

***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) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Casey Smitherman

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

Official School Name Brown Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 340 Stadium Drive

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

City Brownsburg State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46112-1414

County Hendricks County

Telephone (317) 852-1498 Fax (317) 858-2171

Web site/URL http://www.brownsburg.k12.in.us E-mail csmitherman@brownsburg.k12.in.us

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/Heardroundbrown 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. James Snapp E-mail jsnapp@brownsburg.k12.in.us

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

District Name Brownsburg Community School Corporation Tel. \_\_\_\_\_ (317) 852-5726

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 Dr. Adam Brower

(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 9 K-12 schools
- 18 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	59	47	106
1	47	67	114
2	58	59	117
3	44	55	99
4	51	49	100
5	68	55	123
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>	327	332	659

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 8 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 81 % White
  - 6 % 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: 10%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	32
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	32
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	64
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	650
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.098
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %  
27 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Amharic, Arabic, Ewe, French, German, Mandarin, Portugese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Urdu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 23 %  
Total number students who qualify: 152

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
93 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.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>10</u> Autism               | <u>3</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>83</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>9</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed               |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	1
Classroom teachers	33
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals	16
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 20:1
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.

Brownsburg Elementary School will provide, within a secure environment, an engaging, relevant educational program with academic opportunities for all students to pursue their maximum intellectual potential. Social and physical opportunities will also be provided to students to encourage them to become well-rounded individuals. Reaching maximum achievement will prepare students to live productively and responsibly in a technical, global society.

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

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Brown Elementary School opened in 1997 with grades kindergarten through six. Since that time the school has been served by three different principals serving a population of students that has ranged from as low as 540 to as high as 750. Today the school serves 680 students in grades kindergarten through five. Sixth grade was moved to the middle school in 2004. Along with the changing grade configuration, the student demographic has changed considerably since the doors first opened. The poverty level in the Town of Brownsburg has increased over 100% in the last seven years moving Brown Elementary School from a fairly affluent school to one that now hosts a student population of almost 30% who qualify for free or reduced lunches. The school also serves the district's most severely and profoundly disabled (life skills) population which has doubled from 15 to 30 students since the school's inception.

The population has changed, but the Brown Elementary School staff has worked hard to meet the new educational demands. The school has a history of serving students well, marked with consistently respectable performance on state measures of student achievement. In 2010-2011, under the guidance of a new central office administration, sweeping changes began to occur. Since the changes were implemented, state standardized test scores have increased dramatically and discipline referrals have decreased considerably. While federal research suggests schools that experience an increase of students living in poverty struggle to meet the increased demands that has not been the case at Brown Elementary School.

In the fall of 2010, it became clear that change was in order to best serve the students. In an effort to do this programs were evaluated for performance and only those with the highest marks in changing student performance made the cut. The school eliminated the assistant principal position to gain a full time instructional coach in 2011-2012. The instructional coach has full time duties to model lessons, support beginning teachers, debrief and support lessons with all teachers, lead professional development and manage the Learning Lab curriculum. In that same school year, three full time positions were added to staff the Learning Lab, a small group intervention that allows students to get extra support in reading and math at a ratio of 6 students: 1 adult. The school day was also changed in the 11-12 school year to allow for early dismissal of students on Wednesdays. This additional time allows all certified personnel to meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) with their grade levels to analyze student data and make decisions on the instructional needs of students in an efficient and fluid manner.

The reduction of superfluous programs while instilling a focused model of curriculum and instruction, allowed for a student-centered and data-driven culture to take hold at Brown Elementary School. Teachers can be found discussing a full grade level of students during a PLC meeting. The school has transformed from a feeling of "my" students to one where staff supports ALL students. Teachers know in great detail all of the students in their particular grade level and work diligently with their colleagues to support and meet the academic and emotional needs of each student.

District-level support increases the level of specificity teachers master with their classes. A full-time data and assessment administrator enhances teachers' knowledge of student and class level data with data rosters that display each piece of student assessment in one quick and easy format. The real-time data is utilized to drive the professional development needs. Professional development is focused on the three specific components of instruction math, writing, and a balanced literacy program. Because the professional development is geared specifically for teachers in Brownsburg, it is job-embedded and delivered by the instructional coaches who work with teachers to address relevant instructional questions and issues in a timely manner.

Brown Elementary School is a family-friendly environment. The Parent Support Group (PSG) is very active, both as a fund-raising arm of the school and as the connection for parent volunteers. A typical day at the school sees anywhere from 15-40 volunteers coming to school to man the office, run copies, read with a struggling reader, or assist where needed to enhance student learning and support the positive culture of the school. Parents seek neighborhoods that send students to Brown Elementary School because they understand that not only will their children receive excellent instruction, but also because the culture feels welcoming and inviting to them.

Excellent instruction has been consistently delivered at Brown Elementary School, but the last six years have seen significant changes that have brought academic gains beyond what was once imagined. Parents and students recognize their school as one that challenges and delivers the highest level of instruction

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Brown Elementary School has transitioned to the new Indiana Academic Standards as a curricular framework. These standards can be accessed through the Brownsburg School website. Curriculum teams utilize an on-going curriculum revision process. This process involves researching best practices, participating in grade level study groups, and designing lessons and activities which incorporate differentiated instruction. The curriculum teams create curriculum calendars and develop common assessments. These curriculum maps and assessments are posted on a web-based curriculum mapping program called Rubicon Atlas. It allows easy online access, standards mapping, vertical articulation, and a collaborative sharing platform for our staff members.

Our curricular approach is based on the connect that teachers model instruction (I do), then allow students time to practice this in a way that allows for quick checks of understanding typically in a whole or small group settings that allow for practice under the guidance of a teacher (we do), followed by a time for students to practice (you do). These different levels are differentiated based on student need so that some students spend more time under the tutelage of a teacher while other students are allowed to excel at a rapid pace. This gradual release allows students to master the skills in most efficient manner.

**Reading/English language arts:** A balanced literacy approach is supported at the school through the use of literacy stations, book clubs, and the skills as outlined in the basal. Students receive a full, uninterrupted, 90 minute block every day of instruction teaching foundational skills through whole group and small group instruction. The use of differentiated literacy stations allows students additional time to practice these skills. Additionally, teachers recognize the importance of having students engaged in text during the majority of the reading block. Teachers not only focus on mastering necessary reading skills, but also create a culture where students value reading. Students who struggle receive an additional 30 minute small group reading intervention during Learning Lab. In addition to the reading block, students receive an average of 40 minutes of writing instruction each day. During the writing block, teachers focus on content and conventions to develop their writers. Brownsburg Community Schools was proud to have the fourth-highest standardized test scores in English/Language Arts in 2015.

**Math:** Brown Elementary School utilizes the Everyday Math curriculum with fidelity. Within the program there are multiple opportunities for teachers to differentiate the curriculum based on the specific needs of each class. Teachers implement small group, whole group, and math stations to reach every learner. Struggling students receive an additional 30 minute small group math intervention during Learning Lab. Brownsburg Community Schools was proud to have the highest standardized test scores in math for the state of Indiana in 2015.

**Science:** A hands-on, investigative approach is used to teach science at Brown Elementary School. Teachers use science as an opportunity to give students necessary practice in reading and understanding high level, non-fiction text. Students receive instruction in a whole group setting and are then released to practice and investigate the topics through experiments and trials with a variety of materials based on the grade level. In kindergarten this can be seen in watching seeds come to life while in the fifth grade, it is more likely to involve rocks, matter, soil, and outdoor studies.

**Social Studies:** Teachers use a variety of texts to connect their social studies curriculum to reading instruction. While students use social studies text books, they also gather information from newspapers, the internet, and periodicals to learn about the past and current events. Specific attention is given to a connection between the social studies curriculum and reading. Grade level teams seek opportunities to connect the two so students recognize social studies, and the non-fiction reading that comes with it, can be in every part of their day. Fourth grade students spend the year studying Indiana history, as prescribed by the Indiana DOE. The learning opportunities are extended by a field trip to the Indiana State House and Indiana State Museum.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All Brown Elementary School students receive 50 minutes per week of art, music, physical education, technology, and media center instruction. All of the related arts classes include technology. In music class students compose music on the computer and later play it on the instruments in class. Art class includes internet research about specific artists or works of art. During technology class students create presentations using PowerPoint, Prezi, and video cameras to use during reading and social studies.

Arts: As a part of their instruction in visual arts, students study artists from different time periods and different parts of the world. After receiving a basic understanding of the artist's work and how it impacted the world, students are able to try their hand at art in the same method. This includes 2-D, 3-D, and clay projects. During art class, students are exposed to literature about the artist and his/her time period that is at their level, giving them additional exposure to non-fiction text and another view of how reading is incorporated in every part of their lives. Students read about other students who use art to express their creativity; this is followed by time to similarly use art to spark or share their creative genius.

The Brown Elementary School music classroom does not have chairs because students are engaged during the full period in singing, playing instruments, dancing, or moving to music based on the ORFF method of music instruction. Novels and other children's literature is incorporated into the curriculum to help children understand that novels may take on a new meaning when used to create music or read as a song. The first and second grade annual music program is based completely on novels adapted by the music teacher to be set to music. Students read the stories aloud, sing or play composed portions of the story to understand the power books can have. In addition to incorporating literature in his classroom, the music teacher runs a book club before school each Friday morning to allow readers an additional opportunity to interact with text and feel a sense of success.

The Physical Education program is essential to developing proper locomotor, non-locomotor, and fine motor skills. All of these motor skills are needed for proper development of the brain. We incorporate and use other content areas (math and language arts) throughout exercise activities. Including these content areas within exercise is a great way to differentiate our instruction to meet the needs of various types of learning styles. It not only is used to keep students healthy and active, but also has a high emphasis on developing outstanding character skills and life skills including cooperative work, problem solving, perseverance, and effective communication skills.

As part of the daily related arts rotation, students spend time each week in the media center where they are exposed to books chosen based on their reading level. The media center specialist runs a program titled Battle of the Books where students are challenged to read three books from a set of twelve and then compete in a game based on their comprehension of the books. The excitement that she builds around the chosen books and the competition it involves, is an annual favorite of the students. Additionally, a Book Swap Week is held each spring to allow students to swap books in an effort to get books into the hands of each of the students in celebration of Read Across America. Students also learn typing, research, and internet safety skills in technology class.

## 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Brown Elementary School has a number of steps in place to identify and assist students who are in need of additional support. School wide benchmark screenings are used in literacy and numeracy through the Dibels & Acuity assessments. Students identified as at-risk are progress monitored every two weeks. Additionally, they are the focus of increased scrutiny at PLC meetings.

Brown Elementary School's second step in the district's RtI process is targeted placement of at-risk students into learning labs for literacy and numeracy. Reading and math instruction are prioritized and students requiring intensive support to receive reading and math interventions in dedicated 30-minute long remediation/re-teaching labs. Strengthening these RtI intervention strategies is a third prong of the overall professional development plan.

Brown Elementary School's final component of the comprehensive school improvement process is an RtI tier #3 referral. For some students, those with the most serious of academic deficiencies, additional time on task before or after school may be necessary. An after school tier #3 response provides additional time, as well as substantially different remediative interventions, prior to a special education referral. The Tier 3 response provides after school intervention for approximately 50 students throughout the year. Bus transportation is provided for this program to ensure every student who needs to attend will be able to do so.

In addition to reaching the struggling student, the school also provides a high ability program for students. Students who qualify based on teacher recommendation and placement tests, are provided with a separate classroom setting and expedited and enriched curriculum. Nearly 100% of all students in this program, score at the Pass Plus level of the state standardized tests every year.

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

Brown Elementary School, along with every BCSC school, has implemented Richard DuFour's Professional Learning Community (PLC) framework. PLCs are an opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively analyzing and responding to real-time formative and summative assessment data to modify and adjust instruction, design intervention, and reflect on curricular and instructional efficacy.

Within PLCs, teachers bring to the table a variety of different data components. Brown Elementary School administers the Dynamic Measurement Group's Dibels Literacy Benchmark three times annually, with follow-up bi-weekly Progress Monitoring of Strategic and Intensive students based upon those results. In grades 3-5, teachers administer the Acuity Predictive or Readiness battery three times annually as a standards-based formative snapshot of skill proficiency. The Acuity ELA and Math assessment provide standards-level reporting and valuable predictive insight into student mastery.

In addition to those larger-scale standardized formatives, teachers follow detailed curricular maps which include locally designed formative assessments like common writing prompts, unit and chapter test, performance tasks, and exit tickets. This small scale evidence allows teachers to look at the effectiveness of specific lessons and instructional strategies with time to respond, revise, or reteach as needed. This data is used to continually restructure and redesign intervention groups along the instructional "J Curve" providing ever increasing time and resources to drive higher and higher achievement. This support starts with the core instructional program, but can carry through to pull-out intervention labs, after school remediation programs, and intensive skills summer school.

Teachers and parents alike receive comprehensive data rosters that detail longitudinal formative assessment results in a color-coded and easily understood student profile format. Teachers view their students' data through the lens of their PLC, assessing the needs of the school system through common ownership of an entire grade levels' data. Anecdotal feedback is delivered to parents through frequent classroom communication.

Achievement gaps are monitored closely. Although gaps in excess of 10% exist in racial/ethnic and special education subgroups, these groups are generally composed of small numbers in each grade level (often below the state's reporting threshold of 10 students). This makes direct comparison of achievement percentages highly volatile. Brown Elementary School believes that the same progressive "J Curve" interventions work to address the learning deficits of all students and will ultimately reduce or eliminate the achievement gaps.

The high achievement of the last several years (culminating in 2015's 11th overall ranking among Indiana's 487 elementary schools) will be maintained through continued fidelity to the systems, processes, and people that brought us this far. Tight allegiance to solid pedagogical practices, sound data-based decision making, and collegial reflection and refinement through the PLC framework ensures that all children will succeed and positions them for Higher Achievement-Together.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

When Professional Learning Communities were implemented in 2011-2012, teachers felt overwhelmed by all they were expected to achieve during that meeting each week. They described feeling tired on Wednesdays. Today, the perception of PLC and all that is being achieved is holistically different. Over time the push for an analysis of data, instruction and lesson plans based on specific student needs, the idea of being nimble in instruction to reach students where they are, and an acceptance that high standards will always be expected is now a way of life at Brown Elementary School. The culture of high expectations is not necessarily one you can see, but it is definitely one you can feel. Our culture has changed from “these are my kids” to one that says “these are our kids.”

Students and teachers can readily tell you about their data. Excited students come to the office every day to share their increased Lexile or the number of words they can now read in a minute based on the DIBELS assessment. Students also work to push each other with a sense of shared responsibility that their increases in learning are good for the entire school.

Staff members celebrate each other during weekly School Leadership Team, PLC meetings and staff meetings. Each meeting opens with these celebrations to create a culture where teachers understand time will be devoted to celebrating our wins, both professionally and personally. The weekly memo has a section devoted to shout outs and celebrations of the efforts of their colleagues. A teacher recently shared, “In the past 5 years I have been teaching, I have never felt such motivation and joy while teaching. Brown Elementary School is a remarkable place to be a teacher and everyone challenges each other to strive for greater goals.”

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent participation is a key component to success within our school. School begins with Back to School Night/Open House when parents are given the opportunity to meet their child’s teachers. During this event, teachers share classroom expectations, remediation opportunities, and other important class information. Brown Elementary School has an active Parent Support Group. Parents with students enrolled in our school are automatically a member of this group. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at our schools. Our volunteers chaperone field trips, work in the front office, and facilitate small groups in classrooms.

During the school year, a Title One Reading Night is designed by the Instructional Coach to allow parents to gain a better understanding of what their children are learning in school and how to further support this instruction at home. Parents enjoy a free dinner at school followed by stations where they learn how to use read alouds to increase comprehension, how to increase oral reading fluency, and other ideas to encourage reading at home. Every student and sibling that attends the event, leaves with a free book and other reading materials.

In an effort to meet the changing demographics of our school community, we enlisted the help of the local Rotary Club to support bringing the BackSack Program to our school. This program ensures that every child facing food shortages in their home, leave for the weekend with 14 shelf stable items to sustain them over the weekend. Additionally, students have developed a program that takes any unwrapped food that would otherwise be thrown away and collect these items into additional bags to go home with impoverished students. The school counselor, principal, and school resource officer use home visits along with local community partners such as Habit of the Heart and Healthy Families to work with families in need to ensure their basic needs are met. These efforts have increased the school attendance rate and headed off problems that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

### 3. Professional Development:

All of the Instructional Coaches in the district work together to analyze the student performance data to decide on the most pressing needs of the student population. Based on this analysis, the coaches provide district-level professional development three times per year to each grade level for a half day. The professional development allows teachers to work with their grade level teams across the district to design plans and learn specific strategies to help their students. Teachers walk away from each session with fully designed lessons that are shared between all of the six elementary schools. This provides teachers with ready-to-use instructional materials, ensuring the work will be put to use with their students.

At the school level, the coach and principal work together based on the observed needs of teachers to create the monthly professional development. Together the principal and coach lead teachers through lessons that allow them to understand the best practices and how they'll use them with their students. This time also utilizes videos of teachers in action to allow them to see their colleagues practicing the skills and provides teachers with the opportunity to understand to whom they may go to gain additional enrichment in specific areas.

At the classroom level, the principal frequently observes teachers in action and then shares what she sees with the coach. This allows the principal and coach to discuss areas of concern and the specific strategies and techniques that may best help the teacher. The principal follows up with the teacher to share any noted areas of concern and to initiate dialogue about avenues to improve instruction. The coach then works with the teacher to model strategies, debrief lessons, and give feedback.

### 4. School Leadership:

Brown Elementary School uses a model of shared leadership that provides teacher leadership roles within the school while keeping the principal in the forefront so teachers can focus on instruction and their students. The building is led by one principal. Also in school leadership roles is the instructional coach and the school counselor. The instructional coach handles many of the day to day tasks related to curriculum including organizing assessment materials and helping teachers understand the curriculum maps. The coach models 12-20 lessons per week based on the needs of the students and teachers. The school counselor leads a comprehensive counseling program that includes student groups for topics such as divorce, new students, and peer relationship issues, a career program, and character education lessons. She also assists many students in need of services on an ad hoc basis.

Each grade level also has an appointed representative along with a few other leaders in the building who meet with the principal, counselor, and coach one time per month to share strategies for leading PLC, to inform the professional development, to give feedback to the principal, and to gain a better understanding of practices within the school that they may then take back to their respective teams. The grade level representatives also meet with the superintendent and assistant superintendent on a quarterly basis to provide feedback at the district level.

The principal maintains a very visible role within the school inasmuch as she can call every one of the 680 students by name. This connection is made through frequent walkthroughs and observations of classrooms, lunch and bus duties, and an active role within the school. In addition to the traditional roles of discipline and instructional leadership, the principal works with the school counselor to understand the needs of the families served at Brown Elementary School. When chronic attendance issues arise, she and the counselor or school resource officer, visit the home to meet with the family and understand what obstacles are keeping the student from attending school regularly. These connections to families in need, allow the school to take a proactive approach before problems become too large. Through these home visits, families have reported a lack of food, clean clothing, illness, transportation, or insecure housing that have kept them from sending their children to school. Through close relationships with local community partners, the principal and counselor can help connect families to necessary resources to help get families back on their feet. This push also allows the students to focus on the key to their future: a solid education.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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To people outside of education, Professional Learning Communities (PLC) can sound like just another meeting. To the teachers at Brown Elementary School, it is the ticket to success. When PLC was first implemented in 2011-12, teachers spent a lot of time working on the norms and making sure they were performing PLC meetings correctly. What they learned over time, is that it needs to be a time to look at specific students or groups of students who need help and figuring out as a team, how to meet those needs. Both narrative and assessment data is used to gain insight into what the students are doing well and where they need help. Teachers then spend time discussing exactly how they will help the students. Sometimes this means adjusting the list of students who attend Learning Lab. Other times it means carving out time during the reading block or before or after school to work one-on-one with a student who needs the extra time to focus on phonics or math facts. Whatever the case may be, the teachers work together and seek the help of the coach, counselor, or special education teacher to get what their students need to succeed.

All of the teachers meet in the media center for PLC. Being gathered together, but sitting with their grade level teams, allow the meetings to be focused and grade level specific. It also allows the teachers to share resources and ask questions to ensure the curriculum is being met across the grade levels. Each meeting opens with celebrations. Hearing the celebrations of their colleagues allows the staff to share the success of their peers and students they have had or will have in the future. This again allows for a feeling of the students being OUR kids at Brown Elementary School.