

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):
- 11 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 15 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	6	6	12
K	24	23	47
1	40	26	66
2	14	13	27
3	17	26	43
4	33	23	56
5	27	20	47
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	161	137	298

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 96 % White
 - 0 % 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: 21%

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	23
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	38
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	61
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	297
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.205
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	21

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 62 %
Total number students who qualify: 180

8. Students receiving special education services: 24 %
71 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.

- 3 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 9 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 5 Other Health Impaired
- 7 Specific Learning Disability
- 33 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 2 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 11 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	1
Classroom teachers	13
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals	7
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 23:1

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	95%	95%	96%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No X

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

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

Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where students are guaranteed thorough academic instruction, encouragement, cultural activities and inspiration to achieve their goals.

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

Johnson Elementary School is a small but very vibrant factor in the Laurel County School District. Housed on a large campus among farms and neighborhoods, the rural school serves its 298 students with emphasis upon their academic success, their personal development, and their foundation for long-term achievement. The principal leads a staff of 13 teachers and 13 support personnel who strive daily to give students the instruction, environment, and encouragement needed for optimum growth.

Johnson Elementary School's population reflects our community with about 96% of our students being White, 2% African-American, 1% Asian, and 1% Hispanic. There is great diversity, however, in the socioeconomics of the students' families because 62% of our students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. We have many students who are being raised by single parents, foster parents, or grandparents. Our Family Resource Center staff offers programs to support these families. The family occupations include farming, factory work, service jobs, and professional positions. We work very hard to give enrichment (field trips, art and humanities activities, etc.) to ensure that all students have these opportunities to learn and grow.

Our school staff has worked diligently to refine our instruction and materials to ensure that our students succeed in academics. Most recently, we were named a 2014-2015 K-Prep School of Distinction and a High Progressing School. Statewide, we were ranked the number twelve school, based upon K-Prep data, in Kentucky. This achievement is based in part upon a rigorous schedule of classes that gives students both whole group and small group instruction. From employing a Gifted and Talented program for students who demonstrate high levels of ability and performance to an RtI program that provides interventions for struggling students, we strive daily to meet the academic needs of all students. Tutoring is available for additional afterschool instruction.

Being an elementary school, we recognize that one of the most important skills that our students can achieve is reading development. Daily, all students are instructed via a wide range of reading materials that allow skill development and foster the love of reading. All students participate in a rigorous Accelerated Reader program where they earn recognition and rewards for achievement.

The Johnson Elementary School climate is one that fosters success. Most of the staff know most of the students. Multi-generations of families have attended this school. Some families have acquired waivers for their children to attend here, because they appreciate the service and caring their children receive. We believe that it is our responsibility to teach students to believe in themselves, and we share achievements of former students who have succeeded in academics (such as being recipients of scholarships or earning the distinction of being valedictorian or salutatorian of their classes) or who have accomplished lofty professional accomplishments. We emphasize our belief in strong work ethics.

The physical facility of Johnson Elementary School also adds to the school climate. Built about 1960, the original structure has been remodeled and additions have been made to make a comfortable and attractive setting for learning. A large library is usually busy with student activities. The school has two computer labs that are used for skill development activities and research. The structure is on about a beautiful ten-acre lot that is accessible for play and outside learning activities.

In addition to academics, our school offers students a range of services that includes afterschool daycare, art classes, choir, archery, basketball, and cheerleading. These services allow parents the convenience of quality services right here at school. Also, students and parents are frequently informed of special events and programs within the county, such as plays and sports activities that students may enjoy.

A school needs support from outside its walls, and we are blessed to have that. Many of the books and materials that we enjoy are the results of donations and grants, such as the Steele-Reese Foundation grant that provided 2001 new books for our library. The campus gazebo, wetland, and many special plants were made possible via PRIDE grants. This current school year a benevolent benefactor, has provided numerous books, Kindle Readers, and school supplies as a memorial to a former student whose mother is a special

needs assistant in our school. Our active PTO has for years provided materials and special events (plays, movies, guest speakers, special days, etc.) so that all students have an enriching experience at Johnson Elementary.

We could describe many more learning activities and people that make our school special. Yet, a school is more than the sum of these things. Each day, all students recite the school motto: Johnson Elementary—the way to be: respectful, responsible and kind. We try to live by this motto in the way we treat all people (students, staff, parents, and the community at large), and this treatment is what makes our school truly successful and special.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The main goal at Johnson Elementary is for our students to be challenged through a rigorous and diverse curriculum. We strive to prepare our students for their future by creating life-long learners who will be productive members of society. Our instruction is tied to Common Core Standards, KY Core Academic Standards, and Program of Studies.

Reading/English Language Arts:

First and foremost, the teachers believe quality reading instruction sets the foundation for all learning. Therefore, reading instruction is monitored for fidelity and quality materials are integrated into all subject areas. In grades K - 3, the core reading program at Johnson Elementary, as well as throughout our whole district, is SRA Imagine It! This program has been implemented since 2009 and has proven successful. The students who reach grade level standards continues to improve each year. The program focuses on 5 main components: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Everyday, students participate in a two-hour reading block. There is one hour of whole group instruction and one hour of workshop instruction. Students are selectively grouped during workshop based on their MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) scores. This group is also smaller, usually less than 10, which allows for more intense instruction tailored toward the needs of the students. SRA Imagine It! also has a Reading Mastery program that offers for intense reading interventions for students who fall below the 20 percentile on the MAP assessment. Reading Mastery provides these students an additional hour of quality reading instruction per day. In addition to the reading series, instruction is supplemented with Simple Solutions Phonics and Reading Comprehension materials.

Students in grades 4 and 5 receive an hour each day of reading instruction. We have a new reading series this year, Reading Wonders by McGraw-Hill, which was also purchased district-wide. In addition to the reading textbooks, instruction is supplemented with Simple Solutions, Coach Books, DEA probes, i-Ready, BrainPop, and many more online resources.

Lower performing students are identified through an i-Ready diagnostic test. This test then enables the program to create a learning path that is specifically designed to meet the needs of our struggling students. This path has instructional lessons and quizzes that monitor the progress of the students. The diagnostic is taken 3 times a year and the path is adjusted based on student data.

Our preschool teacher uses many aspects of the SRA Imagine It! reading series with her students. She uses the same alphabet cards, sound/spelling cards, songs, and small group instruction techniques that the students will be using when they enter kindergarten. We feel that this better prepares our younger students for kindergarten because they will already be accustomed to some of the expectations.

Mathematics:

Instruction is guided by the enVision series by Pearson. This was also a textbook purchase that was made district-wide approximately 5 years ago. In addition to this series, instruction is supplemented by Simple Solutions, which was purchased at the school level for grades K - 5. Each day, all students complete a Simple Solutions lesson. The students are then quizzed, every 5th day, over the weekly content that was introduced throughout the lessons. Common Core Coach books and DEA probes are used weekly to ensure skill mastery of grade level standards.

For our gifted students, as well as our struggling students, i-Ready is used as a supplemental mathematics resource. Just like for reading, i-Ready creates an individualized path for each student based on their specific needs.

Science:

Instruction is guided by the Harcourt textbook series. Teachers also use a variety of "fresh read" materials that are found from on-line resources. This year, Simple Solutions was purchased for Science and has

proven to be successful. Guest speakers are used for instructional purposes, as well as, field trips. Once a month, a wildlife officer comes from the KY Department of Fish and Wildlife, to speak to our students about conservation and animal habitat management.

Social Studies:

Social Studies instruction is guided by the KY version of the Harcourt series. We also use Simple Solutions and Coach Books to supplement our instruction. Instruction is enhanced through guest speakers and field trips. The arts and humanities teacher works closely with our social studies teacher to create meaningful projects that incorporate the arts into our history and culture.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The staff at Johnson Elementary takes great pride in the various ways that students are presented with visual and performing art education. Students participate in Arts and Humanities on a daily basis at Johnson Elementary. Our students either partake in the Arts and Humanities classroom, in the media center, or in their regular, self-contained classrooms with their classroom teachers integrating the arts into their daily lessons.

One big component of Johnson Elementary School's Arts and Humanities program is drama. There are several different productions that are put on by our Arts and Humanities teachers. Kindergarten students practice several different nursery rhymes and go from class to class to perform for other students. At Christmas, our fifth grade students participate in a Christmas play that is offered to the students here at Johnson Elementary and also to the public. This play includes not only the drama portion of Arts and Humanities, but also chorus. Finally, the fourth grade students at Johnson Elementary perform in a Greek Mythology play.

One of the highlights at Johnson Elementary is our WINGS program. WINGS is our school news program that airs on Fridays. Students from each grade level perform in a variety of ways. We have a word of the month section where students discuss and act out our character word. WINGS discusses current and upcoming events that are taking place within the school and it also ends with a dance section where students from each grade level perform an array of dances.

Our Arts and Humanities teachers also instruct students in other areas than drama. Students participate in an Appalachian unit where students do weavings, square dancing and folk tales that pertain to the Appalachian culture. There is a West African Unit. Within this unit, students learn about the West African culture. Students got to create West African artifacts, listen to Native West African speakers and also hear a variety of West African folktales. Students also learn about the Native American culture through integration of the arts in the regular, self-contained classroom.

The students at Johnson Elementary partake in daily health, nutrition and physical education instruction. They attend P.E. once each week. On Fridays, itinerates combine classes to provide integrated instruction in the areas of health, nutrition and P.E. Students go to recess each day where regular classroom teachers allow all students to participate in physical education. During physical education instruction, students learn and participate in locomotor/non-locomotor movements, exercises and a variety of agility skills to make them successful in physical sports.

Once each semester, students participate in Fitness Day. Fitness Day consists of a day where students take on an intense obstacle course, take part in the President's Challenge and learn about nutrition.

Kindergarten students receive daily nutrition instruction that is provided by the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). Fourth Grade students receive nutrition instruction from members of the Laurel County Extension office. Our pre-school students receive nutrition instruction about age appropriate healthy lifestyle choices. Finally, each student at Johnson Elementary makes nutritional choices when they are in the cafeteria. Our lunch staff provides labels for each meal choice so students are aware of their nutritional intake here at school.

Foreign Language has recently become a daily part of classroom instruction in grades K-5. Our classroom teachers provide Spanish instruction to all students, each day. Spanish is taught in diverse ways throughout the school. There is a universal program that each classroom teacher utilizes, PBS's Arte y mas. This program introduces students to the basic components of the native Spanish language. Teachers also integrate Spanish and other foreign languages into reading instruction, followed and taught in the SRA reading series.

There are multiple other curriculum programs that are offered to the general student population. Third, fourth and fifth grade students are eligible to attend after-school learning clubs which include math, reading and gifted and talented instruction. This gives our students the opportunity to gain extra instruction in these areas to further their skills. Intermediate students at Johnson Elementary are offered the opportunity to participate in track and field, archery, basketball and cheerleading competitions.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

The staff at Johnson Elementary incorporate a variety of instructional strategies, which consider the needs of all students, as we strive to meet them all right where they are. If you read on you will get a small taste of what we do to ensure high levels of student achievement.

At Johnson, we don't believe in an "one size fits all" approach to teaching. Therefore, in order for our children to succeed it requires all hands on deck. Instruction in our school comes not just from a child's homeroom teacher but involves a variety of professionals from the specialty teachers and instructional assistants who lead Reading Mastery groups, to the special education staff who collaborate in classrooms assisting any child who needs help, to teachers of the same grade level skill grouping their students to allow for targeted instruction.

Struggling students are a top priority receiving a variety of interventions to help them catch up. Students who score below the 20th percentile on our universal screener, the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) grades K-3 or DEA (Discovery Education Assessment) grades 3-5, will enter TIES (Targeted Instruction for Educational Success) our RTI process. In the TIES program interventions and educational support are provided at increasing levels of intensity based on individual needs. Johnson uses the i-Ready online program which is research based and aligned to common core standards to provide individualized lessons and practice in reading and math. Students who are in Tier II or Tier III of TIES utilize i-Ready daily and have their data monitored closely. Students who have difficulty with a concept and fail the practice activity 2 times receive one-on-one re-teaching before he/she is able to move on. Students who need interventions in writing work with an interventionist in our writing TIES program which served as a model for writing intervention programs across our county.

Johnson Elementary is proud of its gifted and talented program. Students at the primary level become part of a talent pool where once identified their homeroom teachers are able to provide enrichment activities that spark a love for learning. Identified gifted students in grades 4 and 5 receive additional instruction outside of the regular classroom, complete meaningful projects, and are given the opportunity to be a part of our after-school learning clubs where they can further explore interesting concepts.

If students just aren't ready to leave at the end of the regular day then we also offer Camp-Learn-A-Lot, our learning club. During learning club, students work with certified teachers in grade level groups, except gifted and talented which combines 4th and 5th, to further sharpen their skills in reading, writing, and math. Our club meets 2 days a week, for two hours each day, and offers hands-on activities that engage and enrich our students.

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

Teachers at Johnson Elementary use both formative and summative assessments to drive the daily instruction. These assessments are continuously used to monitor student growth, instructional groupings, and to guide instructional planning.

Several types of summative assessments are used regularly. The following are administered 3 times per year in the fall, winter, and spring via the computer:

- Discovery Education Assessment (DEA) is given to students in grades 3-5 in the areas of math, reading, science (4th grade only) and social studies (5th grade only). The results are used as predictors for the K-PREP and for specific skill instruction where needed.
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is given to students in grades K-3 in the areas of math and reading. The results are used for instruction and skill grouping of students (groups can change based on assessment outcomes).
- i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment is given to all students K-5 in the areas of reading and math. The results create an individual computerized learning path for each student which is adjusted by bi-monthly Progress Monitoring Checks. Extra lessons and assessments can be given in specific skill areas to reinforce or to target RtI students as well as Gifted and Talented students.
- Simple Solution Assessments are administered weekly to all students K-5:
Kindergarten (Phonics & Math);
1st (Phonics, Math, & Language);
2nd & 3rd (Reading Comprehension & Math);
4th (Reading Comprehension, Math, Language, & Science); and,
5th (Math, Language, & Social Studies)

Teachers also use many formative assessments to track the progress of students inside the classroom. Students are administered benchmark assessments, unit tests, weekly comprehension tests, timed tests, ticket out the door questions, and bell ringers.

In the fall of every year, our district provides a professional day for data disaggregation, where teachers analyze the previous school year's K-PREP data. This information is used to decide which instructional practices noted in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) were successful or need addressed. The new CSIP developed from these findings is then presented to the SBDM Council for their review and input.

Assessment results are shared with all parents as well as the community. The SBDM chair presents and explains our assessment data to the Laurel County Board of Education. Strategies that have worked are shared along with what we plan to do for improvement and growth. This is also shared with SBDM and faculty. Our school report card is linked to our school website and scores are published in the local newspapers. Parents are presented with individual student scores during parent-teacher conferences.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Johnson Elementary believes that one of our main reasons for a long lasting success is our school climate. We have long been referred to as the “hidden jewel” in our county. Our small school, containing less than 300 students, and it has a home like climate. Our teachers and staff members have high expectations for all our students to succeed. Our expectations are relayed to our parents. We encourage students, parents and educators to all have a voice in a student's education. We have a strong Parent Teacher Organization which plays a vital role in helping to supply materials needed to reward student success and achievement.

Expectations are a huge part of our school climate. Once students achieve success we reward them. Each year, after the results of the K-Prep assessment are made public, we display a “Wall Of Fame”. This displays each students’ picture that has made a Distinguished or Proficient score on their K-Prep assessment. These students are also rewarded with a catered lunch along with a program where their parents are invited to watch them receive a medal in their successful area. Our school works in collaboration with the middle school in order to bus our former fifth grade students back to Johnson Elementary in order to receive their catered lunch and medal in their area of success. Our third grade students attend the program to watch the older students receive their medals, this helps them realize how important it is to work hard and do well on the K-Prep assessment.

Teachers from the accountable grades (3rd, 4th, and 5th) are given the honor of presenting medals to their former students that scored Proficient or Distinguished. All classroom teachers are also rewarded with a bouquet of flowers after the awards program. Teachers from our school also designed shirts for the students and staff that display our school name and School of Distinction Ranking on them. Our Parent Teacher Organization and local businesses provided donations so that all students were given a shirt to display their accomplishments. At Johnson we believe in a home like school climate where parents, students and teachers feel successful. Our teachers at Johnson take pride in teaching at our “hidden jewel”. We are a small school with big expectations for student achievement.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Johnson strives to involve families and community members in our school activities. We recognize that all stakeholders being invested in our school is an important part of our school being a School of Distinction. Our school has a great Family Resource Center and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Both of these provide many useful resources that help meet students’ basic needs and provide supplies that students need to be successful at school. In collaboration with these organizations our school is able to provide opportunities for our students and parents to participate in many worthwhile activities. Each year we host a Back to School Bash, Grandparents and Parents Breakfast, Fall Dinner with Carnival and Auction, After School Sock Hops, Spelling Bees, K-Prep Awards Ceremonies, Dress for Success Days, Jump for Heart fundraising, and Field Day. All of these activities are successful because staff, students, and parents work in a united effort.

All of these student centered activities are open to families of our Johnson Elementary students. Those also involve many community members’ support. It is important for our school to have an open line of communication with our families and community members so that they can be actively involved. We have various means of communication that our school uses: the Remind texting system, emails, newsletters, school web page, One Call Now calling system, and the school marquee in order to keep constantly updating our school events.

Our Family Resource Center works with many of our local churches to provide needed food and clothing for our needy students. Students in “The Backpack Club” are provided with a bag of food to take home with them each Friday. The Family Resource Center also hosts a “Grandparent Support Group”. This targets grandparents that are caring for their grandchildren. It offers needed information to help them stay

informed and up to date of current events going on in education.

Johnson Elementary is privileged to have a Core Ambassador Club for students who have outstanding character. This group hosts a play every year around Christmas Time in order to fund raise for a member of our community who is in need. Each year a family who is experiencing sickness or a hardship is targeted as a family to help. The Core Ambassador Club fundraises through admission to the play and refreshments after the play to support a local family in need.

Families and community members are such an important part of our success at Johnson Elementary. Our Family Resource Center, Parent Teacher Organization and Parent Volunteer Program have helped to make Johnson into the successful school that it is today. Johnson takes pride in our united front, we prove that students, plus parents, plus teachers equals SUCCESS!

3. Professional Development:

In the Laurel County School District, all certified teachers must obtain twenty-four hours of professional development each year. There are many opportunities for teachers to acquire these hours. Prior to the start of the past school year, our teachers attended a professional development academy that was held locally. During the academy, teachers were given the freedom to choose which professional development activities better fit their needs. Instructors were obtained by the district and all were either experts in their fields, team leaders, or instructional coaches.

Professional development credit is designed to fit the individual teacher's needs. For example, a primary math teacher might attend "Math Made Easy." Whereas an intermediate reading teacher would attend trainings focused on techniques and strategies for teaching reading. Often, after the summer professional development or trainings throughout the year, teachers will come back and train other teachers in the building during PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) or after school during faculty meetings. For example, a teacher who attended a writing workshop may be asked to provide training to the entire staff or just to appropriate grade levels.

At Johnson Elementary, we believe on-going professional development is a way to ensure our teachers are up-to-date on new and effective teaching strategies. In order to meet the demands of common core and the high standards we place on ourselves, we feel we must be current and knowledgeable about all methods of teaching. Therefore, we spend many hours researching new teaching strategies.

We believe our students benefit from what we learn in professional development. Our teachers are constantly refining their style and bettering themselves to engage students in higher learning.

4. School Leadership:

Johnson Elementary's principal was appointed in the summer of 2015. When she took over the reigns, the school was already among the top schools in the district and state. However, as a new principal, she is eager to be the top school in the state, not just one of them. The first thing on her agenda was to call the staff together for a meeting to discuss where she wanted the school to go and to survey all of our available resources. Next, the new principal met with the site base decision making council to learn about their expectations for the school. She welcomed all input from stakeholders and allowed the input to drive the decisions for the school. It was evident to all that the community has high expectations for Johnson Elementary, just like their new principal.

During opening day, the principal met with each grade level to discuss their needs. The conversations were open and honest about all concerns and ideas. The principal is well aware that Johnson's past success is a result of the hard work and dedication of the teachers and staff. She quickly knew that was something that didn't need changed, rather supported. After all grade level meetings, a school leadership committee was formed where all of the concerns could be prioritized and all ideas brought to life. The principal is the teachers biggest supporter. She believes in team work and knows the importance of this concept for true student achievement.

It is really important to the new principal that parent concerns are brought to her attention. Therefore, she expects teachers to speak with parents regularly and voice all concerns. At the beginning of the year, the parents struggled every morning during parent drop-off because of the traffic problems behind the school. Once this problem was noted, the principal worked with the school leadership team to develop a solution. A few weeks later, the parent members on the site base decision making council, thanked the principal for her dedication to solving a problem that had been plaguing the mornings for years at Johnson.

The school principal and her school psychologist work closely together to maintain the RtI (Response to Intervention) process. They both believe in the process and work to ensure it is implemented with fidelity. They conduct bi-weekly TIES (Targeted Instruction for Educational Success) meetings together where the struggling students are discussed in great detail with the classroom teachers. Interventions are developed and discussed that will help struggling students overcome obstacles and reach grade level standards.

Being data driven is the principal's main characteristic. All decisions are based on relevant data. She truly believes "numbers don't lie" and lives by this motto daily. For this reason, she monitors student achievement by having teachers submit their weekly assessments. She makes comments on student work and provides feedback to teachers. She is open to teacher feedback too. If the teachers note a problem or a skill deficit, they are more than welcome to discuss this with the principal. Together, they will remedy the situation by creating a logical, common sense solution. The principal believes that if something needs to be changed, then change it. She also believes that the teachers should drive this change because they are actually the ones in the trenches with students daily. They have the greatest impact on the students and their opinions should matter most!!

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Johnson Elementary School is very successful for many reasons, but the one practice that makes the school peak is the consistent commitment to do what is best for the students. This commitment is shared by all of the school staff, and it can be observed anywhere from the principal's office, to the classrooms, to the cafeteria, and to the extra services such as daycare and tutoring. The dedication and work ethics of the staff positively impact students in their academic achievement and in their emotional well-being.

Johnson Elementary School is a small school where, simply put, the staff wants to be. All but one classroom teacher has been at this school for at least ten years. Several teachers have spent their entire careers here. Many support people have likewise served the school for a long time. This longevity allows the teachers and staff to know the families well and to understand the difficulties and triumphs the students bring with them. Over time, a trust has developed between families and school personnel. The staff members view each other and students as extended family. Staff and students feel at home.

Staff members take their jobs seriously. The janitors work hard to maintain a clean and safe environment. The lunchroom staff goes well beyond the call of duty to provide quality food for the students. Teachers, assistants, and other staff members truly give of their time and resources to increase academic achievement and social development. Teachers often work long hours to create materials and to evaluate student progress. Many spend their own money to buy school materials or personal items for students in need. They recognize the needs of the students, and they make every effort to meet those needs.

To do what is best for students requires a collaborative approach by all staff members. Teachers and others communicate readily about student needs, including academic needs. Teachers freely share ideas and teaching strategies. When a special need arises (such as a family in distress), the staff gives freely to help those in need. The sense of doing what is best for the student(s) is top priority.

The Johnson Elementary School staff has worked very hard to become a School of Distinction. We are quite proud of our academic achievement, but we are equally proud that our school climate is one that fosters a nourishing environment where students feel important and secure. These feelings are the result of decisions being based upon what is best for the students.