

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Mary Jo Anastasio Ed. S.

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

Official School Name Deer Park Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 11541 Jefferson Avenue

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

City Newport News State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 23601-1930

County Newport News City

Telephone (757) 591-7470 Fax (757) 591-7448

Web site/URL http://deerpark.nn.k12.va.us E-mail mj.anastasio@nn.k12.va.us

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. Ashby Kilgore E-mail Ashby.Kilgore@nn.k12.va.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Newport News City Schools Tel. (757) 591-4500

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. Jeff Stodghill  
(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

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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

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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):
- 24 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 6 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 38 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                     | 33         | 39           | 72          |
| 1                     | 34         | 55           | 89          |
| 2                     | 50         | 46           | 96          |
| 3                     | 51         | 38           | 89          |
| 4                     | 43         | 49           | 92          |
| 5                     | 46         | 42           | 88          |
| 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           |
| <b>Total Students</b> | 257        | 269          | 526         |

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 34 % Black or African American
  - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 46 % White
  - 7 % 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: 2%

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   | 2      |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year | 11     |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 13     |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014   | 541    |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.024  |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 2      |

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Portuguese, Albania, Bengali, Arabic, Hindi, Tagalog, Korean, French

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42%  
Total number students who qualify: 221
8. Students receiving special education services: 4%  
22 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
- 3 Other Health Impaired
- 13 Specific Learning Disability
- 5 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 1 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

|   | <b>Number of Staff</b> |
|---|------------------------|
| Administrators  | 2                      |
| Classroom teachers  | 23                     |
| Resource teachers/specialists<br>e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.  | 6                      |
| Paraprofessionals   | 3                      |
| Student support personnel<br>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     23:1

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

| <b>Required Information</b> | 2014-2015 | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 | 2011-2012 | 2010-2011 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 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 2015.

| <b>Post-Secondary Status</b>                  |    |
|---|----|
| Graduating class size                         | 0  |
| Enrolled in a 4-year college or university    | 0% |
| Enrolled in a community college               | 0% |
| Enrolled in career/technical training program | 0% |
| Found employment                              | 0% |
| Joined the military or other public service   | 0% |
| Other   | 0% |

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
Yes      No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Our mission is to educate students so they become responsible citizens who take an active part in protecting and caring for the environment around them.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

All students are eligible to apply for the Environmental Science magnet program, which serves kindergarten through fifth grade. Students are selected by computer lottery. Students currently enrolled and their siblings have priority.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Deer Park Elementary Environmental Science Magnet School (DPES), an urban city school, was established in 1997. It is located in midtown Newport News, Virginia and is surrounded by several institutes of higher learning, cultural arts, and museums. As a magnet school, students are selected by computer lottery. The school does not have a zone so we are able to service students from the entire city. Transportation is provided to approximately 530 students covering a territory of 68.8 square miles. The demographics of the school closely reflect that of the city. The population is composed of 49% male and 51% female; 46% white, 34% African American and 20% other; 42% are eligible for free /reduced-priced meals; 4% receive special education services; and 7% are English Language Learners.

The building originally opened September 10, 1953 as an elementary school through seventh grade. Twenty acres of Deer Park were allocated for the school as a gift from the Mariner's Museum. The name was derived from Virginia's whitetail deer. From 1982 to 1996 the school served as an alternative high school known as Deer Park Point Option and Vocational Magnet School. After a rich, thirty year history as a traditional elementary school and alternative high school, DPES reopened in the fall of 1997 as Deer Park Elementary Environmental Science Magnet School.

DPES has a comprehensive and balanced academic program built around the integrating themes of land, water, and air. The program exposes students to a community that emphasizes discovery and exploration through collaborative study, scientific research and use of scientific tools and technology. DPES's success is a team effort involving students, parents, teachers, staff members and the community. DPES's staff takes pride in providing a compassionate learning environment that offers students a wide range of opportunities for success both in and out of the classroom.

Deer Park has a partnership with the Virginia Living Museum (VLM). Classes take monthly walking field experiences and can participate in the various educational programs the museum offers at no cost to the school. As an active partnership, the museum often borrows DPES's exhibits of five species of frogs and toads to enhance their educational delivery for their Frogs and Friends weekend opened to the public. DPES students have also been invited to help showcase new exhibits and special events such as The Wild and Well Exhibit and VLM Donor's dinner and Groundhog's Day.

The school has been involved with the Elizabeth River Project since 2011. This project has provided students the opportunity to develop an awareness of the impact they have on their environment and ways they can be actively involved in the community. The students implement conservation projects such as recycling, litter clean-ups, and energy conservation. Fourth grade students marked storm drains on the campus with medallions to better identify points of the Chesapeake Bay watershed access. The restoration efforts include erosion projects such as planting specific wetland grasses along the banks of the Elizabeth River. Students also participate in habitat enhancement projects including raising/tagging monarch butterflies, growing a butterfly garden, and making bat houses to provide environmental friendly insect control. DPES has been recognized as a River Star School since 2012.

Another unique feature to DPES is that each classroom houses "fin, feather, fur or scale" animals. Within the school there are fifty-five exhibits/habitats. Students research and create informational posters to display beside each. Students learn about compassion and responsibility by caring for classroom pets and animal habitats. Additionally, there are several unique species of desert, rainforest, and marshland reptiles exhibited throughout the hallways and offices. The educational purpose of this collection is for students to become aware that animals have varying needs.

The outdoor courtyard is an extension of the classroom and a key component of our ongoing environmental learning. It provides opportunities for meaningful hands on lessons in responsibility, hard work, cooperation, commitment, and a love for the environment. The courtyard was designed and is maintained by students, faculty, parents, and community church organizations. Donations and grant monies assist in the restoration/upkeep of our butterfly and vegetable gardens, monarch way station, pond, picnic benches and

tables, birdhouses, rain barrels, cold frame, and habitat tower. This is a high interest area for volunteer hours because of the school community benefit and the sense of pride and accomplishment.

DPES students promote and engage in community in-service oriented projects that help develop many aspects of their lives. Student Council Association (SCA) representatives select the community projects that they will support. Examples of some include but not limited to collecting pet food for SPCA, socks and gloves for the homeless, and making and delivering blankets to the Veteran Americans Hospital.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The curricula in all content areas revolves around the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL), the Curriculum Frameworks, and the division’s College, Career & Citizen Ready (CCC) Skills, focusing on Learning & Thinking, Life & Career, and Information & Communication. The division embedded Understanding By Design as a framework for the development of an extensive on-line curriculums. Each course has detailed units of study, resources, and assessments, including resources such as; anchor and support lessons, professional knowledge videos, instructional technology resources, models for instruction, pacing overviews, and games/center activities when applicable. Technology is integrated in instructional delivery, student learning, and assessments using SMARTBoards, document cameras, SMART Response, GPS devices, and on line resources. All K-2 classrooms have three desktops and three Chromebooks. And all 3-5 classrooms have five laptops. There is a dedicated computer lab and four mobile carts containing classroom sets of laptops. Students use programs, such as PowerPoint, PhotoStory, Little Bird Tales, and Windows Movie Maker to create and present student made projects.

The English curriculum focuses on effective reading and writing instruction. Students are engaged in whole group, small group and independent literacy activities. Teachers use mentor texts for modeling think a louds, explicitly teaching comprehension strategies, and as a springboard for lessons. Our reading instruction incorporates teacher modeling, guided student application, and independent practice of the strategies (“gradual release model”). The “close reading” process is used in grades 2-5 to teach purposeful reading and rereading of texts. Grades 2-5 also participate in a school level Quality Literature focus which encourages them to read books of different genres in their independent reading level. Daily sustained silent reading time provides students with meaningful time in text to engage them as readers as they self-monitor and confer about their reading progress and goals. A great emphasis is placed on reading instruction being a crucial link to the other core areas of instruction. Thus, strategies are integrated across the content areas. Teachers utilize a word study approach to teach spelling and scaffold word knowledge. Writing is also an integral part of the day employing student reflection, thinking, analyzing, and research through the use of journals, rubrics, and the writing process.

The Mathematics curriculum provides students with experiences to practice, and apply CCC skills while learning specific content in Math SOL. The SOL and CCC skills support development of the five mathematical process goals. Students collaborate and explore math concepts in cooperative learning settings. Manipulatives are used to develop concrete understandings. In addition, teachers facilitate experiences, learning to move from the representational to abstract, preparing them for real world application. Formative assessments and daily quick checks allow for teachers to remain abreast of student progress and provide timely intervention. Teachers conduct small flexible groups to provide intervention and enrichment. After school tutoring is offered to third through fifth grade students who need extra help.

The concentration in environmental science studies provides teachers and students a unique science learning environment and experiences. Students observe animal and plant life cycles and processes in action in the school courtyard, habitats, and Virginia Living Museum field experiences. Fifth grade classes are taught simultaneously by a master teacher via video conferencing with the other teachers supporting and providing follow-up instruction. Additional virtual experiences with NASA and other science museums help to teach the curriculum. Inquiry learning is a foundational component in science instruction providing students with hands-on, minds-on experiences set in motion curiosity, independence, activity, persistence, communication, and accountability. Reading selections provide cross curricular support through the selection of texts that support the various units. Learning labs, simulations and models, and field trips support Science content.

The History and Social Studies curriculum is based around themes in history, geography, civics, and economics with emphasis on students knowing and understanding our national heritage and how they can shape its future. Text and stories such as biographies and historical fiction are integrated into reading and library activities for cross curricular support. Students learn about important places, people, and events through reenactments and representations of historical events thus helping students understand points of

view from historical time periods. Each fourth grade Virginia Studies class participates in eight virtual field trips with experts at the Virginia Historical Society.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Deer Park Elementary provides several resource and enrichment opportunities to support students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge. Art lessons are designed using Art standards while also tailored, when possible, to support the students' core content. Cross curriculum connections include a fifth grade oceans; fourth grade Ancient Greco-Roman architecture and parallels to early American culture and lifestyle; and second grade lessons on Ancient Chinese culture. Selected students have their art work displayed in at least three Newport News public art shows. Art enrichment students use a software design program and create graphic design projects.

Music showcases provide students opportunities to perform in front of parents, peers and the community. Every student sings, dances, plays an instrument, and/or speaks, increasing oral communication skills. The performances support core content such as: a Veteran's Day salute, a jazz timeline highlighting famous Americans, an SOL game show review, and holiday celebrations. Additional lessons support the fifth grade sound unit, third grade math facts, and multiple fourth grade Virginia Studies topics. Forty third graders performed at a local Veteran's Hospital and collected socks to donate. Forty music enrichment students stay after school six different times to prepare for a more elaborate spring musical. At least fifteen students perform annually at a local high school as part of a multi-grade combined event.

PE supports the math skills such as: skip counting, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, using fractions, and geometry terms including parallel, perpendicular, and angles, while constantly stressing citizenship and sportsmanship goals. To support physical activity and literacy, a monthly home to school connection calendar is sent home with all students. Approximately thirty-five fourth and fifth graders are a part of a Speed Stacks team. They compete in the city tournament and have demonstrations for community events. The teacher sponsors the school's safety patrol which includes approximately forty fifth graders.

All students also benefit from a weekly library visit. Primary students select books and receive lessons that correlate with the core curriculum. Upper grades are advised on choosing appropriate books which also meet the expectations of our Quality Literature program. Students confer with their teacher to ensure they are choosing reading level appropriate books while challenging themselves.

Kindergarten and first grade students receive monthly guidance lessons. Second grade students receive weekly lessons. Students in third through fifth grade receive lessons as part of the rotation. Some classroom lessons focus on study skills while others support character traits, ways to improve conflict resolution, and provide information for possible careers.

All classes have STEM blocks which organize and deliver instruction through the design process of Ask (research the problem), Imagine (brainstorm ideas and solutions to create a plan), Build (implement the plan and innovate), Evaluate (Improve the plan and the innovation), and Share (communicate the outcomes) and utilizing design briefs to deliver engaging lessons. Second through fifth grade students participate in iSTEM Engineering Design Challenges, quarterly events that challenge teams from each school to collaborate in rigorous, career-based competitions, involving sixteen different students each year.

DPES has an active student council which oversees several community projects. They partner with the SPCA to collect canned food. They also work with the local food pantry to have non-perishable food drives and donate gently used shoes to local shelters. Grade levels also take on community projects. The third graders were involved in Soctober, a service project that donates socks to the Veterans Administration Hospital. They also raise money for the United Way and Jump Rope for Heart. All of these help develop charity, citizenship, and leadership skills in our students.

Third grade students are given the opportunity to be a part of the Great Computer Challenge enrichment. This annual event allows students in the class to apply their technology software skills in a variety of coach selected categories. This past year the team placed first in the desktop publishing division.

A science enrichment club provides fourth and fifth graders the opportunity to discover and explore science, nature, physics and engineering through outdoor activities, experiments, and STEM design challenges.

The Distinguished Gentleman's Enrichment Club, run by a volunteer law enforcement officer, includes twelve upper grade males and focuses on sportsmanship, interviewing skills, importance of attitude, respect, goal setting, and impact of choices.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Deer Park Elementary employs a robust selection of instructional methods and interventions to differentiate and provide learning experiences that engage, challenge, and motivate all students. Team teaching in 4th and 5th grade utilizes each teacher's instructional strengths in the core content. Classroom teachers use flexible blocks of whole group, small group, and 1:1 instruction/conferencing during reading and math. These two content areas have a block of time that allows flexibility of how the time is allocated. Fluid grouping also allows for students to move in and out of groups based on current performance and data.

Daily core content and STEM learning targets are posted in classrooms. These targets are written in student friendly terms and describe exactly what the student is going to learn by the end of each lesson. During reading and math lessons, anchor charts are developed by both teacher and student as a visual representation that supports the lesson's objectives.

Technology is integrated into the instructional day. SMARTBoards are used to deliver instruction and for student use during independent activities. Many of the content area concepts are reinforced through interactive websites, Notebook files, and the division's portaportal where students can access selected sites during independent and small group learning. Teachers use videos, music, and websites such as Moby Max, Study Jams, and Illuminations to support and enrich instruction at students' individual levels. In addition, teachers use document cameras to enlarge read aloud books and to model the creation of the Interactive Notebooks.

Each grade level has an Intervention/Enrichment block (I/E) during the day. Students in I/E receive support in a three week cycle. Checks for understanding and total participation techniques are used to monitor progress. A full-time reading specialist and a part-time reading interventionist work with students who have been identified through assessment data; benchmarks, literacy assessments, state assessments. A retired reading specialist works several hours a week with fifth grade students to reinforce literacy skills. Peer tutors are also used within the classroom to build relationships and to learn from one another.

While planning for students' diverse learning styles and providing support and/or accommodations to meet their needs, some qualify for services in educational areas such as; English Language Learner, special education, and gifted. These students may receive support in these areas from an English Language Learner instructor, Talented and Gifted teacher, and/or special education teacher.

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

Deer Park Elementary relies on a variety of formative/summative assessments to make sound instructional decisions. Teachers use achievement data from Standards of Learning (SOL), Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and quarterly benchmarks for instructional planning and to identify areas for remediation and acceleration. In addition, teachers use quick checks, anecdotal notes, running records, teacher made assessments, and assessments from Renaissance Learning (STAR) and Interactive Achievement (IA).

The ITC, reading specialist, and administrators analyze and interpret data for the purposes of instructional improvement. They attend grade level planning meetings to discuss student achievement, curriculum, and next steps. The team uses performance characteristics of the students to help identify intervention, remediation, and enrichment blocks of instruction in an effort to develop and broaden students' knowledge and skills. They assist teachers in interpreting results and formulating questions related to student learning. Teachers use data to drive whole and small group instruction. Throughout the year, administrators and

teachers rely on summative assessment data and reassign students to various reading and math groups based on teacher strengths. For example, they match strengths in main idea, non-fiction, and word analysis with the students identified as having weaknesses in those areas. All of this is done in hope of answering, “Now what, where do we go from here?” These interactions help to improve the ability to use data to help drive instruction in regard to student learning.

DPES communicates assessment results in various ways to stakeholders. Teachers use Friday Folders, e-mail, phone calls, notes home, and apps such as Class Dojo and Remind 101 to provide consistent feedback on students’ academic and social progress. Parents of grade 3-5 students are able to access the gradebook through a parent portal called ParentVue. Teachers in grades 2-5 share student STAR reading progress and ways parents can help pick appropriate reading material. Grade 3-5 students are invited to participate in after school tutoring based on various performance measures. Teacher conduct parent conferences throughout the year and literacy and math measures are shown and intervention strategies are shared. Students conduct progress conferences with parents during the year via student portfolios. Teachers offer additional home strategies for all students on quarterly progress reports and report cards. The school’s SOL performance is published annually by the state and linked on the school’s website.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Deer Park Elementary strives to create a culture of excellence by offering a distinctive learning environment that is full of opportunities for student success. As an Environmental Science program, DPES provides its staff, students, families, and visitors an environment of discovery and exploration. The scenic murals on the foyer walls, picturesque ceiling light panels, and student created ceramic tiles bring a calm and vibrant look of the outdoors into the learning environment. Student work is proudly displayed and is a visual representation not only of the learning that is taking place, but also student creativity and expression. There are fifty-five animal exhibits and habitats throughout the school that provide homes for animals of fin, feather, fur, or scales. The creatures provide an intriguing yet soothing effect as students observe them. Students take pride in being a part of the care of the animals/habitats both during school and extended breaks. Teachers focus on the skills and knowledge obtained through Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) because they are vital for real world application. The STEM focus helps support the mission of developing life-long learners who are compassionate about the environment. The personal connections made during investigations, performance assessments, and problem solving tasks inspire students to work collaboratively to construct and solve their own questions about the world around them. These experiences aid in the development of the well rounded child that is better prepared to be college, career and citizen ready. The staff is a caring, responsible, knowledgeable and professional learning community. Teachers demonstrate relationships of trust and respect by valuing another's opinions, learning styles, and goals. Educators embrace collaboration and meet daily as a grade level to plan, reflect, analyze data, and discuss professional development opportunities. DPES works to sustain high-performance standards and explores opportunities to improve upon it. Administration and teachers are open to feedback and embrace the idea of "even better if" when making professional and instructional decisions.

The majority of staff has been here for five or more years. Our waiting list reflects a high desire for students to attend. Students generally complete their elementary school years here. Therefore; staff, students, and families have a vested interest in this school. DPES believes that the many successes of our school are a true reflection of a culture that fosters high expectations, inquiry learning opportunities, rigorous and challenging curriculum, and embracement of family and community involvement.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Deer Park Elementary, we promote education as a partnership among all stakeholders. Families have voluntarily chosen DPES for their children. With this participation, families sign a contract and commit to uphold the school's standards and expectations in student academics, behavior, attendance, and work study skills. The most successful strategy in working with family and community for student success and school improvement is the continuous and varied communication between all stakeholders.

DPES communicates with families through class websites, newsletters, phone calls, notes home and apps such as Remind 101 to provide information on upcoming school events and involvement opportunities. Teachers share student academic progress and behavior notifications through an online gradebook (Parent Vue), e-mails, phone calls, notes, and the app Class Dojo. Each year, prospective families are invited to attend Open House and informational meetings to get to know the faculty and unique school features. One of the components of family night is that teachers provide instructional tools, tips, and strategies for parents to use at home to help their child/children. These all help to foster effective communication and build a strong relationship between home and school.

DPES shares many opportunities for parents to be involved at the school. Dedicated and hard-working parents are active with assisting teachers, being mystery readers, decorating for events, chaperoning field trips, working in the library, and helping to maintain the outside learning courtyard. Parents often volunteer to take home a classroom pet that requires care during extended breaks. The PTA supports recognition events, student reward staff appreciation activities. The WATCH DOG program encourages adult male role models to be involved in a variety of activities throughout the building.

Deer Park values the non-profits, businesses, and institutes of higher education partnerships and the goods and services they provide. Community churches provide food and assistance for needy families and help with the Courtyard Clean-Up Days. The partnership with the Virginia Living Museum provides mutual benefits by sharing animals and enhancing educational opportunities related to plants and animals of Virginia. DPES provides an educational setting for Christopher Newport University students to earn observational and volunteer hours. Student athletes from several colleges volunteer by reading and mentoring students. Deer Park houses one of Newport News Parks and Recreational Before/After School/Summer programs which provides child care for working parents. These partnerships make connections that ultimately benefit student success and school improvement.

### 3. Professional Development:

Deer Park Elementary is driven by the division's philosophy that "smart is something you become" and therefore the staff is on a continuous journey of learning. DPES strives to provide opportunities for growth in seven strands outlined by the division: Professional Knowledge, Instructional Planning, Instructional Delivery, Assessments for/of Learning, Learning Environment, Professionalism, and Student Academic Progress. The school's professional development approach centers around developing a climate of high expectations for student performance and success. Resident experts share their knowledge through formal and informal PD opportunities. An example of a PD that has been implemented across K-5 is the Daily 5. The impact from this learning resulted in increased reading stamina and accountability that transfers across other content areas. Teachers have found that students remain highly engaged during independent reading and learning activities. The division's University of Educational Development provides a variety of trainings and chats to support the seven strands, 21st century skills, and incorporate the state standards. Staff participates in workshops and online professional development sessions based on their interests, professional goals, school and division initiatives, and to keep current on instructional best practices to meet student social, emotional, and academic needs. Teachers attended sessions on strategic readers and blending math & literature to support strategies for content integration and the needs of struggling students. Administrators and staff members have continued to increase their level of expertise by participating in sessions on Project-Based Learning, SMART Notebook, and STEM. Further development in learning targets and morning meetings has allowed teachers to enhance their learning environment while building a positive classroom culture. All of these professional development areas have been carefully selected to meet the needs of both the staff and students.

Professional development at DPES is important so that administrators and teachers are consistently learning pedagogy, strategies, and curriculum. The faculty and staff are life-long learners who share their knowledge and skills with their colleagues and students. They implement new ideas and approaches that are researched based to improve and guide future instruction so that the students are successful. Our achievement data shows continuous high performance in all areas and the staff strives to maintain this goal.

### 4. School Leadership:

One of the essential responsibilities of effective school leadership is to maintain a clear vision of high standards and rigorous learning goals. The principal has established improving reading comprehension and creating an enthusiasm for reading as a literacy focus. She mobilizes tangible resources to support this goal and elicits ideas and expertise from human resources such as school staff, central office staff, community partnerships, School Leadership Team (SLT), and PTA. The principal collaborates with stakeholders on how to improve the learning environment and academic, social, and emotional growth for all students. She allows teachers to provide autonomous instructional delivery while adhering to the expectations of the division and state.

The assistant principal is the point of contact for areas such as child study, special education, and assessments that are division and state mandated. She also oversees discipline and helps communicate the expectations and rules regarding behavior. The assistant principal works together with the principal on staff evaluations and providing feedback to refine instruction.

The reading specialist guides teachers in best practices for literacy instruction throughout the day and across content. Her responsibilities in literacy include coaching, modeling lessons, co-teaching, collaborative planning, conducting professional development, conferencing with parents, analyzing data, and collaborating with administrators to plan and set goals for literacy instruction. Additionally, she works with students individually or in small groups to assess and improve their literacy skills.

Our instructional technology coach (ITC) is responsible for guiding instructional staff in integrating technology. She collaborates with school-level instructional staff for planning, co-teaching, and modeling strategies for effectively integrating technology into teaching and learning. She also collaborates with administrators to deliver appropriate coaching, training, and resources to support professional growth of adult learners. Facilitating conversations that bridge data analysis to instructional planning and improvement are a key area of focus.

Grade Level leads are the liaison between their grade level and the division. They collaborate with the SLT and administrators to establish clear expectations, reflect on instructional delivery, interpret data, and monitor and adjust instruction based on findings.

Teachers work collaboratively to plan and analyze data to make necessary adjustments to instruction. The idea of shared leadership and a common purpose create a highly effective organizational structure. Administrators, reading specialist and ITC are a part of team planning. Meaningful conversations are centered around summative and formative assessments to lend suggestions for next steps to improving student learning.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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A key practice that Deer Park utilizes that makes it so successful is the usage of data-driven decision making. The principal has created a culture that embraces and empowers teachers to take ownership and shared responsibility in data practices. Achievement data is routinely used to plan for instruction and guide teachers to continuous improvement.

Trainings keep the staff abreast of any changes to assessment resources and/or procedures. Teachers learn what resources are available to them and how to make sense of the data. The leadership promotes making immediate changes when seeing something in the data that warrants making a change.

Teachers support their colleagues vertically as students advance in grade levels. They draw from each other's past experiences and share strategies that were proven successful in previous year(s) with students. There is an open and honest communication during data discussions. Responding constructively to data is imperative. Conversations about data are held face-to-face and/or in collaborative settings. Areas of instructional weakness are viewed as opportunities for growth and used for next step goals. After benchmarks or other formal testing, the data is shared for collaborative group discussions. Teachers have developed a comfort level for this non-judgmental and reflective data practice. When looking at data across a grade level or vertically, there is a component of trust that is evident among the instructional team.

Looking at data is a natural process at DPES. There are several different assessments both and formal that are used to monitor student performance. There are division and school level expectations for teachers to maintain quarterly data card that reflects each teachers' individual classroom of students. Whereas other teachers might complete data cards as a task to complete, DPES teachers complete this task with the end in mind that they will gain insights into skills needing remediation and those mastered. By making data-driven decisions we are able to grow professionally, improve instructional practices to better meet student needs, and move towards mastery of content and skills.