U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Ms. Lorraine E Lybarger
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Olive B. Loss Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 200 Brennan Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Bear   State DE   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19701-6360

County   New Castle County

Telephone (302) 832-1343   Fax (302) 832-3213

Web site/URL http://olivebloss.org   E-mail   Lorraine.Lybarger@appo.k12.de.us

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. Matthew Burrows   E-mail matthew.burrows@appo.k12.de.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Appoquinimink School District   Tel.   (302) 376-4101
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. Richard Forsten Esq.
(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. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.

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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.

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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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 (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   3 Middle/Junior high schools
                                  2 High schools
                                  0 K-12 schools

                                  15 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
   [X] Suburban
   [ ] Small city or town in a rural area
   [ ] Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 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	54	56	110
2	73	55	128
3	63	50	113
4	75	65	140
5	72	66	138
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	337	292	629

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

    0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    15 % Asian
    17 % Black or African American
    6 % Hispanic or Latino
    0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    58 % White
    4 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 4%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	18
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	25
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	626
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.040
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %
    44 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Greek, Hindi, Korean, Marachi, Polish, Spanish, Tamil, Teluga, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11 %
    Total number students who qualify: 72

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
    71 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.

6	Autism	0	Orthopedic Impairment
0	Deafness	10	Other Health Impaired
0	Deaf-Blindness	29	Specific Learning Disability
0	Emotional Disturbance	19	Speech or Language Impairment
1	Hearing Impairment	0	Traumatic Brain Injury
2	Mental Retardation	0	Visual Impairment Including Blindness
0	Multiple Disabilities	4	Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>15</u>

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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
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   <u>0:1</u>

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

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	97%	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 2016.

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 <u> </u>   No <u>X</u>

    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.

Our mission at Olive B. Loss School is to inspire a community of learners to strive for excellence.

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

Olive B. Loss is an economically and culturally diverse elementary school celebrating its 15th year of operation. Since its inception, the school has operated at or above capacity, and consistently leads the Appoquinimink School District and the State of Delaware in academic achievement.

The school was named after Olive B. Loss, who served as the first female superintendent of a Delaware school district. Even though she has passed away, her legacy lives on in the school's commitment to visionary leadership. Just as Olive B. Loss was a pioneer, the staff and administrators at our school are dedicated to innovation and excellence in education.

We currently educate 638 students in grades one through five. Last year, 74% of students identified with special needs met or exceeded Common Core proficiency standards on the Smarter Balanced ELA Assessment, which represents a 27% increase from the previous year. This performance prompted the Delaware Department of Education to reach out to our school for ideas and advice to best serve students across the state with special needs. Additionally, the achievement gap for African American students reflects a positive story. Data for the whole school indicates only a 5% difference in performance between African American and Caucasian students in English Language Arts. These are not our only areas of strength. We have consistently achieved top scores in every content area when compared to all students in charter, magnet, and public schools across the state. During the 2016 school year, our students ranked second overall in ELA and fourth in Math on the Smarter Balanced Assessments. Based on DCAS results, our school ranked third in Science and second in Social Studies.

We consider our inclusive practices key to the success of ALL students. Inclusiveness takes many forms. It starts in the classroom with the elimination of programs which segregate identified students (those with behavioral, cognitive, physical challenges) from their peers. Next, we establish a safe and supportive environment through daily community meetings where students practice speaking and listening and discuss principles of personal and interpersonal effectiveness such as acceptance, leadership, responsibility, and teamwork.

In our learning community, family involvement means 100% of parents/guardians are actively engaged. This year, most parents or guardians will spend 40 or more hours in our building, participating in a variety of activities. While we have a full complement of "traditional" offerings, more than a dozen represent innovative opportunities that are inquiry based and emphasize discovery in the classroom. These activities make education engaging and accessible for parents. They encourage families to promote and support the learning that occurs in the classroom at home, thereby establishing a strong home-school connection.

Student-staff-parent communication propels engagement and achievement. Every teacher utilizes electronic media. Interactive blogs launched by classroom teachers provide the unique opportunity for the entire family to participate in learning activities after the students leave school for the day. Conferences at all grade levels are facilitated by students. This process begins with, and is reinforced by, personalized teacher-student goal-setting discussions using data. By giving students an active role they are empowered to take ownership of their learning goals and growth.

In searching for answers beyond the classroom, we have established a collaborative partnership with the University of Delaware's College of Engineering. Prospective engineers work with our teachers to develop and deliver engineering problems that enable children to learn through their own investigations, rather than presenting facts and a smooth path to knowledge. This places the emphasis on how we come to know, rather than what we know. We want our children to be inventive, creative, and unafraid to take risks. What we are teaching in engineering applies to everything in life. By telling students to hurry up and fail, we ease the fear of failure and emphasize the concept that the first idea is seldom the best or only solution. Based on the success we've experienced, this philosophy of inquiry has now been applied across all content areas.

Professional development represents a shared vision and occurs throughout the calendar year. Staff at all levels provide input on training interests and current educational best practices. A survey process ensures

that all voices are heard. Curriculum leaders receive training on research-based instructional practices and return to serve as facilitators and coaches. Throughout implementation, the staff feels comfortable taking risks and using data to reflect upon the effectiveness of newly implemented instructional strategies. This process reflects our commitment to distributive leadership and continuous improvement in student and staff achievement.

We are an experienced and cohesive school community. Teachers who work at Olive B. Loss, stay at Olive B. Loss. Student alumni return to contribute their time and talent. Parents and community members play an active role in our building. Staff, students (past and present), parents, and community members are proud to call Olive B. Loss School their home.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. **Core Curriculum:**

All instruction in our school is driven by the Common Core State Standards and our school community's commitment to excellence. Our curriculum is designed to be progressive. We believe that everything we do creates the opportunity for students to achieve at a higher level. Our students are not restricted by the label of a specific grade level. Teachers offer students opportunities to access differentiated content and materials, based on individual achievement and interest. A rigorous curriculum allows all students the opportunity to exceed standards.

We provide a literature-rich environment for our students. Our English Language Arts program is comprised of six key strands: literature, nonfiction, foundational skills, language, speaking and listening, and writing. We teach our students to be discerning readers who can apply strategies to a variety of texts of varying complexity. As a result, our ELA instruction crosses all curricular areas. We also incorporate writing experiences into all content instruction. Our students are just as comfortable writing a story as they are developing the language for a scientific claim and providing evidence to support it. With our commitment to constant growth for all learners, our teachers provide their students with opportunities to read outside of their grade level band, to enrich their vocabulary and extend their understanding of more complex ideas. A majority of our students participate in weekly literature circle meetings, during which they develop and practice how to become active listeners, respond constructively to their peers, and think critically about theirs and others' diverse opinions. This is a safe place for children to respectfully disagree with each other and open their minds to alternative viewpoints. Our school librarian collaborates with classroom teachers to provide authentic research opportunities for students throughout the school year. Emphasis is placed on becoming responsible evaluators of information, thinking critically about the synthesis of facts, and properly citing resources as an ethical user of information. We strive to grow educated, civic-minded citizens who will be able to discern a reliable source of information from a subjective one, and make informed decisions using trustworthy information. Our children live in an information-rich society where they are constantly barraged by media. Olive B. Loss students filter information through a lens of objectivity.

Teachers at Olive B. Loss focus on math concepts, not procedures. We teach our students to discuss their mathematical reasoning and justify thinking, both verbally and in writing. Our Math program is comprised of four key strands: numbers and operations, measurement and data, operations and algebraic thinking, and geometry. Students are often challenged by their teachers to struggle productively to solve real-world problems. During that process, children independently discover strategies that prove effective and efficient. They are then responsible for sharing their thinking with classmates, who have the opportunity to implement demonstrated strategies. Thus, all students' knowledge of math strategies is constantly growing. Additionally, we facilitate Number Talks in all classrooms and engage in math discourse daily. In this highly engaging environment, nonverbal signals help build a safe culture where every child responds constructively to their peers.

Just as with our ELA and Math curricula, science instruction is focused on application of the science practices, which will prepare our students for the jobs of the future. We are moving towards full implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards. In every classroom, creativity and collaboration is paramount. Students think about real-world problems and engineer possible solutions to improve conditions locally and globally. In the inquiry-based model, children are creating and conducting hands-on investigations to help them make sense of scientific phenomena. They make claims about science concepts by using the results of their investigations to support their thinking and explain their reasoning.

Our Social Studies curriculum consists of four key strands: history, geography, economics, and civics. Standards are taught within the context of broader questions. When we study geography we ask questions like: How do the resources of an area affect human settlement? How do communities change over time? How do human actions impact their surroundings? The strategies of inquiry learning facilitate student engagement and deepen understanding. Civics instruction is woven into all aspects of school culture, from establishing classroom and school-wide rules and expectations to discussing the rights and responsibilities of

American citizens.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students at Olive B. Loss Elementary (OBL) participate in the visual and performing arts, physical education, technology and World Language instruction. The design of OBL's other curriculum areas reflects our commitment to the development of students' 21st century skills (communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration). We work to ensure that students understand through these related arts they can mindfully shape, define, and empower their growing and changing lives.

General Music
We believe that early musical training helps develop brain areas involved in language and reasoning and promotes creativity and higher order thinking. Students develop individual musicianship by singing, chanting, moving, and playing instruments. They apply their skills through reading and writing music that represents many styles and cultures. All students are given opportunities to create musical compositions individually and collaboratively. Students participate in performances for the school, families, and community members to showcase their learning. We encourage children to think about how they can become lifelong musicians and share their musical talents with others. Additionally, fourth and fifth grade students are invited to meet weekly to study a woodwind, brass, percussion, or string instrument in a small group setting.

Visual Art
OBL students are encouraged to explore their imaginations, discover art from diverse cultures, research art history and be inspired by master artists. Students attend art class to experience the joys and challenges of drawing, painting, collage-making, printmaking and sculpting. As members of a creative community, our students know that there are no mistakes in art. They learn to believe in themselves as individual creators, flexible thinkers, problem-solvers and collaborators.

Technology
The technology teacher collaborates with classroom teachers and the librarian to infuse technology into the academic curriculum. Students learn the versatility of technology and how it can be used to access and communicate information and engineer solutions to problems. Projects range from slide shows in Pixie 4, Google Slides, Powerpoint, and Prezi to commercials using a green screen app. Students work on keyboarding skills with a focus on Microsoft Word, Publisher, and other productivity programs. A key component of our technology program is teaching students how to code and read code. Students learn basic coding, Blockly, and Coffee Script.

Spanish
All students receive instruction in Spanish language. They use higher order thinking skills as they develop cultural awareness, listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities in Spanish. As students learn another language and are exposed to other cultures, they begin to evaluate and refine their own ways of thinking about the world.

PE
The staff at Olive B. Loss School recognize the important role that both physical activity and health knowledge play in creating successful learners. In addition to formal Physical Education classes, students also have opportunities to participate in exercise throughout the school day.

Receiving grants and raising money within our community, we have a paved quarter mile walking path with fitness stations installed along the circuit. All students in our school participate in Walking Club and walk on the path a minimum of a half mile during the school day three times per week. This is in addition to their daily recess. A 60' x 20' room addition was built to create a student fitness lab within our school where students are free to choose activities which work on all five fitness components as well as balance, agility, and cross body/mind exercises. Teachers at our school embed movement breaks within their class lessons. Having an open fitness lab gives students a longer period of time to exercise their body and brain to refocus

on learning. Fitness lab equipment includes a climbing wall, treadmills, mini trampolines, rowing machines, virtual game bikes, and video dance games. All students participate in health lessons during weekly physical education/health class. These include physical activity knowledge, physical skill development, nutrition lessons, and health topics such as safety, hygiene, and health damaging habits. OBL's PE lessons provide academic skills practice by integrating cross-curricular instruction in areas such as life science, math, and language arts.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Our goal at Olive B. Loss School is to meet the needs of all of our students, from those who require remediation to achieve academic success to those who benefit from enrichment and extension of the curriculum. Instructional decisions are driven by students' needs as reflected in the data from various sources: including nationally-normed assessments Smarter Balanced and Measures of Academic Progress, as well as formative and summative assessments developed at the school level. Student achievement has been positively impacted by the Appoquinimink School District's adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and continuous analysis of disaggregated data. We have unpacked the Common Core State Standards at every grade level and designed assessment activities that are directly aligned with the CCSS. This has provided teachers with a deeper understanding of each of their students' proficiency level with each skill. That allows for differentiated learning activities targeted to students' specific needs. Each time we develop and administer an assessment, a cycle of continuous feedback is created for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Student progress is monitored and communicated consistently to all stakeholders. One of the factors that contributes to our students' consistently high achievement is that they take responsibility for their learning and set goals for their own academic progress. There is a commitment to constant and continuous growth.

All students participate in Response to Intervention during which instruction is targeted to their specific needs in ELA and mathematics based upon multiple sources of data. Students in tiers 2 and 3 receive instructional interventions to strengthen foundational skills and implement strategies that will help them be successful in the classroom. Teachers progress monitor students in tier 3 weekly and students in tier 2 biweekly. Every six weeks, teachers and administrators meet to discuss student progress and to determine the level of intervention which will maximize student achievement. Students who exceed grade level standards participate in enrichment activities, including reading novels and nonfiction selections at the higher end of the complexity bands, completing engineering projects (including, but not limited to activities in the Engineering is Elementary program), or applying advanced math concepts in the context of real world problems.

Teachers provide students with differentiated learning opportunities in addition to RTI. Students participate in research-based programs that target their areas of need, such as fluency, inferential thinking, written expression, phonetics skills, number sense, computations, and algebraic thinking. Every student in our school participates in the Accelerated Reader Program. Children are encouraged to self-select books to read within their Lexile range. Regardless of reading proficiency, all students work towards meeting rigorous, achievable goals for themselves while developing the skills to become life-long readers.

Our staff is committed to integrating technology into instruction. Teachers have been trained in Schoology, and how to utilize online opportunities and resources to increase engagement in learning. Through District and PTA support, we have purchased over 100 electronic tablets and laptops. Our goal, beyond immediate academic excellence, is to ensure students are technologically literate and able to apply the critical thinking skills necessary for 21st century learners. Our collaboration with the School of Engineering at the University of Delaware, our STEM programs, the inquiry-based model of learning we embrace, and the high level of math discourse in our classrooms all support the development of global citizens.

We are proud of our many accomplishments, especially those that reflect the success of students in our subgroups. Our students ranked second in the state of Delaware in 2016 on ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment. From 2015 to 2016, the number of students identified with special needs who scored proficient or advanced on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased 27%; 74% of students with an IEP scored proficient or above compared to 88% of all students. In 2015, there was a 38% achievement gap between

students identified with special needs and all students. In 2016, that gap was reduced to 14%.

Our school ranked fourth in the state on the Math Smarter Balanced in 2016. There was a one percent decrease in the achievement gap between students identified with special needs and all students, and the gap between African American students and all students did not increase. We have identified the field of mathematics as an area of focus for our school. We have exciting plans to improve student achievement, by encouraging students to develop their own understanding of math concepts as they productively struggle with real world problems, focusing on math reasoning over math procedures, and emphasizing clear verbal and written communication of math understanding. Our success in ELA and our commitment to improvement in math hinges on data. Student achievement is the focus every time staff meets; in our Professional Learning Communities, staff meetings, and during professional development days. Data is disaggregated by sub groups and teachers collaboratively develop and implement action plans to ensure every student succeeds.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

Olive B. Loss School uses a variety of strategies and programs to create a safe and accepting climate. Classroom community meetings held daily build students' active listening skills and respect for each other's thinking. These meetings allow students to share openly and connect with their classmates. All community members benefit through sharing or listening while establishing their own viewpoints. These practices are also reflected in how our staff interacts and works together. During staff meetings and twice weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, teachers are encouraged to share their teaching strategies while collaborating with peers. We celebrate new ideas used with our students and offer each other constructive feedback with the common goal of achieving best teaching practices.

We celebrate students in a variety of ways. Student work is displayed in the halls. Banners distinguish students' level of achievement in our school-wide Accelerated Reading program. Morning announcements recognize classrooms with perfect attendance, birthdays, upcoming themed spirit days, and extracurricular student achievements. We announce upcoming events such as the STEM Fair, Walk-a-Thon and our PTA's Carnival to promote community participation.

Our Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Team is comprised of staff and community members. The team meets to discuss and outline expectations for school-wide, classroom, and individual student behavior. Teaching these expectations builds positive relationships that transfer from teacher to student, student to student, and student to home.

The WISE Owl is our school mascot. The acronym, WISE, stands for When Inspired Students Succeed. By awarding WISE Owl tickets, students are motivated to demonstrate the ABC's (Act Responsibly, Be Cooperative, and Consider Others) of Olive B. Loss School. Students use these tickets in various ways. Submitted tickets are drawn from every grade level and announced each morning as recognition. Students in older grades can use tickets to purchase items at the Wise Owl store. In addition to the tickets, each classroom utilizes a common, interactive chart to encourage positive behavior. Our culture is built on pride in our school. We have set a tone of trust and respect that carries into academic and social interactions throughout the day. Our teachers and students set clear, measurable goals together, thus setting consistent expectations for individual student achievement. A climate of trust and respect allows us to help students develop a sense of acceptance, leadership, personal responsibility, and teamwork.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

Community engagement and support plays a vital role in the success of Olive B. Loss. It starts with frequent and ongoing communication between students, parents and community members. Teachers utilize agenda books, Friday folders, interactive blogs, the school website and scheduling applications to keep families informed of learning opportunities and upcoming events. Families receive a weekly message (transmitted via email and phone) that provides current school news. They are often invited into the classroom to celebrate students' learning and achievements. In addition, volunteers are seen in our building daily, providing support for teachers and office staff. With their help, teachers are able to focus on planning quality instruction.

One of our valued relationships is with the University of Delaware. Students and Professors from the College of Engineering's Deep Roots Outreach Program (DROP) have partnered to create engineering challenges for our students. During STEM activities, these college role models help facilitate the Engineering Design Process. As our students become more proficient with inquiry-based learning and research, the University's database system, UDLib Search, provides resources to further 21st Century Skills. Professional development for teachers was provided by UD's Reference and Instructional Service Department. This relationship gives teachers additional strategies to offer students during learning opportunities.

Additionally, our faculty creates opportunities to bring the community together. Whether addressing student academic achievements or artistic contributions, we host multiple activities for parents and the community to attend. Events, such as the Education Showcase and STEM Family Nights allow the community to engage in hands-on activities together, as well as celebrate authentic student learning. Our community shows support for the arts by providing sold-out shows for the school musical, grade-level concerts, an annual Student Art Show, and other events where students demonstrate their talents. Beyond engaging with students, we provide opportunities for families to learn about our current instructional practices and expectations for student learning through PTA sponsored Curriculum Nights.

Our school's PTA is vital to our school's development, focusing on student and school success. The PTA supports us through the purchase of educational tools such as SmartBoards, laptops, and iPads. In addition, our students have access in school and at home to educational applications such as Study Island. The PTA partners with businesses in our surrounding community, hosting a Bingo Night, a school Walk-a-Thon, restaurant nights and other fun events to fund these programs. These activities unite everyone for a common goal of student achievement.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is ongoing at Olive B. Loss, and closely aligned to our distributive leadership model. We discuss educational research and emerging trends in order to be proactive. Teacher Leaders within our building serve on a variety of curriculum-based cohorts at the district and state level. These leaders bring awareness and information to the staff regarding changes in education.

In order to create gradual but meaningful change, professional development is offered in a way that is systematic and manageable. We continually seek new methods of instruction, student engagement and student-centered learning to drive our professional development opportunities. To accomplish this, student data is analyzed and teachers are surveyed about instructional needs. Surveys offer teachers a chance to identify areas within which they need to improve as well as highlight areas of strength.

Feedback from surveys target areas of instructional need. Our professional development is scaffolded. Classroom teachers provide workshops in a variety of content areas which allow for opportunities to practice new concepts. Teachers are first given information or strategies, collaborate on lesson design and the best ways to present new ideas to students. After implementation of lessons or strategies, our staff reflects upon the lessons. In teams, we work to analyze strengths and areas of need, thus determining future professional development.

Appoquinimink School District curriculum and instructional specialists also provide professional development in their areas of expertise. For instance, as more technology has become available in the classroom, the leadership team recognized the need to have the district technology specialist provide our staff with training on current and applicable programs. Our district Math specialist has been actively involved in professional development with our staff this year, providing additional trainings in math discourse.

One example of our professional development process involves the national transition toward Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Delaware has chosen to adopt NGSS and has asked districts to implement the Science and Engineering Practices. Being charged with taking information back to the school, our Teacher Leader presented professional development on how to utilize existing materials while implementing new practices. Ongoing professional development and examples of new methods are provided. Teachers are given the opportunity to create new lessons and assessments to ensure student success. The impact of this type of professional development is reflected in the outstanding standardized science scores received by our students each year. We have seen a direct correlation between thoughtfully prepared professional development and student achievement, as evidenced by our success at closing the gap in ELA.

4. School Leadership:

The staff at Olive B. Loss School embraces the distributive model of leadership. This begins with our administrators, who encourage staff members to take advantage of opportunities to become teacher leaders. The principal who opened Olive B. Loss School in 2002 remains its leader today, in 2017. Combined with our high teacher retention rate, we believe this consistency has been one of the reasons why so many of our teachers actively seek out leadership roles.

Instructional decisions for our school are made by our PLC Leadership Team which consists of representatives from each grade level (general education and special education teachers), instructional coaches, the school librarian, the technology instructor, the principal, and the assistant principal. The team analyzes student data to determine areas of strength and areas for improvement. With that information in mind, the team develops the School Success Plan (Consolidated Grant) in alignment with the Appoquinimink School District Success Plan, identifies topics for professional development with whole staff input, and prepares and presents staff trainings. In addition, the team discusses school policies and programs and the potential impact upon students and staff.

Every teacher is a member of their grade level Professional Learning Community which meets twice a week for a total of 90 minutes per week. In conjunction with the School Leadership Team, grade level teams analyze and use disaggregated data to develop instructional action plans. Every teacher has a role that she fulfills during meetings, and teams submit notes and data to administrators for review.

Many teachers at our school are members of instructional cadres including ELA, Math, Social Studies, and Science. They are responsible for attending district meetings and trainings and returning to our school to share information. In addition, they plan lessons to meet the standards in their content area and model those lessons for other teachers.

Teachers are active in various committees that directly impact the culture and achievement of our school. The Positive Behavior Support team develops school-wide rules, analyzes discipline data from a proactive standpoint in collaboration with the school Discipline Committee, and rewards students for good citizenship. They are responsible for planning both staff and student events to promote a positive school climate and culture. Our Instructional Support Team consists of the Educational Diagnostician, School Psychologist, Instructional Coaches, Classroom teachers, the Speech Therapist, the School Counselor, and school administrators. The goal of the IST team is to identify instructional strategies to be implemented in the classroom to ensure the success of individual students. Efficacy of the strategies is monitored by the team.

The distributive model empowers teachers to take risks and fosters a sense of community among staff members. Teachers trust each other as resources, as experts in specific instructional strategies, as collaborative partners, and as part of a group dedicated to students.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Academic excellence is our goal. We work together to inspire a community of learners that strive for excellence. Inclusivity has a different meaning here. Our culture is one of collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity; values that empower students with the skills needed to impact the global society. We create an environment where personal and academic growth is encouraged and expected among students and teachers. Our staff model hard work and personal responsibility, creating a welcoming, comfortable, but academically demanding culture where students can thrive.

As educators, we strive to continually reflect and improve our instructional practices. Lessons are not recycled, rather, they are improved through reflection and student response. Teachers and students are actively engaged through critical questioning, distributive summarizing, discussions, and student led activities. Within a lesson, the teacher checks for understanding and adjusts the lesson based on immediate formative feedback. Student responses directly impact instruction. This is how we ensure our students are successful and instruction is directly aligned with lesson goals. Collaboratively, teachers analyze data from formative, summative, and unit assessments to determine areas of instructional need for the entire grade level.

We ensure academic growth by providing a positive and encouraging school climate. Our priority is for children to feel safe and cared for, while being a valued member of our school community. Within each classroom children are active members of a community meeting where they greet one another, share ideas and opinions, and discuss relevant topics to prepare them for a successful school day. In addition to establishing positive rapport with classroom teachers, students create meaningful relationships with other adults throughout the entire building. This creates a comfortable environment where students are willing to take risks. School-wide, we have established a positive culture with common language and expectations. Students are recognized and celebrated for being role models and making positive choices through classroom, grade level, and school wide celebrations.

The staff at Olive B. Loss School shares a common philosophy of educating the whole child. We are aware of students' academic and personal needs. Beyond using data to establish students' academic goals, we recognize that socio-economic issues also impact student success. By establishing strong communication between home and school, we create a trusting environment which helps us to better understand the needs of our students.