Tioga Junior High School is a public, rural school, and is located in the Tioga community north of the Red River in Rapides Parish, Louisiana.

Tioga originated as a sawmill community in 1899. Tioga is a Native American name meaning, “at the forks of the river”, and boldly displays its heritage through the mascots of all community schools. Tioga Junior High’s mascot is the Braves. Every spring, citizens celebrate Tioga’s history at “Tioga Trade Days” held at the historical society. The town of Ball, which also feeds Tioga Junior High, has an annual Christmas parade. Area schools are represented by marching bands, cheerleaders, dance squads, ROTC, and athletic teams.

Tioga Junior High School accommodates students in the seventh and eighth grade. The school’s enrollment is currently five hundred seventy-eight students. The seventh graders number three hundred twenty-five and the eighth graders two hundred fifty-three. The racial distributions are one percent Hispanic, thirty-four percent African American, sixty-two percent white, and eight percent other. Approximately nineteen percent of the student population is special education students.

The majority of Tioga residents are employed in the Pineville or Alexandria area. Major employers in the Tioga/Ball communities are Proctor and Gamble and Dresser Industrial Valve Plant.
Channels of communication used are: progress reports, teacher websites, parish websites, letters, parent/teacher conferences, school marquee, and Project I.E.P. (for special education students).

The town of Ball is led by Mayor Roy Hebron. His office actively supports and contributes to the community schools. Pencils are donated to schools from Mayor Hebron’s office. The Tioga community school board member is Wilton Barrios. He is a former social studies teacher at Tioga High School, and a life-long resident. Mr. Barrios has served as board member in the community for five years. He was instrumental in passing a bond tax in the community four years ago that led to major school renovations.

Tioga is a small rural community with many residents of low socio-economic status. The percentage of students on free lunch at Tioga Junior High is seventy-two percent.

There is no political structure in the Tioga community due to it not being incorporated. There are no major players in the community that greatly influence the school.

Community groups play a big role in the schools. Local small businesses are the main power structures in the community. Restaurants like, Lighthouse Chicken and Stalnackers Seafood helped “push” the above-mentioned bond tax through in 2004. These small businesses also contribute through fundraisers, as well as sponsorship. The Tioga Historical Society is also a supporter of local schools.

Tioga Junior High is a unique school because it not only pulls students from four different elementary schools in the community, but also draws students from
areas in Alexandria. The students from Alexandria are predominately African American from very low socio-economic backgrounds. These students are “bused” to Tioga Junior High and High School as part of the desecration law in Rapides Parish. There are some social tensions due to race and territorial issues.

Previous community efforts that have been attempted in the past have been moderately successful. The primary bridge between the Tioga community and its schools has been through athletics. The school has made its facilities available to community basketball, baseball, softball, and football leagues for many years. The community basketball league (Ward 10 Youth Basketball League) has contributed One thousand dollars a year to Tioga Junior High for the use of its gym for practice and games. All community schools open their doors before the start of each school year for “Open House”. Several times a year, community parents are invited to parent/teacher conferences.

References: Tioga Junior High School Improvement Plan (2008)

www.census.gov

Interview with Diane Berlin assistance principal at Tioga Junior High

Tioga Junior High teacher and community member interviews