

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Jennifer Raycroft

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

Official School Name Union Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 11750 East 300 South

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

City Zionsville State IN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 46077-8902

County Boone County

Telephone (317) 733-4007 Fax (317) 733-4008

Web site/URL http://www.zcs.k12.in.us/uni/ E-mail jraycroft@zcs.k12.in.us

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/ZCSUnionElem Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

Blog

YouTube/URL _____ http://unionpbl.weebly.com/ 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. Scott Robison E-mail srobison@zcs.k12.in.us

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

District Name Zionsville Community Schools Tel. (317) 873-2858

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 Mrs. Shari Alexander Richey

(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	39	30	69
K	60	50	110
1	51	48	99
2	57	52	109
3	55	61	116
4	71	52	123
5	0	0	0
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	333	293	626

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 5 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % White
 - 4 % 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: 9%

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	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	21
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	53
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	583
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.091
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Pushtu, Mandarin, French, Urdu, Cantonese, Korean, Gujarati, Serbian, Hindi

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %
Total number students who qualify: 26
8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
75 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.

- 9 Autism
- 1 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 19 Other Health Impaired
- 9 Specific Learning Disability
- 26 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 9 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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	2
Classroom teachers	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	14
Student support personnel 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 12:1

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	97%	98%	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.

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.

Union Elementary strives to create a nurturing and kid-focused learning environment where teachers, students, and parents work together in supportive and collaborative partnerships so all students can meet their potential.

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

Union Elementary School, part of the Zionsville Community School Corporation, is located in the southeast corner of Boone County and serves Eagle and Union Townships. The district is comprised of one senior high school, two middle schools, and four other elementary schools, for a total K-12 enrollment of over 5,000 students. Zionsville, Indiana is characterized as a suburban community, where small town festivals highlight its brick paved roads, a nostalgic feature of Zionsville's quaint atmosphere. Zionsville was ranked as the #2 Best Suburb by Business Insider and was named the Safest Small Town in America by Movoto Real Estate Website.

Union Elementary School opened its doors in the current location in 2007 after the closing of the original Union Elementary School. "Old Union," as it is affectionately called, opened in 1938 and was considered the small country school on the outskirts of Zionsville proper. After the building upkeep became costly and the physical space could no longer accommodate the suburban sprawl, the new building was constructed, bearing the same name. While the student population grown, the small school feel of "Old Union" has been preserved through the staff emphasis on relationships and the active family involvement.

Union Elementary's 91,000 square foot facility serves over 600 students and their families. The building contains thirty general education classrooms, two computer labs, a project room, and areas designed for art, music, physical education, and STEM. Union Elementary has a large media center that serves as a hub for reading. The seventeen acre property boasts an outdoor classroom which includes native Indiana wildflowers, a butterfly garden, vegetable gardening space, and picnic tables for outdoor education. Recently, first grade students have utilized PBL (project based learning) to fund several bird feeders to create a more nature friendly environment surrounding the school building.

Our school provides programming for students in pre-school through fourth grades. The professional staff consists of a principal, an assistant principal, four pre-school teachers, five classroom teachers at each grade level from kindergarten through fourth grades, two special education teachers, one literacy coach, one STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) teacher/coach, one full-time speech and language pathologist, and one full-time school counselor and her therapy dog. Content specialists in art and music education are shared with other Zionsville elementary schools. Our school also shares occupational and physical therapists across the district. Other personnel include one health care professional, two full-time secretaries, a library paraprofessional, and four full-time instructional assistants.

Union Elementary maintains a high standard for academic excellence. We attribute our success to a rigorous curriculum, innovative instructional practices, a highly qualified and dedicated staff, and parents who value and support our efforts. We pride ourselves in meeting students where they are and helping them get to where they need to be. We do this through a variety of programs and services such as full day kindergarten, intervention supports, high ability programming, and differentiated instruction.

Our school provides many opportunities for students that extend learning outside the school day. Extracurricular offerings vary each year and include programs such as before school Foreign Languages (French and Spanish), Music and Art Enrichment, Engineering Club, a Kids Fitness Program (Fit Kidz), and a Drama Club. Students in the fourth grade also can participate in Student Council. As a culmination to the various curricular units of study, each grade level highlights student work with an annual student production, such as the first grade Young Author's Night, second grade States Fair, third grade Specialties Fair, and fourth grade Famous Hoosiers.

Parental support at Union Elementary is phenomenal! Parents take an active part in Union Elementary School as classroom volunteers or field trip chaperones. The PTO is very active in assisting the school and demonstrates their involvement by raising funds to provide programs and materials. Union Elementary School also has a Dads Club, which hosts many fun, free events such as grade level breakfasts, a campout, winter festival, and basketball tournament. Parents are considered valued partners in the educational process. Parent-teacher conferences are held at the end of the first grading period and on an as needed basis throughout the year. These conferences have nearly one hundred percent participation. Parent emphasis on education is demonstrated by our high attendance rate, which is consistently above ninety-seven percent.

Each year, parents are offered a satisfaction survey to provide feedback on how we can continually improve as a school.

Positive school culture is a priority at Union Elementary. We implement a positive behavior student support program, where every Union student is a “STAR” by showing they are safe, truthful, accepting of others, respectful and responsible on a daily basis. Each student at Union Elementary is invited to eat lunch with the principal during the school year and can be nominated by their teacher each week to be recognized for showing positive citizenship. The combination of proactive behavior interventions, collaboration with all stakeholders, and positive supports allow for Union Elementary students and staff to focus their time and energy on creating an enriching school experience.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Curriculum is based upon the Indiana College and Career Ready Standards and is often interdisciplinary. Support is provided for students with special needs and students who have been identified as high ability, with a focus on continuous progress for all students through instruction that is differentiated for individual levels of readiness. In all academic areas, students learn through research-based instruction that helps them acquire skills which they can apply inside and out of the classroom.

Reading/English Language Arts

Union Elementary educators believe that literacy is the foundation for all learning and is critical to future success. They know that literacy instruction is multi-faceted and must include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension. Union Elementary students receive direct instruction in reading at and beyond their instructional levels. Students are guided to read for meaning and pleasure across all curricular areas. The Zionsville Community Schools balanced literacy framework details experiences for readers and writers to grow through research-based best practices. This framework outlines the instructional strategies that should be implemented. Reading and writing instruction is provided through a workshop structure. Each instructional block begins with a whole group mini-lesson and leads into student work time where teachers differentiate through small group instruction and individual conferences.

Teachers utilize a variety of resources to ensure that they are meeting students at their current instructional level and moving them forward. Union teachers and students have a wealth of reading materials at their fingertips. Each classroom is equipped with a robust and diverse library from which students select texts that are both of interest and at their level. Teachers utilize a leveled book room, from which they may pull multiple copies of texts to use with students in guided reading groups or literature circles.

Writing instruction is based on the Lucy Calkins Units of Study. At each grade level, students compose narrative, informational, and opinion pieces, in conjunction with direct instruction to craft elements and exposure to high quality mentor texts. These units are balanced with instruction on the mechanical aspects of writing, including grammar, spelling and punctuation. Teachers utilize resource materials, such as the "Elementary Grammar Program" by Michael Clay Thompson and "Words their Way" by Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnston, to provide direct instruction of these skills. These materials allow students to develop a conceptual understanding of language with an emphasis on patterns that govern the way we put words together.

Mathematics

Everyday Math is the foundation for math instruction in kindergarten through fourth grades. This program explores mathematical concepts through hands-on discovery and problem solving. An emphasis is placed on concrete, real-world application of skills that help students see that math is a useful and integral part of their life. The spiral structure of the program provides students with repeated exposure to concepts in different contexts over time. The continual reinforcement of skills allows teachers to regularly assess students' mastery and retention of skills, informing future instructional decisions. Teachers utilize flexible grouping based on these frequent assessments to reinforce, remediate, or enrich skills.

The Everyday Math program allows students to develop and test their own theories for how and why a mathematical process works. Mathematical discourse is emphasized as teachers encourage students to clearly communicate and defend their thinking processes. Students understand that there are multiple ways to solve a problem and, as good mathematicians, it is important to be adept in more than one strategy.

Science

Science content is integrated throughout the school day in both the students' classrooms and in their weekly

STEM experience. Teachers and the STEM coach work together to meet state standards and provide rich experiences that enable students to themselves as scientists. Students receive science instruction in the general education classroom where the classroom teacher has worked collaboratively with the STEM coach to develop standards-based, hands-on lessons. More detailed information about our STEM program is provided in part four of this application.

Social Studies

Union Elementary is located in a town with a vibrant and well-documented history, nestled just outside our state's capital and largest city. While students read about concepts of social studies using textbooks, trade books, magazines, and primary documents during literacy block, they also have the ability to gain real life experience with content through field trips and guest speakers. As an example, our third grade classrooms partner with a local museum, the Sullivan Munce Cultural Center, for year-long lessons on Zionsville history, culminating with a guided historical tour.

Early Childhood

The focus of the Zionsville Community Schools Universal Preschool program is to foster a love of learning while challenging students to do their personal best. Universal Preschool provides a hands-on learning experience, focused on the whole child, in an inclusive and supportive environment ensuring maximum growth for life-long learning. Children are encouraged to actively experiment, explore, and discover their surroundings. The Indiana Foundations for Young Children are the framework for Universal Preschool academics. While knowing how to read and to perform math skills are important, advanced knowledge is not the only thing that students need to be successful in a classroom setting. In order to adequately prepare students socially, the Universal Preschool program utilizes the "Social Thinking" curriculum by Michelle Garcia-Winter. This is the same program implemented throughout our elementary grades. The preschool assessment aligns with the elementary standards based report cards and provides evidence of students' academic and social readiness for kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Related Arts

All students in first through fourth grades experience weekly visual arts and music lessons with highly qualified teachers. Kindergarten students receive instruction in the arts from their classroom teachers and from the dedicated arts professionals, as scheduling allows.

In the art room, students gain experience in critiquing and creating art. Our art teacher provides students with an authentic audience. Student artwork is entered into local contests and is in progress of being displayed along a local walking path. Youth Art Month is a prominent event in Zionsville. Throughout the month of March, student work is showcased in local businesses around our picturesque downtown.

Music instruction is provided using the Orff Approach. Students develop creativity and confidence through lessons that incorporate music, movement, speech, and drama. Collaboration is a key component, as students work together to discover elemental aspects of music. The classroom is equipped with a variety of cultural instruments, allowing for all students to be active participants throughout the lesson.

Physical Education/Health/Nutrition

Students receive weekly physical education instruction from their classroom teachers. Teachers follow a year-long, standards-based and developmentally appropriate curriculum that was developed by a certified physical education professional. Additionally, our PTO has funded lessons with local experts to expose students to new physical activities, including tennis, Tae Kwan Do, karate, and total body conditioning. Health and nutrition topics, based on grade level standards, are addressed through thematic units or science units of study. Through interactive lessons and guest speakers, students learn how keep their bodies healthy. These topics are also addressed on a school-wide level through participation in events such as Jog-A-Thon, Red Ribbon Week and Jump Rope for Heart.

Foreign Languages

All elementary schools in Zionsville offer before school French and Spanish classes. These optional programs are available for a fee and are provided by The Learn Another Language program. The classes are well attended. They provide students not only with language instruction, but also a cultural understanding of the countries where the language is spoken.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)

Our STEM coach and classroom teachers work collaboratively to ensure that students are provided rich experiences in all areas of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Students attend class in the STEM lab once a week. The goals of the STEM program are that all students will be able to identify a problem, generate ideas and solutions, test and collect data based on their ideas, and defend the worth of their ideas. Lessons in the STEM lab often complement or extend the science and math instruction in their classrooms. Additionally, students are exposed to unique experiences in the engineering design process. Students are using technology to program robots, blog about research findings, and connect with experts around the world. The Zionsville Elementary STEM program has received over \$35,000 from our education foundation to enhance the robotics program. Students in all grades experience coding and programming robots to complete various tasks. This type of logical thinking transfers to all areas of the curriculum. In 2016 the Indiana Department of Education named Union a STEM Certified School, an honor bestowed to only twelve Indiana Schools.

Technology is utilized throughout the school day, with an emphasis on purposeful integration. All classrooms are equipped with devices such as interactive whiteboards, document cameras, desktop computers, iPads, and Chromebooks. Students utilize devices to create, collaborate, and communicate. Our school shares a tech integration specialist who provides professional development and supports teachers in finding the appropriate tech tools to match their desired learning goals for students. Our tech specialist also oversees our student tech team, the Zeek Squad. This group meets weekly to learn new technology skills and to educate others. For example, the Zeek Squad helped students and parents use online coding programs during our annual Family STEM Night. Because we want our students to be safe and comfortable while navigating the internet, all students receive instruction in digital citizenship. Union Elementary is a Common Sense Media Certified School.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our philosophy at Union Elementary is to use formative assessment thoughtfully and often to match appropriately-challenging curriculum and experiences to every child to lead to maximum growth. There are many avenues to ensure continuous progress and challenge, including subject-skipping, grade-skipping, using technology as a resource for presenting content, grouping for instruction within classrooms, regrouping for instruction across classrooms or grade levels, additional enrichment projects and resources, leveled and guided reading groups, curriculum compacting, independent learning, student-driven inquiry on projects of choice/interest, and differentiation to meet needs involving other school professionals, adjustment of pace or materials, etc. We meet the needs of the students in many different ways, as unique as each child who comes to us on a daily basis.

Union Elementary School uses a three-tiered, Response to Instruction (RTI) approach to ensure that all students receive support to achieve their individualized goals. Tier I meets the needs of about 80% of our students. Tier I is the core, research-based instruction that students receive in their classrooms. This is the foundation upon which all future instruction and interventions are built. Within the classroom, teachers use small groups and individualized work plans to differentiate. Those needing further support to be successful receive Tier II and Tier III interventions. These interventions are delivered to students by our classroom teachers, counselor, literacy coach, resource teachers, and their instructional assistants. Students in Tiers II and III receive daily intervention support. Parents and students meet with the literacy coach and counselor to create intervention plans with individualized goals. Students are assessed regularly to ensure that they are making adequate progress. Parents receive progress reports quarterly.

The process for determining if a student is in need of intervention is two-fold. The data team, which includes

the principal, assistant principal, instructional coaches, and school counselor, reviews and analyzes the data after each benchmark period to determine the need for further intervention or enrichment opportunities. Additionally, the RtI PLC (Professional Learning Community), comprised of twelve staff members, meets monthly to discuss student needs. Teachers bring work samples and assessment data to each meeting so that research-based interventions can be suggested. Through thoughtful analysis of all data pieces, Union Elementary staff and families are able to make informed decisions to promote student achievement.

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

Union Elementary utilizes a wide variety of assessment practices to measure student progress, to make instructional decisions, and to evaluate the effectiveness of academic programs. Informal classroom checklists, teacher-created tests, textbook tests, rubrics, and portfolios are used to monitor daily instruction.

In order to communicate to students and families what students know and are able to do relative to the specific goals of that grade level, we utilize standards-based reporting. Teachers use multiple, precise, and valid assessment measures to collect evidence of students' growing abilities and knowledge. Quarterly, our teachers pause to report to parents each student's skill attainment based on the most recent body of evidence available. Parents are also invited to attend conferences in the fall to discuss assessment data and individual student progress. Historical student assessment information is readily accessible and stored for parent and staff use on a district digital data warehouse. To communicate student progress as a whole to a larger audience, our Division of Academic Services updates the Board of Trustees during public meetings on assessment data.

In terms of standardized assessments, our third and fourth grade students participate in ISTEP+ testing. This includes assessment in English/language arts and mathematics based on the state standards. Third grade students also participate in IREAD-3, a measure of foundational reading skills, while fourth graders participate in an additional ISTEP+ assessment in science.

The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, provided through Northwest Education Association (NWEA), in language arts, reading and mathematics is conducted in the early fall, winter, and late spring each school year to measure ongoing academic progress for students in grades one through four. These benchmark assessments provide norm-referenced information about how our student performance and growth compare to the rest of the nation. Kindergartners who qualify for the high ability talent pool are assessed using NWEA as well. In determination of placement in the high ability program in first and third grades, students take the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test. Other means of assessing students include AIMSweb probes, which are given three times during the school year to all students, and more often for students who receive Tier II or Tier III instruction. We use the My Virtual Reading Coach program and Leveled Literacy Intervention to support our at-risk readers and use the assessment tools within the programs to monitor student progress. All of these assessments help teachers to identify appropriate learning goals for each student, to monitor their progress, and to assess the effectiveness of instructional strategies.

We recognize that many of our students are high-achieving. Overall, Union Elementary students outperform their peers nationally and at the state level. Our students' median scores on NWEA are typically well above the national norm. Student test scores on ISTEP+, which assesses state standards, regularly rank Union among the top-performing schools in the state. Thus, the typical expectations and instructional levels in our classrooms are high, and our curriculum is both enriched and moving at an accelerated pace, with differentiation for those above and below grade-level standards. We celebrate these scores, but continue to look for innovative ways to improve learning experiences for our students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Union Elementary provides a safe and supportive environment where high expectations for behavior and achievement are balanced with opportunities for risk taking and authentic learning. Union is a place where “Every student is a STAR student.” We want our students to be safe, truthful, accepting of others, respectful and responsible. This philosophy is integrated throughout the school day. Our mornings start with student-led announcements that focus on a positive message or a life skill that students should learn. Following morning announcements, our teachers lead a class meeting, or community circle, where students can discuss personal issues and teachers can address topics pertinent to their class. Messages throughout the school support the desired STAR student behavior including, “To have a friend, you must be a friend.”

We want students to feel known, respected, and cared for at school. We accomplish this goal in many ways. For example, each week our principal invites students to attend a STAR student lunch. Invitations are sent to the child’s home to inform the family of the special lunch. The principal will eat lunch with every Union student by the end of the academic year. Our principal also hand delivers pencils to students during their birthday week. These actions enable our principal to form positive and supportive relationships with the students at Union.

Our school counselor and healthcare professional provide lessons that focus on healthy choices. Our focus on safety includes lessons dealing with school emergency drills, bullying, positive friend relationships, dental health, hygiene, and puberty. Our school counselor also handles a therapy dog, Betty Ford, which enables us to support students who have difficulty throughout the school day. Betty provides breaks and incentives for students who need her support.

Our school values our teachers by building positive, supportive, and collegial relationships. We celebrate our colleagues on a regular basis by sharing our “joy” at each staff meeting and by participating in monthly "Culture of Caring" lunches. We also support each other by sharing the “sorrow” when needed. The leadership at Union Elementary works collaboratively with professional staff to solve problems by encouraging reflective dialogue. They are invited to share their opinions openly to spur professional discourse. Their feedback is taken into consideration for many school-wide decisions, including hiring and scheduling. Union also utilizes a climate survey each year to encourage teachers to give the leadership anonymous feedback about strengths and areas of needed improvement.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Union Elementary has a supportive learning community, which includes families, local residents and business owners, and school staff. Each of these groups realizes the importance of fostering creative and empowering learning opportunities for our students. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsors numerous opportunities for our students, including our annual Jog-A-Thon, movie nights, and outdoor clean-up events. One significant PTO-sponsored event is Spotlight Night. This time-honored Union tradition, now in existence for over two decades, occurs every three years and is a celebration of learning. This year, Union Elementary's PTO visually transformed our school into ten National Parks, each with interactive learning experiences for our students. Our PTO has also allocated funds to provide each classroom with technology, including iPads for kindergarten, first, and second grades, and Chromebooks for third and fourth grades. Most importantly, our PTO has embraced our district’s initiative to provide authentic learning activities through support of student grants. All of our students had the opportunity to write a grant proposal for something that would make our school a better place. Students worked in groups to present their ideas in a creative way to a grant committee of PTO members and school staff. Our generous PTO awarded over \$5000 to our students to support their ideas.

Union also has an active Dads Club that supports teachers and students. Our involved Dads provide grade level breakfasts, an overnight camp-out on our school’s lawn, a basketball tournament, Easter egg hunt, and winter festival. Fund raising initiatives allow our Dads Club to fund student and teacher wish items. Most

recently, the Dads funded water rocket launchers for third graders. Students will design and launch rockets to focus on the design process, but also use this activity as a celebration for individual student math progress, symbolizing how they "soared through their multiplication facts."

Outside of our school families, we also foster positive relationships with community partners to support our educational programs. We have partnered with Dow Chemical, University of Indianapolis, Butler University, Purdue University, Zionsville Parks Department, Boone County Master Gardeners and various local businesses and professionals to support our family STEM and Math nights, outdoor classroom renovations, grade level PBL endeavors to improve our school, and to provide authentic learning experiences for all students. Recently, we had local health care providers speak with our kindergarten students about the importance of dental health and hygiene. Our kindergarten students then shared what they learned with an authentic audience-our pre-school students.

3. Professional Development:

Union Elementary provides ongoing and job-embedded professional development for teachers. Our school is part of a dynamic district where teachers are considered our most valuable resource for professional development. We focus all professional development on implementing research-based best practices that will enhance learning for our students. Professional development is offered by teachers to their peers to share newly learned techniques, strategies, and ideas. For many of our professional development offerings, our teachers have the opportunity to choose their focus based on their professional interests, goals, and/or areas of needed growth. Most recently, our teachers took part in a day of self-selected professional development that included topics such as Project Based Learning (PBL) for young learners, reading and writing units of study, mathematics instruction, and word study. These sessions were all presented by experts in the field, including our very own teachers.

Each week teachers meet with their grade level teams. During this time, teachers analyze the standards and curricular materials, review data to ensure lessons are appropriate for their diverse learning population, and share plans for units of study. Union Elementary also provides four additional PLCs that teacher contribute to on a monthly basis: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Literacy, High Ability, and RTI (Response to Instruction). These collaborative opportunities allow teachers to discuss and analyze programs, individual student performance, and our school's progress towards achievement goals and district initiatives.

Our district initiatives include technology integration in meaningful ways and providing authentic learning opportunities for all students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The leadership team at Union Elementary has facilitated book studies for teachers focusing on topics that support these initiatives, including Project Based Learning for elementary grades, differentiating for high ability learners, supporting students in use of claims and evidence, and best practices in writing and reading instruction.

Our district's evaluation process (ZTEP – Zionsville Teacher Evaluation Process) provides frequent, consistent, and actionable feedback focused on purposeful planning, instructional strategies, and teacher leadership. The teacher evaluation process is a learning tool focused on best practices in planning utilizing data, formative and summative assessment, responsive instruction and feedback, and promoting teacher leadership practices. Union teachers and school leadership consistently engage in dialogue about their professional practice to ensure students perform at their highest potential.

4. School Leadership:

The school leadership team at Union Elementary is the support network for the learning community's many accomplishments and successes. The leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, counselor, STEM coach, and literacy coach. Union Elementary School's leadership philosophy includes fostering a culture of collaboration and trustful partnerships with all stakeholders for the benefit of students. This student-focused philosophy is evident in all of the interactions among the leadership team, students, families, teachers, and community members during the decision making process. In order to support the district's initiative to engage students in more authentic learning opportunities, the leadership team meets

regularly with community members. This is evident by the collaborative relationships between the principal and the professional staff during weekly PLC meetings, which focus on providing responsive learning opportunities for each student.

The leadership team values a supportive, caring, and empathetic learning climate for teachers, students, and their families. The leadership team values the strengths each member brings to the school. Union Elementary's professional staff and leadership team strive to nurture close relationships with all stakeholders to ensure that programs support student achievement. The school leadership also supports teachers and students to be authentic and collaborative learners. Our school community works with local stakeholders, including businesses and community members, to improve the school campus and to provide outreach services. These opportunities enrich our curricular foundation, and allow our community members to be active in the learning process.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Union Elementary has a long reputation of being like a family because of its caring, nurturing climate. We strive to ensure that this tradition never ends. The supportive partnerships we have built with parents and community stakeholders allow us to do great things with students each day. It truly does take a village!

The benefit of these relationships has become increasingly more evident this school year. As a school corporation, one of our academic priorities is that all students will engage in respectful work requiring them to use their capabilities and knowledge in meaningful ways. At Union, many teachers utilize a PBL (Project Based Learning) philosophy that involves students in the planning and implementation process across disciplines. These projects empower students to change the world by making an impact on an authentic audience.

We have many local experts in our midst, willing to share their time, talent, and resources with our students. An example of this is our first grade project, which revolved around the driving question, “How can we make our school more nature friendly?” After taking a walk around our school, students identified specific areas of need. During this time, first grade teachers also toured the campus with a local naturalist, who identified realistic first steps to take. Students began by focusing on improving the garden beds in the front of our school. First grade classrooms reached out to our PTO and a local home improvement store to coordinate a clean-up event on a Sunday in the fall and successfully landscaped the main entrance.

Students then wanted to bring more animals to our campus. After studying animals as part of their science curriculum, students wanted to attract more birds. A first grade teacher received a grant to fund bird feeders from our education foundation. In purchasing the granted items, she connected with an ornithologist who is also a Union parent. He was able to serve as a resident expert, teaching students about the types of birds that the feeders would attract and helping students to install the feeders in the most effective spots around our campus.

Clearly, the student learning was more robust because of the partnerships that our school has developed. Similar examples could be provided from all grade levels. We are so fortunate to be able to live our mission each day, working together with families and community members in supportive and collaborative partnerships.