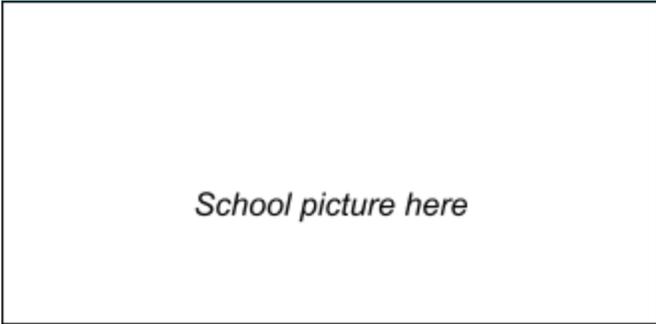




# INDIANA SCHOOLS TO WATCH MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR’S GUIDE



**School Name:**  
Triton Central Middle School  
2016-2017



## 2015- 2016 School Statistics

Source: Indiana Department of Education

Community: Size/characteristics  
Rural, inside MSA (fringe of metropolitan area)  
Enrollment: 441  
Grade Levels: Grades 5-8  
School Schedule: Traditional

### Student Demographics

- 3 % Hispanic
- 94 % White
- 3 % African American
- 0 % Filipino
- 0 % Asian
- 0 % Pacific Islander

- 36 % Free/Reduced Lunch
- 1 % English Learners

2013: TCMS received an "A" for school accountability  
2014: TCMS received an "A" for school accountability  
2015: TCMS received an "A" for school accountability  
(Visit <http://www.imlea.org> to view this school's data for prior years.)

### Designated in 2011; Redesignated 201

- **Middle School :** Triton Central Middle School
- **District :** Northwestern Consolidated Schools of Shelby County
- **County :** Shelby
- **State :** Indiana
- **Principal :** Bobby Thompson
- **School Address :** 4740 West 600 North  
Fairland, Indiana 46126
- **Phone :** (317) 835-3006
- **E-mail:** bthompson@nwshelbyschools.org
- **Website:** www.nwshelbyschools.org/middleschool

## Triton Central Middle School School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

All students are expected to meet high academic standards. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions are aligned with high standards. The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills. Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts and skills being taught. Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts and skills being taught. Teachers use a variety of methods to assess and monitor the progress of student learning. Teachers use both summative and formative assessment. The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards. Students are provided the support they need to meet rigorous academic standards. The adults in the school are provided time and frequent opportunities to enhance student achievement by working with colleagues to deepen their knowledge and to improve their standards-based practice and align lesson to current and best practice..

- Triton Central Middle School (TCMS) challenges all of its students with high academic standards.
- We practice inclusion, giving each student the opportunity to learn with their peers.
- All students have the opportunity to participate in high school credit classes such as Algebra I, Geometry, and Intro to Engineering and Design.
- Foreign language courses are offered to seventh and eighth grade students.
- Students take math courses according to ability, not necessarily by grade level. For example, sixth grade students may take Pre-Algebra, seventh grade students may take Algebra, and eighth grade students may take Geometry.
- Students invest in their own learning through exercising voice and choice in the classroom.
- Students prepare for and lead annual parent conferences.
- Teachers post daily classroom objectives in their classrooms and online; students can easily understand the daily expectations in each class.
- The school has aligned curriculum, instruction, assessment, and appropriate academic interventions with high standards as well.
- Indiana Academic Standards are the guiding forces in our curriculum development.
- Teachers use mastery teaching and assess only on standards in order to adhere to this guideline.
- Our use of the RISE evaluation system has led to consistent ways for teachers to document the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and interventions.
- Tier 3 Remediation classes are offered in math for all students.
- In 2012 we implemented 90-minute blocks of language arts at all grade levels and of Everyday Math in grades five and six.
- Tier 2 Remediation for math and language arts occurs during an Academic Advisory period scheduled for all students. The NWEA and ISTEP+ data shows that students are making growth in all of these Rtl initiatives.
- The curriculum emphasizes deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills.
- Project Based Learning (PBL) and Problem Based Learning (PrBL) are continually implemented in select classrooms
- Each grade-level team of educators creates cross-curricular projects (often in collaboration with the Fine Arts Department) and establishes comprehensive lists of content vocabulary.
- Teachers check student fluency, writing, listening, and speaking skills in multiple content areas—not only language arts.
- Grade levels communicate about student's academic needs, useful strategies, and content alignment.
- The school's one-to-one computing initiative ensures that technology is embedded in content and exploratory classes.
- Educators make regular use of Google Drive and its online suite, allowing students to submit assignments online as well as on paper.
- Students use the digital textbooks, Study Island, and PLATO to review content or work ahead to complete advanced assignments geared toward a higher grade level.
- Instructional strategies include a variety of challenging and engaging activities that are clearly related to the grade-level standards, concepts and skills being taught.
- Cooperative learning takes place in all courses with teacher initiatives, program-led activities, and when the school draws on outside participants such as the Purdue Extension Office of Shelby County.
- Simulations occur in countless forms— including plays, STEM projects, and interactive museum exhibits.
- TCMS strives to allow students hands-on experiences through strategies and initiatives like project-based learning methods, science projects, Everyday Math, and Project Lead the Way (PLTW) faculty certifications.
- Students enrich their classroom experience while on academic field trips to fine arts performances and museums.
- Faculty meetings and professional development during scheduled Team Release Time encourage the use of different teaching strategies and modalities. As a result, many educators have been able to implement a workshop (learning station) structure for their classroom instruction, individualizing the content for each student.
- To emphasize content mastery, teachers conduct a variety of standards checks and formative assessments, focusing on giving students useful feedback to help them grow academically.
- Summative assessments are based in state and national standards.
- Courses utilizing PBL strategies and principles include presentations that encompass numerous methods and allow student to use their multiple intelligence skills.
- Assessments are used to determine student growth, and as a guide for instructional practice.
- Educators implement individualized instruction through workshops and the Study Island and PLATO digital textbooks.

- Students take NWEA three times during the year to test the areas of reading, language usage, and math.
- Data is readily available to educators through the Pivot website as well as printed data cards which the staff update on a regular basis.
- The faculty and master schedule provide students time to meet rigorous academic standards
- All four grade levels of band classes meet during the school day.
- By the end of their four years at the middle school, students have also participated in rotations of exploratory classes in general music composition and performance, art, and physical education.
- TCMS introduced a flex schedule where fifth and sixth grade students have different period release times than seventh and eighth.
- There are no bells signaling these changes, and students have responded positively by taking accountability for watching the schedule and getting to class on time.
- Teachers in the building volunteer their time before and after school to work with students needing extra help.
- Each grade level has established a regular after-school “Homework Club.” Special education staff assists in math, science, and social studies courses.
- Triton Central High School sends its best and brightest students to peer mentor and tutor those at the middle school who need assistance.
- The faculty has time set aside to delve into data during our delayed start Wednesdays.
- Each grade level also has a weekly meeting to concentrate on addressing student issues.
- Community partners such as the Kennedy Center offer free or discounted professional development sessions to the Triton Central staff and faculty.
- The district took additional steps this year in creating accounts for its faculty members at the professional development website Educational Impact.

## Developmental Responsiveness

Triton Central Middle School staff creates a personalized environment that supports each student’s intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development. Our school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment. The curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents. Triton Central Middle School teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems and provide multiple opportunities for students to explore a rich variety of topics and interests in order to develop their identity, learn about their strengths, discover and demonstrate their own competence, and plan for their future. Triton Central Middle School believes that all students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities. Our staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children. Triton Central Middle School staff members provide all students with opportunities to develop citizenship skills, to use the community as a classroom, and to engage the community in providing resources and support. All students are introduced or taught ways to develop citizenship skills and are provided with age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment.

- Triton Central Middle School staff members create a personalized environment that supports each student’s intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.
- Our RtI program is designed with a pyramid of interventions to best meet the needs of our students.
- Teachers use collaboration, full inclusion, and co-teaching techniques to create instruction that appeals to all individuals.
- Each grade level has a team of teachers with a team leader who represents the team and helps communicate information to and from our administrative staff.
- Students in fifth and sixth grade have a homeroom teacher to handle parent contacts for parent/teacher meetings and day-to-day school business. Students may see their homeroom teacher throughout their day if they need extra assistance.
- All students are part of a STAR period that meets each Wednesday. The staff or faculty member in charge of each STAR group will work with the same students for their academic tenure at TCMS. Adults help students keep track of their grades and assist with study strategies and social initiatives.
- The school provides access to comprehensive services to foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Our students can find guidance from many different resources.
- We have a school nurse who is present in our building on a regularly scheduled basis, a full-time social worker, two special education teachers, media center assistant, a speech language pathologist, and an occupational therapist.
- Adults monitor the hallways between our classes so that students can seek help with any issues that they are facing.
- We have a fifth grade orientation to help new students better adjust to middle school.

- During registration the school offers information about the 21st Century Scholar Program and actively encourages students to take part in it if they are able.
- Teachers foster curiosity, creativity and the development of social skills in a structured and supportive environment. Teachers provide their students with differentiated instruction as well as using varied instructional strategies.
- Teachers post clear expectations and set routines to ensure that students understand what is expected of them throughout the scheduled day, often while giving students voice and choice within the development process.
- Select classrooms post rules (or “norms”) written by students and tailor units to fit students’ areas of interest.
- Most language arts classes also allow students to choose their own independent reading books.
- Students have increased access to technology through use of their personal Chromebooks and iPad mobile libraries.
- The school’s partnership with both the Kennedy Center and Clowes Hall further supports language arts, history, and fine arts programs.
- The school’s curriculum is both socially significant and relevant to the personal and career interests of young adolescents.
- School-wide, individual and group counseling programs include bullying intervention and drug abuse prevention.
- Guest speakers and various convocations enrich our students and teach them to make positive social and academic choices.
- Teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to reinforce important concepts, skills, and address real-world problems.
- The Science Department sets the example by frequently bringing math learning concepts into their classrooms.
- The Fine Arts Department has made use of professional development offered by Clowes Hall to coach core subject teachers in joining the arts with their teaching strategies.
- Every student has the opportunity to experience cross-curricular field trips.
- Reading and writing activities ensure students are given multiple opportunities to write across all academic disciplines.
- In math classes students can excel at their own rate; they can skip grades or different classes depending on their level of achievement.
- Many courses offer students the chance to utilize their learning styles in various projects, such as the Hunger Games project, Fairy Tale project, and Poetry-Community Service project.
- All students have opportunities for voice—posing questions, reflecting on experiences, and participating in decisions and leadership activities.
- The campus is interactive through its one-to-one computing initiative, allowing communication to flow in multiple directions.
- Students are comfortable around both guidance and building administration.
- The Guidance Department accepts appointments with students through email and the traditional office sign-up sheet.
- Our administration keep their office doors open and make concerted efforts to spend time with students each day. They field student emails, visit classrooms frequently, and do their best to let our students know they are the top priority.
- Teachers are available before or after school to meet with students.
- Students create and lead fundraisers and charity events.
- TCMS has a thriving after-school scene, including athletics and clubs like Student Council, Art Club, Robotics, Drama Club, and Academic Super Bowl.
- TCMS staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children.
- We have a school breakfast program that allows students to get off the bus in the morning and be able to eat a good breakfast before the start of the day.
- Our All-Pro Dads group meets regularly for breakfast with student.
- Teachers remain in contact with families through many different types of communication such as our school web site, newsletter, Power School, Google Classroom, and phone calls.
- Parents also share input through PTO, school book adoptions, and come in as guest speakers or professional experts.
- Since we have many staff members that live in the community; there is a true trust relationship between staff and parents.
- Students are provided with chances to develop citizenship skills, to use the community as a classroom, and to engage the community in providing resources and support. All students are introduced or taught ways to develop social responsibility skills by engaging in projects such as fundraising for Riley Hospital for Children and donating to food and winter clothing drives.
- This also includes partnering with Family Prevention Services in Shelbyville in conjunction with a text-to real world project where our seventh grade classes read material about a homeless boy in Philippines who helps others.
- Triton Central Middle School provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character, and to develop interests beyond the classroom environment. Our students participate in a wide range of sports, including volleyball, cross country, basketball, football, track, wrestling, and cheerleading.

- Unique to our school is our policy of containing a few athletic avenues for all fifth through eighth graders—track, wrestling, cross country, boys and girls basketball, and Weight Lifting Club. Students also participate in afterschool programs involving the arts such as Yearbook Club, band, choir, and Winter Guard.

## Social Equity

To the fullest extent possible, all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and honors students, participate in heterogeneous classes with high academic and behavioral expectations. Students are provided the opportunity to use many and varied approaches to achieve and demonstrate competence and mastery of standards. Teachers continually adapt curriculum, instruction, assessment, and scheduling to meet their students' diverse and changing needs. All students have equal access to valued knowledge in all school classes and activities. Through our intensive push to make technology available, relevant, and purposeful, students are given more than just a textbook education. Students have ongoing opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own and others' cultures. Through many different genres, students are given the opportunity to appreciate their culture, along with many other cultures: history, literature, convocations, guest speakers, and field trips. Triton Central Middle School consists of a close knit group of staff, students and community. The faculty welcomes and encourages the active participation of all its families and makes sure that all its families are an integral part of the school. The school's reward system is designed to value diversity, civility, service, and democratic citizenship. Staff members understand and support the family backgrounds and values of its students. Our teachers learn about each student and his/her background. The school rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied and are in our handbook that each student receives at the beginning of the year.

- To the fullest extent possible, all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and honors students, participate in heterogeneous classes with high academic and behavioral expectations.
- Flexibility within student groupings allows for frequent small group instruction.
- The students who struggle in the classroom setting have adaptations that enable them to participate in a general education class setting.
- All students have the opportunity to interact with their peers through field trips, specials, lunch, and peer mentoring in the functional academics classroom.
- Resource teachers and assistants come into general education classes to provide support for all students.
- Students are provided the opportunity to use varied approaches to achieve and demonstrate competence and mastery of standards.
- Students learn through instruction using technology in addition to whole class and small group instruction.
- The Language Arts Department utilizes literature circles, reading and writing workshops, audio support, the online writing assessment tool Write to Learn, and in-depth projects.
- PBL has influenced assessments and teaching methods within the classroom.
- Students demonstrate understanding through performance, written work, presentation, and standardized assessments.
- Students work alone, with partners, and in groups.
- The Guidance and Special Education Departments are currently collaborating to form a social skills group directed specifically toward students with special needs. Beginning sessions are to focus on behaviors that affect students' ability to learn in a general education setting—from defining inappropriate actions to participating in a group discussion.
- Teachers are flexible with their plans, so schedules are changed when necessary.
- Conversations in weekly team meetings and content area meetings show that teachers are working to meet the needs of individual students.
- Through our intensive push to make technology available, relevant, and purposeful, students are given more than just a textbook education.
- PBL methodology requires students to think critically, not just give back factual information.
- Collaboration with special education teachers happens at all grade levels. Special education assistants are visible in classes as determined by student needs.
- If a classroom setting does not work, teachers are diligent about using the additional resources available to ensure that all students are successful academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Students have ongoing opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own and others' cultures. Through many different genres and authors, students have access to groups and cultures that are typically marginalized, along with educational experiences in history, literature, and on field trips.
- Seventh grade students attend the International Festival each year.

- Students participate in the Shelby County Reads Program where they read literature from various cultures and perspectives, often with an opportunity to meet authors.
- Speakers from the community share their knowledge about other cultures with students.
- General education students go into the life skills classroom to read with their peers who have severe disabilities.
- Students are active in the community through food drives, Riley Children's Hospital fundraisers and visitations (obtaining the status of a Riley Miracle School for four straight years), SCUFFY events, and assisted living care outreach.
- Staff members work to honor students' endeavors both at school and outside of school by being committed to attending events for TCMS students.
- STAR period initiative allows for each faculty and staff member to mentor a group of fifteen students throughout their time in our school. Mentors meet with their STAR students once weekly, taking time to discuss social skills, strategies for academic success, and drug and alcohol abuse prevention. At the heart of this movement is a drive to ensure that every Triton Central student has an adult they can trust, someone whom they know is looking out for them.
- The Student Council led a successful fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society at the start of the year by asking STAR classes to collect "Pennies for Patients." Students participated and even called on their family members to get involved. The fundraiser fostered charity and goodwill within our students, and it spread the STAR message of caring for each other out to the Triton community.
- The faculty welcomes and encourages the active participation of all its families and makes sure that all its families are an integral part of the school.
- Triton Central Middle School stays connected with the community through newsletters, committees, phone calls, mailings, emails, and web programs like Power School, Facebook, Twitter, and Google Classroom.
- TCMS tries to get all families involved in the educational process, and has special success with showcasing student work at events after school. The Fall Arts Festival, which couples a Drama Club production with live presentations of student work, saw record attendance this year.
- We work in conjunction with a variety of community organizations including Drug Free Coalition, DARE, Girls' Inc., 4-H Extension Services, FTA (Triton Youth Athletic Association), SCUFFY, Coats for Kids, the Salvation Army's Adopt-A-Family, and school supply assistance.
- Guest speakers and community members visit classrooms and afterschool activities.
- Staff members understand and support the family backgrounds and values of its students. Our teachers learn about each student and his/her background.
- Most of our staff members either make the Triton area their home or have been employed in the school system for a long time. Teachers know students, parents, grandparents, siblings, and relatives on a first name basis.
- Contacts with families are made during school hours, at ball games, at community events, etc.
- The school rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied. Our school rules are in our handbook that each student receives at the beginning of the year.
- Every teacher makes sure that students understand the expectations prior to the start of school.
- Each grade level team has a discipline plan in place.
- We have a school-wide discipline referral system. Our administrative assistant/safety specialist ensures that parents and students understand the process.

## **Organizational Support**

In accordance with the corporation vision and mission of: "Continuous improvement towards excellence – committed to fostering a culture of excellence where all students are provided opportunities to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and values to succeed and become responsible contributors to society". The school improvement process has become an ingrained element at TCMS – with strong leadership from the building administration to teacher teams. A prime example of our school's efforts to continually learn and reflect on professional practice is supported by the professional Learning Communities. In response to student achievement data analysis, targeted professional development regularly occurs to develop faculty and staff competencies to meet student deficits. A key element in our improvement planning is the analysis of the data generated in our various collection efforts. TCMS is unique in the fact that we are a grade 5-8 building making us very aware of the "bridge" responsibilities we hold. For example, Triton Central Middle School continually strives to bridge the transition for students as they move from the elementary to our High School. Mindful of the above vision and mission all faculty and staff participate in and adhere to the goals and objectives established in our regularly revised School Improvement Plan. In order to achieve continued growth and success, a key element is the insistence of the principal on having teachers who promote young adolescents' intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and ethical growth. Leadership has consistently hired teachers from a pool of quality candidates during the interview process, involving current staff in the evaluation process. TCMS as part of the whole Northwestern School community actively seeks and promotes parent involvement in the parent-teacher organization (PTO). This plan is the shared vision

that guides our daily efforts to have a school that gives our students the best chance to be the productive citizens we envision them to be.

- Triton Central Middle School faculty and staff have a shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does, which drives every facet of school change.
- In accordance with the corporation vision and mission of: “Continuous improvement towards excellence – committed to fostering a culture of excellence where all students are provided opportunities to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and values to succeed and become responsible contributors to society”, TCMS continually strives to bridge the transition for students as they move from elementary to high school.
- Mindful of the above vision and mission all faculty and staff participate in and adhere to the goals and objectives established in our regularly revised School Improvement Plan.
- This plan is the shared vision that guides our daily efforts to have a school that gives our students the best chance to be the productive citizens we envision them to be
- At designation we carried a staff of thirty teachers and instructional support positions.
- District and school staff possess and cultivate the collective will to persevere, believing it is their business to produce increased achievement and enhanced development of all students.
- Although TCMS has sustained such dramatic leadership changes, the teaching and learning atmosphere have grown significantly with a fresh new staff who are eager and on fire to positively impact students and continue to see our student body thrive.
- Our principal has the responsibility and authority to hold the school-improvement enterprise together, including day-to-day know-how, coordination, strategic planning, and communication.
- The focus on individual student data and the emphasis on instructional strategies to meet individual student needs has also been a positive result of the RISE implementation.
- Other positive results are the development of the Pivot website database. Pivot expedites group and individual student data analysis and allows our staff to respond more quickly to student need at all ability levels.
- In addition to staff being more fluent users of data, promotion of real time student data will occur with the installation of our new data dashboards – placed in the main lobby for anyone and everyone to see. Through these resources and efforts, the school staff holds itself accountable for student success.
- The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and the opportunity for reflection are the norm
- Our PLC initiative requires that every Wednesday morning all faculty gather for a minimum of an hour for regularly planned professional development and common staff work time.
- The school and district devote resources to content-rich professional learning, which is connected to reaching and sustaining the school vision and increasing student achievement.
- Ongoing review of student data, surveys of teacher needs, and administrative input guides the choices made available during this professional development time. Emphasis is on making data-driven decisions and encouraging development of learning communities that support innovations known to produce student success.
- TCMS is unique in the fact that we are a grade 5-8 building making us very aware of the bridge responsibilities we hold. This awareness drives our staff to continually explore and develop programming that eases and leads to the best chances of success coming from the elementary and going to the high school.
- We have established block schedules in the fifth and sixth grades with an emphasis on more time for math, reading, and writing skills development.
- Language arts blocks have also been created to ensure our students have a solid reading and writing foundation as they transition into the high school.
- TCMS and district faculty partner with colleges and universities.
- The Purdue Extension Office of Shelby County works with teachers in and outside of the Science Department to bring engaging, challenging, and enlightening lab experiences to our students.
- The school is not an island to itself; it is a part of a larger educational system, i.e., districts, networks, and community partnerships.
- TCMS as a part of the whole Northwestern School community actively seeks and promotes parent involvement in the parent-teacher organization (PTO). This organization takes a very active role in school development beyond fundraising and after-school promotions and activities.
- All grade levels have established regular after-school tutoring programs where at least two teachers are available to assist students at least one day per week for an hour.
- Administration attempts to attend the monthly PTO meetings in order to gauge parental views and gain input to programming at the school.
- The school includes families and community member in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.

- Families and the community have full access to information about student grades via our online tools, school newsletters and the corporation website.

## **Indiana Schools to Watch 2014**