

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Sherry F Robinson

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

Official School Name Bald Creek Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 100 Bald Creek School Road

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

City Burnsville State NC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 28714-5740

County Yancey County

Telephone (828) 682-2535 Fax (828) 682-3575

Web site/URL http://bc.es.yanceync.net/ E-mail sfrobinson@yanceync.net

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*Dr. Tony Tipton E-mail ttipton@yanceync.net

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

District Name Yancey County Schools Tel. (838) 682-6101

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. Mike Orr

(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	9	12	21
1	16	12	28
2	15	17	32
3	20	10	30
4	10	15	25
5	16	14	30
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	86	80	166

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % 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: 17%

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	17
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	30
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	179
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.168
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	17

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

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 64%
Total number students who qualify: 106
8. Students receiving special education services: 12%
20 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.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 16 Specific Learning Disability
- 9 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: 9
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	10
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 17:1

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	94%	94%	95%	94%	95%
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 X

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 school strives to provide a learning environment where all students receive quality instruction of the 21st century skills from competent educators, lead by a supportive administration.

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

Bald Creek Elementary School is located in the rural Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina. Bald Creek School was established in the late 1880's. Our existing building was constructed in 1936. Our student population fluctuates around 175, is primarily Caucasian and has an approximately 64% Economically Disadvantaged. BCES is one of six elementary schools within the Yancey County Schools District. According to the NC Rural Economic Development Center, Yancey County has 20% poverty rate, 31% child poverty rate, 5% unemployment, median household income of \$39,327 and only 15% possess a Bachelor's Degree or Higher. About 50% of our students enter Kindergarten having attended a Preschool program and about 50% of our students have Internet access at home.

Our educational philosophy is believing a talented, united and strong team can prepare young lives for success by providing them with the high quality education they deserve.

Student success depends on the well-being of the whole child. A great deal of our time is dedicated to the special needs of our students through teacher/principal/parent conferences. Supports are obtained from mental health services, school social worker, school counselor, Department of Social Services and other outside agencies ensuring needs are met. Approximately 40% of our students come from broken home environments and approximately 12 % of our students are in the Exceptional Children's Program. Currently, three of our students are placed in The Yancey County Schools Alternative School (YCLA) which also provides a summer program to decrease back sliding during this time. There is a significant improvement in both behavior and academic gain upon graduation from YCLA and re-entry into our school. We also encounter more and more homes with substance abuse and deal with its enormous impact on our students. Supports are in place for special needs students with the Exceptional Children's Program and for the Hispanic population with the ESL program. Students at risk in Reading in grades 2-3 are offered a special summer reading camp.

Unique community supports consist of Operation Feed A Child which provides weekend food sent home in backpacks with 40+ students each Friday, (CIS) Communities In Schools which provides weekly Reading Buddies , community volunteers, parent and guest speakers and tutors.

Special curricula is implemented such as the fifth grade DARE drug awareness program, second grade Character Counts, K-2 Professor Popcorn Nutritional program and special whole class sessions conducted by the school counselor. Physical fitness is implemented into the schedule each day with 30 minutes of outside activity and another 15 minutes is encouraged each morning. One class implements a full 60 minutes of unique physical activity by implementing movement between each completed academic activity. The garden area provides a unique educational area where students learn how to grow food, where it comes from, and healthy eating habits. The Park Ranger program provides special classes which address Science standards.

Students who are academically at risk and may have empty households at dismissal time are enrolled in our after school MAGIC program, which provides additional daily instruction by certified teachers, healthy snack, karate classes, physical activity, art, special guest speakers and other extracurricular activities.

Our school hosts Christmas programs and Talent Shows enabling students to display their talents and build self-esteem. Many times, students who do not excel as high as their peers in the classroom stand out in this setting. We feel self-image is vital and needs to be strengthened whenever possible. We implement the PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Support) program where students are rewarded for positive behavior. At the end of the school year, a whole day of activities is dedicated to celebrating good behavior throughout the entire school year. Monthly Principal Awards are announced over the intercom and those students receive metals for "manners and respect" with their picture being placed on the hallway principal board that month. Students are recognized for academic achievement and perfect attendance at the end of each nine week grading period in school wide assembly programs, with parents and guests being invited.

What makes the regular school day unique to our school is the fact that students are not only supported by

all the above support systems but enjoy functioning in a calm and secure learning environment where they know what to expect. From the time they begin Kindergarten at BCES, they experience consistency in curriculum programs in Reading, Math, Science and Social Studies. They are taught and understand expectation for all subject areas. They learn how to use daily items such as their Student Planner and Reading Logs. They learn how to effectively use our 1:1 technology devices as they transition from iPads in K-2 to Chromebooks in 3-5. We believe consistency and knowing what to expect give our students a sense of security, safety and overall well-being.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

BCES adheres to the National and State Standards and the school decides the comprehensive curriculum and how to best deliver it. All Curricula is aligned to the NC Common Core & Essential Standards for the four core areas. Standards for Reading/ELA include (Informational and Literary which includes Reading Foundational Skills in K-5), Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

Implementation of consistent programs across the grade levels and teaching strategies is enhanced by 1:1 technology device use from Kindergarten through 5th grade is crucial to our school's success. All subject areas are richly integrated with Literacy and Technology.

Math standards include the following overarching concepts: Numbers and Quantity, Algebra, Functions, Modeling, Geometry and Statistics and Data. These standards provide a clear focus of content that must be mastered at each grade level.

Core content concepts for Science cut across the disciplines of Earth Science, Life Science, and Physical Science. The following content areas are tiered so that students at each grade level build knowledge upon prior knowledge: Force/Motion, Matter: Properties and Changes, Earth Systems, Structures, and Processes, Structures and Functions of Living Organisms, Molecular Biology/Genetics, Ecosystems, and Energy. Based on Common Core Social Studies Essential Standards, K-3 students develop the ability to demonstrate chronological thinking asking questions that historians ask. Fourth grade explores disciplines of History, Geography, Civics and Government, Culture and Economics through the context of North Carolina. Fifth graders focus on United States History Pre-Colonial through Reconstruction, Government and General Assembly Laws.

BCES Teachers devise a curriculum that best meets the needs of all learners. Data is compiled indicating strengths and weaknesses of students. Once student data is gathered, strategies are researched and instruction is tailored to the needs of each class. In Reading, foundational skills such as Phonemic Awareness and Decoding are taught using Letterland in grades K-2. Each teacher has completed an intense OG training which builds upon and strengthens the Phonemic Awareness and Decoding begun in Kindergarten. This training multiplies ELA instruction in all capacities. In addition to basic reading skills, teachers tailor make their curriculum using chapter books, novels and small reading group books to teach literary elements. Engaging students in the reading of these books, allows teachers to promote comprehension, make predictions and inferences, draw conclusions, and critically analyze problems and evaluate solutions. Informational texts allow teachers to not only address the standards for text features but also provide students with opportunities to respond to issues through writing. Students write reactions to texts, letters, opinions, persuasive papers and research papers. Integrated into these writings are the language standards punctuation, capitalization, subject verb agreement, and sentence structure. Instruction is presented through whole group instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice.

Math standards are achieved through integration of multiple programs, teacher designed instruction and technology. Bald Creek's strength in Math is a result of program and instructional consistency across grade levels. The faculty has developed a spiraling curriculum which builds on each student's prior knowledge. Numbers, quantity and functions are taught each morning at each grade level using the spiraling program of Excel math. This program is used to teach computation, number sense and quantitative measures. Students in all grades use manipulatives to model Fractions, Algebraic Equations, and Geometric shapes. Students are provided with real world problems which promotes analytical and critical problem-solving skills. Motivation Math, which is implemented at all grade levels, requires students to use higher-order thinking skills to solve word problems. Computer programs such as IXL, allow students to individually achieve proficiency on each standard through tutorial when needed.

Science Standards spiral encompassing the same basic concepts at each grade level. BCES does not use a commercial Science program. Teachers ensure that Science standards are achieved through hands-on

experiments, observatory deck, computer programs, field trips and community involvement. Teachers have developed a notebook of hands-on activities that address all the State Standards. Math and Literacy skills are integrated into the Science curriculum through journaling.

Social Studies Standards are integrated into ELA standards through historical novels and informational texts. Novels are used to teach how communities and people have changed over time. Cultural standards are taught through projects and community speakers and volunteers.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Bald Creek Elementary follows the North Carolina Essential Standards for the Arts, PE/Health/Nutrition, and Technology. Foreign language has not been part of the elementary curriculum for many years. We have a 6% ELL population and a part-time instructor who translates communications between school and parents, and supports ELL students whenever needed. The ESL teacher travels between three schools and is on call if emergencies arise.

Art and Music are offered once a week for a semester each. K-5 students have Art and Music instruction for forty five minutes each week. The Art teacher and Music teachers follow the state prescribed standards for their core areas. They ensure that students achieve these standards through projects, school programs, cooperation with other core teachers integrating Art and Music into other content areas, as well, as formative and summative assessments. The Art and Music teachers cooperate with Toe River Arts Council to bring cultural experiences to our rural area that students would otherwise not have the opportunity to engage in. One such experience is traveling to Asheville, North Carolina to see a performance of "The Nutcracker." Native American and African American groups also bring music and art projects to the schools through TRAC. Middle school Drama Clubs also present special plays throughout the year.

All students at Bald Creek are engaged in Physical Education with a PE teacher for forty five minutes once a week. The PE teacher engages students in movement, endurance, coordination, as well as games which promote social skills and physical skills. All students are assessed by the teacher by performing such skills as running, sit-ups, tumbling etc. The other four days, students are engaged in physical education which is organized by their regular classroom teacher. North Carolina mandates that students get an additional 105 minutes of activity besides the time spent with the PE teacher. Each student is given a "4 Heart Fitness Test" which determines the heart rate before and after exertion. In order to provide optimal PE experiences, teachers have written Bright Ideas grants to purchase PE equipment which has been found to be a critical component to a quality physical education program. The goal of this grant is to get student moving more and promote outdoor healthy living skills by being physically active and having fun while doing it. The equipment is set up into stations and students move among the stations during their recess time. BCES refers to this as "rotation station" which promotes interaction among students and reduces discipline incidents.

Health/Nutrition is addressed through the 4-H agency coming into the school for special programs. Professor Popcorn, is a 6 week program that addresses nutritional choices with students, prepares nutritional snacks and teaches the effects of proper nutrition on the body. This is an effort to reduce childhood obesity and diabetes.

With this in mind, BCES has partnered with the Yancey County Extension Office and Master Gardeners. Students grow vegetables such as lettuce, kale, snap peas, onions and tomatoes which can be used in salads and snacks. Other vegetables such as potatoes, beans, corn, squash and pumpkins are planted for harvest when school resumes in the fall. Vegetables from the garden are also prepared in some classrooms, in cookware awarded through the Michelle Obama grant for healthy school food. They also share a portion of their garden with a local food coop called TRACTOR.

Technology standards are hugely integrated into all subject areas through our K-5 1:1 device initiative. Students have a total of one and a half hours per week in the computer lab where specific computer skills are taught. K-2 students have I Pads which are used in the regular classroom each day to enhance instruction. K-3 students have chrome books. IXL math provides K-5 students with tutorial practice for all North

Carolina math standards allowing students to progress at their own pace. Discovery Education gives students and teachers access to instructional information as well as assessments. Reading programs such as RAZ Kids and Motivation Reading enhances reading skills on an individual bases therefore differentiating instruction. Google classrooms which are paperless further enhance student technology skills, classroom engagement and completion of assignments.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Instructional methodologies and Interventions at BCES encompass a vast array of strategies to ensure students reach their maximum potential. Reading and Math concepts are introduced in whole group settings during designated daily time blocks. Students are then broken into small groups for further instructions and to assess understanding. Students then work independently to strengthen concepts. This independent Literacy practice often uses computer programs such as RAZ Kids which allow students to work at their own pace giving tutorials when necessary. Literacy skills are taught through novel units, informational text and current events such as Newsela and Scholastic News. Student/teacher conferences in reading and math allow for one on one instruction and re-teaching. Literacy blocks use RUNNERS as an instructional strategy helping students analyze questions and locate information. Motivation Reading engages students in critical thinking skills such as making inferences and drawing conclusions. Writing is integrated into the critical thinking skills as students support their writing with evidence from texts. Math blocks use a spiral math approach called Excel to teach basic computational skills. This strategy allows students to build on their prior knowledge. Motivational Math promotes problem-solving skills as the teacher introduces the lesson, then students think and pair share the second day, the third day they work independently and assessment is on the fourth day.

Science strategies include hands-on investigations, interactive websites which introduce Science concepts and vocabulary and field trips. Fifth grade students participate in an outdoor program, "Toes in the Toe" which is a cooperative endeavor between the high school biology class and the elementary students. Students travel to the local South Toe River, and participate in environmental stations dealing with water quality, pollution and marine life. K-5 teachers use the school garden to teach Earth and Life Science concepts such as composting and seed cycles. Teachers also use the observatory deck on school property, provided by a grant, to analyze issues of water quality and other Science Standards.

Differentiation cuts across all grade levels and achievement levels. Gifted students have access to an AIG teacher once a week with ongoing projects the remainder of the week. Students needing additional help complete a three tiered Response to Instruction before receiving services from an Exceptional Education Teacher. Tutors and volunteers serve students needing to build self- esteem as well as skills. Computer instruction and paperless classrooms such as Google Classroom allows teachers to further individualize instruction.

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

BCES has a very systematic process for reviewing assessment results in the school, across grade levels, classrooms and communicating these with parents. Multiple times per year, including all four grading periods, all benchmark assessments are reviewed by the principal who then communicates with teachers regarding at risk students. Parent conferences follow as a result of that initial discussion.

Assessment data drive curriculum and instruction. 3-5 students are administered End of Grade tests in Reading and Math, fifth grade takes the Science assessment. K-2 students are administered the Mclass 3D Reading three times per year and regularly progress monitored. Reading progress is assessed quarterly through Accelerated Reading (AR) tests, Star Reading, and Discovery Education benchmarks in Reading, Math, and Science. Star Reading shows growth, lexile and grade level equivalence. AR indicates student comprehension. Discovery Education benchmarks indicate student achievement on specific standards. Teachers and the administrator analyze these test results thoroughly and differentiate instruction based on needs of students. There is also continuous classroom assessment. Teachers differentiate multiple subjects for students, creating multiple grade level assignments and assessments daily and weekly.

Successful, positive learning environments are cultivated through parents as major stakeholders and constant conferencing. Parents understand assessments and scores are shared immediately with them. AR scores are now available to parents from home. Star Reading growth is also shared after each assessment. Teachers collaborate with the Media Specialist to ensure students are choosing appropriate reading materials. Classroom progress is shared through “instructional progress reports” mailed to parents in the middle of each nine-week term. Classroom progress is also provided to parents through parent/teacher conferences at the end of each nine weeks and four parent conference days each year. Additional parent conferences are scheduled as needed by teacher or parents. Students “at-risk” are identified and parents are immediately notified and encouraged to be an active part of the instruction. Notification letters of at risk areas are given to parents at midyear, preventing surprises of any sort at end of year. Students who are excelling are also identified and parents are encouraged to provide challenging activities at home to further that of school higher level activities.

With BCES being a high performance school, one of four Title I K-5 A+ Schools in NC, maintaining achievement levels are paramount. Our targets are maintaining high quality teachers, continued implementation of 1:1 initiative and effective use of higher level, critical thinking resources. Parent contacts are a MUST.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

POSITIVE CHASES POSITIVE! BCES has a professional, positive and respectful climate. Visitors are greeted on the phone and all calls with “It’s a Great Day at BCES”. We have an established culture of high expectation for academic excellence, school pride and positive behavior. Students are nurtured and know they are genuinely cared for and supported. A great amount of time is dedicated to whole group and individual counseling, consulting with mental health outside agencies and parent/teacher/principal conferences. Students enjoy being rewarded for good behavior and academic success through multiple events and recognition. The Principal’s Award is given each month to a student from each class for “manners and respect” and students are awarded for various achievements at Awards Day programs. We make a huge deal out of being a National Title I Distinguished School Nominee, an A+ School and grant recipients with Fun Friday Celebration Days. We send home notifications of these and publish them in the local newspaper. We create school pride and excitement for both teachers and students by celebrating successes which have enabled us to be a 1:1 technology device school. Technology of this caliber engages and motivates teachers and certainly students.

Our staff is a very positive group of team players who are quick to celebrate the accomplishments of their colleagues and learn from one another. They have a keen sense of who has expertise in specific content areas and never hesitate to pull from that wealth of information. There are close friendships among faculty members, group support, camaraderie and an overall sense of happiness. The overall well-being of the teaching staff carries directly into the classroom and enhances the success of students.

Another vital element of a positive climate is ensuring a dynamic start at the beginning of each new year. All staff is welcomed back into a sparkling clean building with an exciting faculty meeting that resembles the scene of Christmas morning with all their start up supplies and surprises, followed by a catered luncheon. This year’s school wide theme is “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People & STUDENTS”. All staff members received t-shirts with the words “Highly Effective” the first day back. Staff is provided special breakfasts and luncheons throughout the year and a week-long Teacher Appreciation in May. Also, occasional out of the building faculty meetings with dinner is provided. Stakeholders are always welcomed and valued.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Establishing a positive organization and a welcoming environment is crucial for engaging families and communities. You may not agree with the parent or family member but you must understand their perspective and circumstances. To take student success to a higher level, parents must be conferenced with often and have a deep understanding of expectation of core subject areas at each grade level, and ownership in the child’s academic progress. It is each teacher’s responsibility to ensure the parent’s understanding. Parents must be educated in the relevance of elementary success and its impact on middle school transition, high school graduation, higher education and work force competition. We are striving for long term success. We ensure the conversation takes place that successful students have home support and deep parent involvement.

One example of engaging parents on a daily basis is each K-5 student has Student Planner, provided by the school, which goes home each day with all assignments and homework for the day and week, with the Reading Log, spelling words, comment sections and signature lines. Parents are free to call, email and text teachers at any time. Parents volunteer as classroom helpers, field trip chaperones, school improvement helpers, guest speakers and after school in the MAGIC program. They visit often for Book Fairs, Parent Lunch Week, Fall Festivals, Christmas Programs, Talent Shows, Awards Days, End of Year Special Events, Kindergarten Celebrations, Fifth Grade Graduation, garden projects, PTO, parent/teacher/principal conferences. We conduct four formal Parent Conference Days per year and multiple other conferences on a regular and as needed basis.

Community involvement is a huge asset to our school. We recognize increased student achievement of those students who have a one on one Reading Buddy on a weekly basis, provided by the Communities in Schools group. ESL students progress at higher levels when paired with a Buddy who speaks Spanish. The Yancey County Master Gardeners enhance the food growing experience for our students. Operation Feed a Child provides food for 40+ students and their families each week. Community groups and local churches partner with BCES staff to provide food and clothing items to 40+ families each Christmas.

BCES feels strongly that family and community involvement impacts the overall success of our students and uses it as a School Improvement Plan Goal.

3. Professional Development:

Due to very limited funds for Professional Development, our approach must be very focused and targeted on areas of school wide improvement which benefit the greatest number of teachers and has the greatest effect on overall improvement. Due to Reading End of Grade scores being historically lower than Math, we have had a consistent Literacy approach. Although, all teachers have received Math Foundations training.

Seven years ago through an outside grant, BCES began the journey and school wide initiative of becoming an Orton Gillingham fully trained teaching staff. And shortly thereafter, implemented the Letterland Phonics Program. All teachers and teacher assistants were trained. The first grade teacher aligned the two programs for greater student impact. All teachers were trained in Reading Foundations. All of this was aligned due to both Letterland and Reading Foundations falling under the Orton umbrella. Renaissance/STAR/Accelerated Reading has been added and all teachers have been trained in the reports which can be generated to progress monitor the Grade Equivalence and Lexile levels. Teachers also attend regional trainings for additional literacy skill and strategy methods. Many times, teachers attend and bring back information to be shared in grade level or school wide PLCs.

Yancey County Schools (YCS) provide professional development days with county wide PLC trainings by grade level. YCS also use the "Train the Trainer" approach where individuals are trained in a specific skill and return to their school to train the remaining staff. This is done primarily for technology programs.

Due to acquiring a grant for the National TI Distinguished School Nominee, our teachers and principal have been afforded the NC Technology Conference in Raleigh, NC for the past two years. This has benefited teachers in exposure to higher levels of technology engagement for students. Also, due to the grant, BCES is a 1:1 school with all K-5 students having all day access to their own device. This year, teachers learned how to create and have implemented a Google Classroom which is virtually paperless and where students can ask and get answers from them without ever having to raise their hand or interrupt their peers. This is proving to be advantageous for students who typically have behavioral issues.

School Improvement Plan Goals have consistently, for the past five years, included professional development in Orton Gillingham, Letterland and all Literacy based trainings. Also, Technology integration in all subject areas is consistently a main focus and School Improvement Goal.

4. School Leadership:

The Principal of BCES takes full responsibility for both the successes and weaknesses of the organization. Having said this, also recognizes and embraces the tremendous talents, gifts and expertise of the valued staff. The Principal understands that success only takes place when the right people have been put into place. One of the most important traits of a Principal is to possess good character judgment and exercise it when hiring the best people possible. Positive attitude and climate starts at the top. All members must be like-minded and share a common vision. BCES is a TEAM of positive people who are dedicated to excellence on both a personal and professional level. PEOPLE FIRST, AND THEN SUCCESS FOLLOWS.

Our TEAM's success is a shining example of "putting good resources in the hands of GREAT

EDUCATORS” and freedom to demonstrate expertise. The coherent philosophy is: We are a team who values, supports and mentors each member, collaborates, learns and acknowledges the strengths of others. When this vast amount of knowledge is strongly valued and united the result = A+. The most important element of our philosophy is each child is a special little person who deserves the highest quality education possible and hopefully we have a part in preparing them for a bright and successful future.

BCES is a unified, well-functioning team of school leaders. All teachers are trained in Orton Gillingham and Reading and Math Foundations, many have Master’s Degrees, one has Master’s in Technology Instruction, many have received specialized county wide trainings in Literacy, Math and Technology. This makes for strong leaders in all subject areas. It is widely known throughout our school who leads which subject area.

Our Leadership Team consists of all ten classroom teachers and the principal. A lot of discussion and data dis-aggregation takes place before expenditures are expedited for curriculum materials and technology devices. The Principal considers the Teacher experts in their field. Their input is highly valued. When Reading scores were low, the Leadership Team/School Improvement Team came together and made decisions about why scores were low, what was needed to correct them, was it curriculum issues, was it lack of proper instruction, what areas were lowest, what areas were highest, and why this was happening. We made a team decision to become OG trained, implement Letterland phonics, implement Accelerated Reading, purchase benchmark tools and acquire technology. These leadership decisions have greatly impacted student success.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

BCES has experienced a total turnaround over the past nine years. Therefore, making it extremely difficult to target ONE Practice which has resulted in the enormous student gains and outcome. The entire structure of this organization has changed in terms of philosophy, vision, personnel, curriculum, instruction, student expectation, technology, parent involvement and the interior and exterior facilities. Open minded, positive, high quality teachers had to be obtained, who delivered high quality instruction. Student expectation had to increase and parents had to be educated. Appropriate curriculum had to be obtained and used with fidelity. Technology had to be obtained and used effectively. Interior and exterior facilities had to reflect our educational philosophy. Our road to success has been long and winding.

Our school determined student outcome would not change until the “Reading issue” was addressed and fixed. It began with the principal meeting one on one with each teacher and going over a list of questions which focused on reading fluency and comprehension, student data, existing programs and curriculum, weakness and strengths of the school, and personal opinions. All answers were compiled and the School Improvement Team came up with a strategic set of goals to address the school wide Literacy Program.

First, a K-2 Phonics Program was purchased and training was obtained. Then, all teachers began to obtain Orton Gillingham training, along with Reading Foundations. All of this had to be implemented with fidelity and entirety which took about five years to achieve. Next, student expectation and grade level expectation had to be enforced. Promotion to the next grade level had to depend on this. Supplemental programs such as Accelerated Reading had to be implemented encouraging students to reach reading goals and required lexile levels. And finally, the task of re-educating parents to higher expectation and the importance of their involvement had to begin.

Currently, all students are provided a Student Planner the first day of school. They record their reading list and reading log with parent signature daily. The entire school has a two hour Literacy Block each morning. Students in grades 1-5 participate in the Accelerated Reading Program daily. K-2 students receive Letterland phonics daily. 3-5 students are instructed with intensive reading skills and strategies daily. All subject areas are integrated with reading. The majority of parents buy-in, knowing their child’s success depends on it. And, a lot of time is dedicated to parent conferences.