aurora Historical Society to enhance students' knowledge of the rich history of the community. The Aurora Schools Foundation supports students and teachers through grants which directly impact student learning. Several years ago, a joint venture between the schools and community resulted in the creation of the Little Free Library. These are small libraries located throughout the community in which children and adults can borrow and return books at their leisure. Each year at Valentine's Day, students create anonymous valentines and place them in various spots around town for unsuspecting residents to find. This program is called "Love Around Aurora." We teach our students that simple random acts of kindness can make a difference in others' lives. The Mayor of Aurora, along with City Council members speak with our students each year as part of our local government unit, and our school board members are invited to read to students in celebration of Read Across America. Each year the Aurora Tree Commission holds a contest selecting the best poster, poem, woodcraft, and photo from Leighton's fifth grade student entries. Every year, one class of our students with special needs makes dog treats to raise money for their own unique needs.

We are in constant communication with our families. Each week, teachers send out digital newsletters keeping parents informed about what their child is learning in the classroom. All parents have internet access to their children's grades through the PIV, the Parent Internet Viewer. Each building has its own website on the district webpage to provide appropriate information. Teachers have website and blogs where they post links for learning and pictures from classroom activities. Our media specialist has created a Symbaloo that allows students to access a variety of websites all in one interface. We also connect with many authors from around the world. The ability to Skype has greatly changed the way we teach.

3. Professional Development:

The staff at Leighton are lifelong learners and pride ourselves on looking to the most respected professionals in our field and content area experts in order for us to provide students with high quality and stellar educations. As we may look to outside professionals to help guide our instruction, we know that we are the experts of our fields. We trust and collaborate with each other in Professional Learning Communities, in which we plan, learn methods, and share ideas with each other and collaborate on academic performance of students. We understand that in order to move our students forward, we look to each other to be our very own professional development. We take professional learning very seriously as we are always looking forward to improve student results.

Teachers in our school go above and beyond to learn in many different settings, bring their learning back to the school, and educate other teachers on what they learned. Additionally, Professional Development days are set up to enable teachers to working together to lead sessions on a variety of educational topics while the staff has the liberty to chose the sessions they would like to attend in order to best meet their own strengths and weaknesses. This allows our teachers to be more well-rounded and up-to-date on changes in education. This past year, one session offered was the new release of the movie "Most Likely to Succeed" followed by intellectual conversations about how to become more student-centered while educating our students. We collaborate on putting students in problem based learning situations, STEAM/STEM projects, and SOLE (self-organized learning environments) in order for them to develop into critical thinkers.

Additionally, we have a curriculum director, a math coach, and a reading coach who support us and bring in fresh ideas and positively critique our teaching methods to increase student achievement. With their assistance, we strive for better results such as helping us to produce common summatives in a non-biased way to assess students.

Our teachers and coaches have traveled to other states, such as New York in order to get high quality PD to learn a new process of teaching writing, and to Virginia to understand differentiation. We travel to Columbus and Cleveland to attend National and State conferences such as OCTM and OETC. We use 21st century technology to keep on top of the ways kids learn and what will be expected in their job and careers one day. We cannot predict what kinds of jobs will be available, but as teachers, we know we must be active learners of technology. One example of this is a book talk, formed by a group of dedicated teachers, based on the book *Teach Like a Pirate* by Dave Burgess in which we virtually talked to each other using Twitter and the author joined us in our tweet chats. Our staff also Skyped with the author to ask questions about how we could engage our students more.

We have cohorts with our local university as well as with neighboring districts.and release time is provided to continue to work on pacing guides and vertical alignment.

4. School Leadership:

An important philosophy within our district, and particularly at our school, is that all staff members are leaders. While traditional leadership positions exist, it is encouraged that all staff members view themselves as leaders and see their positions in the same way. One paradigm shift that's taken place is the idea that we are no longer just responsible for our own assigned students. Rather, all staff being leaders requires that we view all students as our own. Consequently, whenever there's a student in need, we don't wait for their assigned teacher to become available. Teachers assess the situation and act immediately in the best interest of the student.

The principal has been here for only two years, but he brings a solid veteran presence to the building, with an understanding of what a mixed veteran professional staff needs to perform its greatest task teaching our students. We have eight staff members who serve on the teacher-leader team, representing all grade levels, specials, and guidance. This team meets approximately every two weeks. Decision making is seldom top down at the building level; it is a combination of discussing what must be done, determining how best to make that happen, and doing it. Across the building, once per week, our professional learning communities meet. The focus of these meetings is student achievement and what we can do to help our students succeed.

Additionally, our goal is to develop student leaders. We have a program, Leighton Leaders, which gives fourth and fifth grade students the opportunity to develop leadership skills while creating school-based and community-based programs. Each school year the Leighton Leaders create and coordinate fundraisers for local charities, support local families with our holiday “Flurry of Gifts” program, and advertise building programs by decorating the hallways. Students and staff alike look to our Leighton Leaders to set the example for all to follow.

The Response-to-Intervention Leadership Team includes the principal, guidance counselor, school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, and tutors. This team is responsible for coordinating benchmark assessments and providing consultation with teachers in regard to intervention development and progress monitoring.

Leighton also has a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Team. This team includes the principal, guidance counselor, teachers, and parent volunteers. It typically meets monthly and has been responsible for the development and promotion of Leighton’s school-wide behavior expectations of Respect, Responsibility, and Problem Solving. It also organizes quarterly assemblies that are designed as incentives for students who meet predetermined criteria related to following school rules.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We are a building and school community that values education with strong parental and community support, committed students, excellent teachers and an administrative team that understands how this process must function together. Obviously, the success of our students at their next level is one indicator of academic success.

Our culture of learning produces multiple outstanding factors exemplifying consistent academic success. Our staff is the root of our success, and each member supports all aspects that have made Leighton grow strong. The leading factor in our academic success is our Professional Learning Communities (PLC) foundation. We have nurtured three key ideas that have been the rich soil to grow a strong PLC. We first look at our purpose and make sure it is clear. Our meetings are set with a comprehensible focus in mind. From this focus, we collaborate. Our school culture is a team effort. We collaborate professionally in all areas, putting our students first. We use our results as both a focal point and a growing point, demonstrating continuous proof that we are all steadfast learners in pursuit of ongoing achievement.

Our school and community culture has nurtured many facets of these key ideas to help all our students succeed. We meet weekly as grade level teams with team leaders who create the purpose for the meeting. Teams collaborate through standards, share professional opportunities, examine common academic struggles, and deeply analyze results of summative assessments. Constant feedback loops of discussion, interfacing, and data analysis inform our learning and teaching paradigm. Administration supports the innovative thinking and practices carefully honed by staff members as a result of PLC work. Yet, “work” is not a word staff members associate with Leighton. Rather, academic success is the product of dedicated staff, calibrated interventions, and passionate learners.

Education has had major shifts in standards and statewide testing impacts what we want students to be able to do. Our greenhouse is continually growing, being nurtured, and ever changing with our Professional Learning Communities, which have made us academically successful. These passions come from our active visions, building upon new practices, and sharing new endeavors to create an environment where everyone grows. We all develop in different ways and are not focused on how any one individual gets there. Our success is much deeper, within our roots, as we have developed a culture that has made every student at Leighton Elementary School shine.