

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Laura Webb

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

Official School Name Big Creek Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1994 Peachtree Parkway

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

City Cumming State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 30041-9506

County Forsyth County

Telephone (770) 887-4584

Fax (770) 781-2247

Web site/URL

<http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/bigcre>

ek

E-mail [lwebb@forsyth.k12.ga.us](mailto:lwebb@forsyth.k12.ga.us)

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. Jeff Bearden

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

E-mail [jbearden@forsyth.k12.ga.us](mailto:jbearden@forsyth.k12.ga.us)

District Name Forsyth County School District Tel. (770) 887-2461

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. Kristin Morrissey

(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. 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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 21 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 7 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 38 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	65	49	114
1	56	67	123
2	67	65	132
3	80	70	150
4	65	73	138
5	75	70	145
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>	408	394	802

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 54 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 36 % White
  - 2 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 12%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	71
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	58
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	129
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	1090
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.118
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Korean, Spanish, Other Indian, Other Asian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %  
Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %  
105 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.

- 11 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 7 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 4 Other Health Impaired
- 19 Specific Learning Disability
- 51 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 13 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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	35
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
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., 22:1 231:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
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 2016.

<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. 2011

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.  
Big Creek Elementary's mission is to instill a love of learning through a supportive, rigorous, and empowering environment.

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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Big Creek Elementary School opened its doors in 1939 in Cumming, Georgia. It is named after Big Creek, a stream that runs through Forsyth and Fulton counties. As the oldest Forsyth County School that is still in operation today we have a rich history that contributes to our climate and culture. The original school house did not have electricity or running water. Coal heaters were used to heat the building and drinking water came from the well on school property. Those first years, Mr. A.M. Sosebee, the first principal, was one of the five teachers at the school. Over the seventy-eight years in operation, Big Creek has gone through nine renovations and additions to transform it into the school it is today.

Throughout the years, Big Creek has fluctuated in size due to redistricting within the county as the fast, growing population in our area has opened several elementary schools around us. In the 2014-2015 school year, we had 941 students. The next year, we were up to 1,105 students. This year we currently have 802 students who call themselves Big Creek Wildcats. Currently, 54% of our population is Asian, 36% are Caucasian, 5% are Hispanic, 3% are African-American, and 2% are Multicultural. English Language learners make up 6% of our population and 13% of our students are in special education programs. Our gifted students make up 16% of our population. Currently, Big Creek has five kindergarten classrooms and six classrooms in every other grade level. In addition to the general education classrooms, there are two self-contained specialized instruction classrooms that serve the needs of moderately intellectually disabled students. These students are served by our dedicated and talented staff comprised of 76 females and 2 males.

The mission of Big Creek Elementary is to instill a love of learning through a supportive, rigorous, and empowering environment. Although academics is a top priority at Big Creek, as a staff, we also want our students to love learning. We take great pride in this as we are the initial gateway to their educational experience. We use a variety of resources to increase student engagement and passion for learning. Each classroom is equipped with a Promethean interactive board. Teachers have access to laptop carts, iPads, iPods, and Chromebooks to support personalized and innovative learning. Teachers constantly plan and implement 21st Century, research based lessons while incorporating technology and student choice to instill a deep love of learning. Big Creek believes acknowledging students' passions and interests will spark a level of engagement that leads to student success.

At Big Creek Elementary, our goal is to develop students who will be contributing citizens in their chosen college or career paths. Our school uses the Forsyth County Learner Profile as a guide to create an environment where students pursue continuous learning, exhibit strong personal qualities, utilize creative and critical thinking, engage and contribute, and interact effectively. By implementing choice and personalization into our lessons, students thrive and learn at a pace conducive to their academic needs. We are committed to providing personalized and engaging learning experiences for all students.

While we have experienced many changes in our long history, Big Creek continues to provide an excellent educational experience for all students. Big Creek consistently thrives academically on multiple criteria including the Georgia Milestones End of Grade Assessments and scoring over 100% on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Big Creek Elementary School has been honored with many prestigious state and national accolades throughout the years. In 2000, 2007, and 2012, we were awarded the Georgia School of Excellence Award. We have received the Platinum Award for Highest Performing School from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2015, and 2016. Big Creek won the 2015 Platinum Award and 2016 Gold Award for Greatest Gains from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Most notably, we were named A National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2001 and 2011. These awards would not be obtainable without the continual hard work of our staff members and the support of our stakeholders.

Being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence has given us a great opportunity. Families have moved to this area specifically to have their children attend Big Creek. The accolades have also drawn many talented teachers to our school and have encouraged us to maintain high expectations in all we do. In order to meet the needs of our students and continue to achieve at high levels, our teachers have implemented a workshop model in Math and Language Arts. We meet the needs of all learners by providing

personalized learning experiences. This honor keeps our staff focused on continuous improvement as we strive to maintain high levels of performance.

Keeping the balance between a rigorous, supportive, and empowering environment inspires our students to reach their maximum potential. Big Creek maintains high academic achievement through the support of our entire community, including the partnership of our district, community, parents, staff, and students. Continuing to keep Big Creek Wildcats' needs at the forefront of every decision allows for remarkable success for all.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Big Creek Elementary thrives on creating an environment where students are pushed to their maximum potential by the continuous support of highly qualified, collaborative educators. Our teachers are committed to preparing our students for higher education and careers by using appropriate standards, research based strategies, and rigorous learning experiences.

The teachers at Big Creek Elementary use the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) as the foundation for teaching in all grades. Our teachers use these standards to plan rigorous, differentiated lessons in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies to meet the needs of our students. We also have two Specialized Instruction classrooms for students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities. These classrooms are designed to deliver learning opportunities based on Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and objectives. These goals are created based on student's individual levels of performance and are monitored through weekly data collection. Furthermore, the students are given the Brigance Inventory of Early Development, a yearly skills based checklist, to monitor achievement and help create goals for each individual child.

At Big Creek, we utilize a balanced-literacy approach for reading and writing instruction. Balanced literacy instruction prepares our students to make meaningful connections across content and develop a solid foundation in literacy. All teachers identify specific learning targets and model critical reading skills and strategies through mini lessons. Students learn through small guided reading groups that focus on the specific needs of the children. These flexible groups are based on classroom assessments and standardized reading inventories. Small group experiences provide time for teachers to personalize instruction by extending or remediating the content. While some students are engaged in small group instruction, other students are completing standards-based, rigorous reading, writing, and grammar activities that provide an opportunity for students to practice or extend the content. Throughout reading instruction, students are exposed to a variety of text types and text complexities. Allowing opportunities for students to dive into poetry, historical fiction, nonfiction, and fictional texts is crucial to creating well-rounded readers. Students are exposed to a variety of best practices and many high impact strategies including close reading. Reading and writing instruction is a foundational component to all subjects, and students are continuously immersed and exposed to rigorous, personalized activities.

Writing instruction is a critical component of our balanced literacy program. We use the Lucy Calkins program for writing instruction. Using this program, teachers implement writing through a workshop approach. The first step is to model and explicitly teach students the craft of writing using strategies that will lead to successful, independent writers. Teachers are available to meet the needs of each individual student through conferencing. One-on-one experiences allow teachers to differentiate writing instruction for each student. While writing instruction is taught daily in isolation, it is also incorporated into every subject area in meaningful ways.

Mathematics instruction targets the Georgia Standards of Excellence while building critical thinking skills to develop conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization. As with reading instruction, teachers model focus skills and strategies through guided mini lessons. These lessons often involve Number Talks where students are encouraged to critically solve problems and talk through their thinking and learning with peers. After the mini-lesson teachers meet with guided math groups and deliver instruction to address the specific needs of students through targeted lessons. Flexible groups are determined using formal and informal assessments. While some students are in teacher-led small groups, the remaining students practice skills, further their understanding, or receive remediation through standards-based activities and projects that accommodate learning styles and readiness.

In the primary grades, students develop their base-ten understanding. They build a strong foundation for place value and begin adding and subtracting within 1000 using models and strategies. Students learn about plane and solid figures in geometry and begin using standard and non-standard units of measure. In the intermediate grades, students develop their understanding of fractions and decimal concepts. Multiplication

and division of integers is mastered by the end of fifth grade. Students begin to convert measurements and use the conversions to solve real-world problems. Students go from naming plane and solid figures to classifying and measuring them in the intermediate grades.

Many science standards are taught separately so that students can acquire key vocabulary in the correct context. While many concepts are taught in isolation, students still have opportunities to read about science standards through balanced literacy. Because we value deep conceptual understanding, teachers provide authentic learning experiences and opportunities for inquiry using resources from our science lab. In the primary grades, students use their senses to explore while learning about rocks and minerals, plants, animals, weather, motion, and many other observable phenomena. They raise questions about their observations and learn to record and analyze data. They learn safety rules for inquiry while making predictions and conducting simple investigations in all areas of science. In the intermediate grades, students begin conducting their own investigations through hands on experiences. They focus on stars and the solar system along with weather for earth science. Light, sound, gravity, and simple machines are explored in physical science while ecosystems are the focus for life science.

Teachers use a segment to focus on Social Studies standards, but using a balanced literacy approach, the standards are included as a part of Language Arts as well. Students read informational books, real world articles, and historical documents that focus on the Social Studies Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Social Studies is imbedded in writing instruction as students write about their learning at every grade level. In Kindergarten through third grade our students begin to gain a foundation in history, geography, government, and economics through real-life concepts. During the course of these four years, students will begin to learn about holidays and character traits of good citizens. They continue to develop their understanding of specific historical figures, Georgia history, along with democratic practices. As students get older, they are introduced to basic economic concepts including spending and saving and goods and services. In fourth and fifth grade students begin the formal study of history, geography, civics, and economics which are fully integrated as they study Native American cultures through the antebellum period and continue the study of US History from the Civil War to present day by the end of fifth grade.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Big Creek Elementary involves students in standards-based and integrated instruction among all areas of the curriculum. Within our daily specials, students are engaged in lessons and activities that extend their learning within the general core curriculum and help make meaningful connections to enhance their understanding and encourage application of skills and concepts for their core academics.

Students participate in a variety of extracurricular activities and engage in experiences through fine arts, physical education, and technology. Throughout our six day rotation, students attend a fifty-five-minute segment of music, art, ThinkLab, and physical education.

Music instruction at Big Creek is based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). During music class, students are exposed to music history and theory, introduced to a variety of instruments and how they are played, and actively engaged in reading and writing music. Our music teacher incorporates movement with music literacy to help students apply their learning and practice musical skills such as rhythm and pitch. Students utilize technology to access Quaver, an interactive music program that supports the curriculum. In addition to working with students among all grade levels through the specials rotation, our music teacher leads our school chorus program comprised of fourth and fifth grade students. Students practice before school on a weekly basis to prepare for various school and community events where they showcase their musical talent.

Our art program also follows the GPS. During art classes students are not only involved in creating hands on projects and pieces of art, but are immersed in art history and specific artistic techniques. Each project created by the students is inspired by a specific artist, time era of history, or an art technique. Students are exposed to a variety of elements and experiences utilizing different mediums such as clay, paint, chalk, and pencil to create their art. Through modeled lessons, students are encouraged to enhance their fine motor and creativity skills. Our students' artwork is displayed in our hallways and in local businesses. Each year our art

teacher holds an art show that displays a finished piece of every student's artwork that is open to our parents and community. Parents and family members have an opportunity to purchase their child's art and much of the money raised is donated to a charity that is identified by one of our students each year.

Physical education (PE) instruction is based on the GPS as well. Our PE teachers encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle through exercise and teach our students about healthy choices. Students develop an understanding of the body and why exercise and proper nutrition are essential for their growth and development. PE is one of the best opportunities our students have to learn how to cooperate, take turns, strategize as a team, and win or lose gracefully. Many social and emotional needs are met through our PE program and our coaches take great pride in their positive effect on our students and their physical, social, and emotional well-being. One way students use their good health to make a difference in our community is through raising money for Jump Rope for Heart each year.

Think Lab is a special class unique to Big Creek. It is a rotating special for students that is comprised of Media, Technology, and Counseling instruction. Students rotate through each class every six weeks and receive a total of twelve weeks of instruction in each area. Media and Technology develop their lessons based on core curriculum standards. Research and project-based learning enrich science and social studies standards for all students during this time. Students are actively engaged in research, creating projects, and participating in hands on authentic learning activities using a variety of resources during Think Lab. Students participate in lessons that focus on safety, character education, and the Georgia Career clusters which are established by the Georgia Department of Education when they rotate to our guidance counselor. To best meet the needs of all students, our counselor supports additional concerns shared by teachers during her instruction through independent, small group, or whole class instruction.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Big Creek Elementary uses instructional approaches and methods to meet the diverse needs of our students. As a high performing school, we maintain our levels of achievement by using research-based instructional strategies in all content areas, having a staff that is committed to lifelong learning, and doing only what is best for children. All decisions are based on a variety of data, including formal and informal assessments.

Students who need support receive additional instruction in various ways. The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is a segment where students who need remediation are provided personalized interventions and taught specific strategies in their area(s) of deficit. English Language Learners are provided a daily pull-out segment to receive language support along with vocabulary specific to the content being taught in their core academics. Both the EIP and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers regularly collaborate with grade level teachers to support the needs of students and align their curriculum. Additionally, students in fourth and fifth grades who show a need for remediation based on various data points attend Instructional Extension (IE). IE is an after-school program for Reading and Mathematics instruction. High achieving and gifted students in grades four and five are offered advanced content Language Arts and Mathematics classes. This opportunity allows identified students extension beyond their grade level standards.

We have a forty-five minute daily segment dedicated to remediation and extension. No new content is taught during this time, but instead, students' needs are met through personalized instruction based on current data. This flexible segment is an excellent opportunity for students to increase their achievement whether they need additional support or extension.

Our Bring Your Own Technology approach encourages students to bring their devices to school to enhance and accelerate learning. Students use these devices and those provided by the school to complete personalized learning pathways, projects, and assessments. Teachers use technology to increase engagement while modifying lessons; therefore, lessons can be quickly and easily extended or remediated for small groups or even individualized for one specific student.

Teachers develop and use a variety of assessments to inform instruction. At the classroom level, teachers use formative assessments to monitor student understanding throughout the learning process. Big Creek teachers

utilize local and district common assessments as summative tests each quarter. We also use benchmark and interim assessments once a semester to track student understanding of content. Annually, students in third, fourth, and fifth grades are given the GMA, a criterion-referenced test provided by the state, to measure student achievement in critical areas including Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Teachers work as a data team to collect and analyze data. After reviewing student performance on assessments, teachers plan lessons that incorporate appropriate strategies and interventions for those who need remediation, as well as enrichment and extension activities for students who have mastered the content. In addition to classroom data collection, students in our Response to Intervention (RTI) process are progress monitored through FastBridge. The data from FastBridge, as well as classroom assessment data, is used to modify interventions and instruction to provide the best learning experiences for our neediest students.

Big Creek values the importance of ensuring students and parents are informed and understand student performance and learning. Parents are notified of student progress through progress reports, parent-teacher conferences, graded assignments, and Parent Portal, Forsyth County's online grading and student information system. Itslearning is an online platform each teacher uses to post lesson information, homework, and school communication. Students also use the platform to engage in class discussions, complete assignments, and communicate with their teacher. The support we have from our community is strengthened with open and regular communication regarding performance. The partnership formed between the school and the stakeholders is vital in keeping Big Creek at the top of our game. We are excited and motivated to share our successes with the community, who in turn, help keep us accountable with high expectations.

Assessment and data are at the heart of instructional planning at Big Creek. Teachers use a variety of assessment data to determine students' needs. Big Creek teachers and administrators carefully analyze data on a regular basis to make informed decisions about instruction, not only within the classrooms, but school wide.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

Big Creek Elementary’s culture focuses on maintaining an environment that fosters academic success. Known for superior academic performance, we emphasize the importance of student achievement through employing a highly qualified and collaborative staff. Big Creek families greatly value education and are actively involved throughout the learning process. With a mission to instill a love of learning through a supportive, rigorous and empowering environment, Big Creek takes pride in creating a learning community in which all students thrive and grow.

While academics are seen as an integral part of education, Big Creek also provides social, physical, and emotional experiences to develop the whole child. Teacher led clubs are provided on a regular basis. Students enroll in clubs based upon their interest and interact with peers across all grade levels. Favorite clubs include Cooking, Mad Scientist, Chess, Lego, Art, Coding, and Running Club. In addition to clubs, Big Creek students have opportunities to serve as student ambassadors, safety patrollers, and be a part of the daily news crew. Enrichment opportunities are also supported through teacher sponsored programs including Battle of the Books and Mathletes. Teachers and staff dedicate their time outside of the classroom to support these opportunities and extend learning beyond the curriculum.

Celebrating success, accomplishments, and positive character traits are also a valued and important element of our culture. Throughout the year, students are recognized in many ways. As part of our positive behavior management system, we use the acronym R.O.A.R. which stands for Responsible, Organized, Attitude, and Role Model. Each quarter, one boy and one girl are chosen from their homeroom to be recognized as a R.O.A.Ring Wildcat for the nine weeks. A breakfast ceremony is held at the end of every quarter to recognize these students and celebrate their accomplishment with their families. Big Creek also has a Student of the Month reward program. Each month students are introduced to a new character trait. At the end of the month, one student per homeroom is recognized as someone who has displayed the trait and is a model for their peers. These students’ names are shared on the news and given a certificate to reward their positive character attributes. In addition to school wide recognitions for students, teachers celebrate students’ successes and accomplishments on a daily basis within their classrooms. Teachers help celebrate the uniqueness and importance of individuality for all students to continuously motivate and encourage learning and positive relationships.

In order to have a positive school climate, we must support teachers as well as students. Teachers are shown they are valued in many ways at Big Creek. We use our weekly newsletter to share staff shout outs to recognize each other for going above and beyond, as well as celebrating life changing events. We treat teachers to a monthly surprise that shows our appreciation of their continued support of students and the community. During the holidays staff members also receive small tokens of appreciation from administration and community members. All the supports that we have in place for our staff and students create a positive climate.

Overall, Big Creek maintains a positive and effective learning environment in which every student can be successful. Fostering strong relationships between teachers, parents, and students is critical and a valued aspect of the school climate and culture.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Big Creek Elementary works closely with parents and the community to reach its full potential and maintain its legacy of high academic performance. Parent involvement is an important aspect at Big Creek. Parents volunteer in the media center, assist in classrooms, chaperone field trips, and coordinate Parent Teacher Association (PTA) participation. PTA works with Big Creek to host family centered events including a school talent show, family movie night, BINGO night, Father-Daughter dance, Mother-Son night, and an international night known as Around the World. PTA events are an important part of building our school community and a key to establishing strong relationships.

In addition to PTA, our school is supported through the local business community. Big Creek's Partners in Education support the school through donations, discounts, and funds that provide and enhance educational experiences for our students. The community has assisted the PTA and the school to raise funds for Chromebooks and the Media Center. Our first Roaring Wildcat 5k was held in November and was a true partnership event among all stakeholders. PTA and the community show continuous support for fundraising events to ensure our school can provide quality educational opportunities for all students.

Our community also provides mentors for several of our students. Mentor programs support academic success while encouraging positive character traits and building self-esteem. Mentors serve as role models and give students an invaluable gift of quality time.

Likewise, Big Creek participates in many community outreach programs such as canned food drives, Jump Rope for Heart, and Relay for Life. We also support teacher apprenticeship programs from our neighboring high school and allow students to gain experience, hours and observations within our classrooms.

Regular and effective communication is a key element to ensuring that stakeholders are informed and involved. We use a variety of avenues to communicate with staff, students, parents, and our surrounding community. Daily and weekly newsletters are sent to staff to keep everyone informed and notified of upcoming events. A bi-weekly newsletter is sent from the front office staff to keep parents informed of student recognitions, PTA news, upcoming events, and important information from Big Creek. Our students are presented information through our morning news program. We use our website and social media outlets to share school calendars and news of what is happening in our classrooms.

Understanding the great value in partnerships and building relationships among all stakeholders, Big Creek upholds collaborative efforts with our staff, students, parents, and the community. Our school's success is greatly attributed to everyone working cohesively and focusing our attention on the needs and success of our students and school.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Big Creek Elementary's staff is a group of lifelong learners. We continually seek research based, high leverage teaching practices to improve student achievement. Professional learning opportunities are offered at the school, at the district level, and through professional conferences.

The Forsyth County school district has always been diligent in providing county-wide professional development opportunities. This year, the district provided personalized professional development. District Collaboration Days were structured to offer a large number of professional development options to choose from including personalized instructional practices and strategies, technology enhanced instruction, deepening content knowledge, and resource development. Big Creek mirrored this approach to professional development with all staff members this school year and offered sessions for teachers, led by teachers and administration, based on personal professional growth goals. Professional learning opportunities in personalized learning have equipped teachers with specific high leverage strategies to support learners at all levels. Teachers are able to utilize a more personalized approach to their instruction resulting in higher engagement and achievement.

Along with school-wide professional development based on our school improvement plan and in line with the district's professional learning goals, we provide specific support to teachers as needed. Peer observations occur regularly for teachers who have an area of need identified through the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). Peer observations comprise of a pre-meeting to discuss what will be observed, an observation of instructional time, and a post-meeting to reflect and receive guidance on the targeted skills observed. Veteran and new educators seek observation opportunities beyond those coordinated by administration. Regardless of teaching experience, the open-minded and positive attitude our teachers have is supported and encouraged by administration. Since peer observations have taken place, teachers have confidently implemented high leverage strategies in their classrooms with fidelity. Peer observations also open up regular communication between teachers as they continually refine their practice.

The pillars of personalized learning are the focus of professional development for administrators this year. Administrators have spent a portion of each district meeting learning about the pillars and how these will support learning in classrooms. In addition to this focused professional learning, school leaders seek professional growth opportunities through professional organizations, conferences, and publications. They review their Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) standards and survey data to create personal professional growth goals. Modeling a commitment to professional learning encourages our teachers to seek out and implement their learning in the areas they identify for their professional growth goals.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

The administrative team at Big Creek Elementary includes the principal, assistant principal, and an administrative assistant. The administrators work together to be instructional leaders, provide resources to the staff, maintain the positive morale of the school, create a safe, academic environment, and ensure the staff is focused on quality instruction to meet the needs of the students. The continued achievement of students and professional growth of the staff are their main focuses. A great deal of time, effort, and decision making is centered around what is best for students. Administration considers stakeholders when making decisions.

There are two important groups that work together to lead Big Creek Elementary. The Leadership Team is made up of administrators and teacher leaders from each grade level, special education, and specials. This team meets monthly to discuss district and school level efforts, make school related instructional and logistical decisions, and assist with the writing and implementation of the school improvement plan. The Leadership Team uses the vision as a guide in all decisions. This team makes specific decisions regarding curriculum and resources, discusses specific strategies that will have a high impact on student learning, and works together to plan school events to celebrate our students and involve our community. The Local School Council (LSC) is an additional group who partners with Big Creek to ensure the success of our students. The LSC is made up of parents, staff members, and the principal. As with the Leadership Team, they work to help meet the needs of the school with the vision of Big Creek at the forefront of their decision-making. The principal, as the head of the school and a member of both groups, leads each team. She keeps both sets of stakeholders consistent in their work and efforts in continuing to uphold the vision of a high performing school focused on a love of learning and academic achievement.

All leaders at Big Creek from the principal, additional administration, teachers, and parents have a shared vision of instilling a love of learning through a supportive, rigorous, and empowering environment for our students. Therefore, there is a continual focus on academic achievement through personalized instruction to meet the needs of each of our students. All stakeholders' input is valued and Big Creek truly believes in the power of relationships. Collectively, all leaders of Big Creek Elementary have the best interests of the students at the forefront of their minds as they work as a team to provide a superior educational experience.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Striving to maintain a school of academic excellence is the core principle of all that surrounds and goes on within Big Creek Elementary. All decisions within our school are centered around the academic success of our students, so data team meetings and vertical team meetings take place throughout the school year to examine these results and determine ways to continue such high levels of achievement.

Data team meetings are held numerous times throughout the school year. At data team meetings, grade levels meet with the administrative team to disaggregate results from various assessments. Additionally, the ESOL teacher, EIP teacher, and special education teachers attend to examine the results and provide resources and strategies when appropriate. During data team meetings, teachers analyze their assessment results and the possible teaching strategies that lead to them. These meetings create a productive conversation with teachers identifying their strengths and areas for growth. Through these discussions, grade levels also identify standards that transcend from one grade level to another. This then creates conversations through our vertical team meetings.

Vertical team meetings occur across all grade levels at Big Creek. These meetings provide an open dialogue on strategies grade levels use to teach specific standards. These strategies can be used as remediation for some grade levels and enrichment for others. Teachers also discuss certain standards that are crucial for academic success for specific grade levels. Most importantly, these positive conversations allow an additional opportunity for staff members to meet to discuss the needs of our students and celebrate the successes from one grade level to another.

With a mission to instill a love of learning through a supportive, rigorous, and empowering environment, Big Creek Elementary works hard to promote a school culture in which instructional time is highly valued. School leaders and staff understand the importance of protecting classroom instruction and the outcome of many daily decisions as result of this philosophy. Utilizing every minute of the protected segments of instructional time allows the staff the opportunity to implement engaging, differentiated lessons. Having students that are challenged academically, but supported through various teaching strategies and a welcoming, empowering staff is how we ensure students maintain their personal level of academic success.