

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Dr. Carolyn Styles

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

Official School Name Skyland Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4221 Highway 14 North

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

City Greer State SC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 29651-0000

County Greenville

Telephone (864) 355-7200 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/skyland/ E-mail cstyles@greenville.k12.sc.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*Mr. Burke Royster E-mail wroyster@greenville.k12.sc.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Greenville School District Tel. (864) 355-3100

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 Ms. Crystal Ball O'Connor
(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. 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

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):
- 52 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 23 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 19 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 94 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	20	26	46
K	49	45	94
1	62	55	117
2	56	56	112
3	68	53	121
4	64	72	136
5	49	55	104
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	368	362	730

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 82 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 7%

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	21
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	31
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	52
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	708
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.073
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %
37 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41 %
Total number students who qualify: 307

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
84 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>48</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>71</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>6</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>3</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 22
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	32
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
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 23:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	97%	96%
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.

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

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 develop responsible, productive, lifelong learners by providing an environment and diverse educational learning experiences which enables students to grow academically, creatively, and socially while respecting individual differences.

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

Founded in 1957, our school moved to its current facility in 1998. We are located on 21 acres in a beautiful pastoral setting nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Currently we serve 746 students from four-year-old kindergarten through fifth grade. This number includes two full day at-risk K4 classes and approximately 100 school choice students. Many parents in our community work second and third shift blue-collar jobs. While our state poverty index is 63%, only 41% of our students take advantage of our free or reduced lunch program.

Our educators are exceptional and we maintain a very low teacher and staff turnover rate. Over 60% of our certified staff has earned advanced degrees and many have earned National Board Certification. Our commitment to success is evidenced through exemplary student outcomes, as well as participation in professional development activities that extend far beyond our district's requirement.

Being a true community school, we thrive on the contributions of our numerous parent/community volunteers and partners. Our PTA board and Student Improvement Council collaborate with our principal to make important decisions regarding school needs, best use of finances and how they can support and enhance instructional programs. Every decision is thoughtfully analyzed to determine its overall impact on student success. Our PTA has given thousands of dollars to support student achievement in the areas of technology, literacy, health and wellness, leadership and overall school improvement. Events sponsored by our PTA include (but are not limited to) the annual Fall and Spring Festivals, Shining Stars Arts Night (a night to showcase our students' art), and our annual Color Run. Skyland students benefit from approximately 31,000 PTA volunteer hours each year.

We boast of many community partnerships. Local businesses and financial institutions have provided funding for various school-wide projects such as author visits, artists-in-residence programs, Operation Santa, and additional educational resources. University partnerships allow us to help prepare the next generation of educators and provide us with additional support in the classroom. Working with neighboring churches and veterans' organizations has also led to one of our most successful community activities--our annual Veteran's Day Celebration and luncheon. This event allows our students to make personal connections to history and the opportunity to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to veterans. Skyland flourishes as a result of these community supports.

Our mission statement reads, "The mission of Skyland Elementary School is to develop responsible, productive, lifelong learners by providing an environment and diverse educational experiences, which enable students to grow academically, creatively, and socially while respecting individual differences." Our record of excellence includes over a decade of earning our state's highest honors including the Palmetto Gold Award for school achievement, as well as the Palmetto Gold (and an occasional silver) for Closing the Achievement Gap. While we strive to meet the academic needs of our student learners, we also focus on growing the whole child. We take this responsibility seriously as we work diligently to support our students outside the walls of the classroom through various initiatives such as career awareness, character building, and exposure to the arts.

Initiatives and programs include, but are not limited to, the implementation of a strong balanced literacy program, the roll-out of one-to-one devices (Chromebooks), and the emphasis on arts integration across the curriculum. Our students are offered a variety of unique opportunities both during and outside of the school day to hone their skills and interests. After school clubs are offered by teachers in the areas of art, music, physical education, as well as a history club and an in-school mail system (Skyland Express) allowing students to further develop their skills and to build close connections with our staff outside the school day. They can also participate in service organizations such as safety patrol, flag raisers, book buddies, media center helpers and student council. Being a community-minded school, we also offer unique experiences for our students to participate in and give back to the community. We have an annual canned food drive to support our school's food pantry, which is used to send home backpacks full of food to families in need. We have also collected "Coins for a Cure" and have held fundraisers such as our most recent "Singing for a Cure" event to help support our local cancer society. We believe these events support a close and caring

school community while instilling in our students the joy of being a contributing member and leader.

Our original school motto was, “Mountain School, Mountain People, and Mountain Pride.” However, it has evolved into what it remains, “A Place Where Children Flourish.” This motto continues to reflect the school we are today.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our core curriculum is standards-based across all academic subject areas. We utilize creative, research-based engagement strategies to challenge our students and help advance academic achievement. We provide rigor in each classroom and emphasize high expectations for student learning. Our instructional day is strategically planned with intricate scheduling details in place to best support student success. Consideration of student pull-outs (i.e. Special Education, Limited English Proficiency, Speech, Early Reading Intervention, Response to Intervention and Gifted and Talented) is taken when forming student rosters to develop a school-wide schedule that is optimal for student learning and provides time during the instructional day for teacher collaboration.

We have found that a balanced literacy approach benefits the needs of all students in the classroom, regardless of reading levels. We participated in trainings under the Fountas & Pinnell model to assist our teams in building the skills and knowledge needed for effective implementation of our current balanced literacy program. We believe this paradigm shift has helped us to better identify individual needs and work with our students using a more targeted approach. Our Literacy Specialist targets specific areas of instructional need, collaborates with classroom teachers, and works with small groups of children and teachers to support literacy. Another part-time staff member supports our Reading Tiered Intervention program for at-risk students. Additional students in grades K5-2 are served in small groups ranging between 3-4 students utilizing Leveled Literacy Intervention kits. These kits contain leveled readers that are of especially high interest for early readers, making reading more meaningful and enjoyable to students. Currently, we have a teacher at the primary and intermediate level who serves as a Literacy Mentor. These teachers participate in specialized professional development off-site, utilize and share best practices with their colleagues, and provide mentorship for teachers who may need support or direction in literacy instruction. Our Book Buddies program utilizes responsible intermediate students as peer tutors to read with primary students identified by their classroom teachers before the school day begins. This practice has benefited our primary students academically and helped form relationships beyond the classroom walls. It has also helped build character traits, such as responsibility, self-confidence, and leadership in our intermediate students.

The balanced literacy approach has worked well with us as we strive to integrate social studies standards during the literacy block. This moves us away from textbook-centered instruction and makes learning the social studies standards more meaningful. Utilizing content-based leveled readers from our literacy library, students are able to make personal connections with the past while improving their reading and writing skills. This integration allows the teacher adequate time for instruction in both subject areas. Additionally, we support social studies standards by providing students with engaging, hands-on activities and special events such as Pioneer Day, Market Day, and KidsVote to promote cultural awareness and civic responsibility. Multiple and varied field trips are also planned to provide students first-hand opportunities to connect to the standards-based content, while also exposing them to a host of careers.

Vertical teaming has shown us that fact fluency is a major concern for some of our students as they learn the basics of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as they build the foundation for more difficult concepts. Thus, we implemented a morning math lab (before the instructional day begins) that targets at-risk students who struggle in this area. Our morning math lab teacher communicates with classroom teachers daily as she monitors, assists, and tracks student progress making students' time in the lab both intentional and productive.

Our students utilize science kits to supplement their unit studies. These kits provide hands-on opportunities to complete inquiry-based investigations that support standards-based instruction. Our state of the art science lab is utilized for experiments and is equipped with additional science equipment, materials, and resources. Fifth grade students compete annually in a school-wide Science Fair where the winner moves on to the district level. In addition, we hold an annual invention convention contest which encourages our students to be innovative and inventive scientists. Our school further supports math and science instruction

through our annual Math and Science Day where teachers focus specifically on engaging lessons relating to these two areas. Community members and parents participate in this event to share their math and science-based careers with students.

Our 4K core curriculum includes instruction in the areas of social skills, reading, writing, and mathematics. In order to align with our balanced literacy approach in K5-grade 3, we utilize components such as interactive read-alouds, shared reading, independent writing, and community writing to help students learn more about literacy and most importantly, to begin to see themselves as readers and writers. In mathematics, we implement systematic and intentional opportunities for students to pursue investigations, problem-solve, and use mathematical thinking to draw conclusions. Each of these instructional areas includes a balance of whole group, small group, and learning center experiences.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Our emphasis on the arts is apparent from the moment you enter our building. Students' artwork and murals adorn our classrooms and hallways. The integration of the arts has been a part of our school's philosophical backbone for many years and is integrated in each classroom throughout the building for students in 4K-5th grade. Participation in the IDEA (Intensive Development of Education through the Arts) program has provided our faculty with the knowledge and skills needed for effective arts integration in the classroom across all curricular areas--whether it be through an artist-in-residence, tableaux, concentration circles or methods to assist students with focus, learning through movement and music, artist's toolbox collaboration, or other imagination and concentration activities. Our related arts teachers also plan collaborative units with our classroom teachers to ensure meaningful arts integration across the curriculum.

As a member of our state music education association, our music teacher encourages student participation in the state honor choir, as well as our district's spring sing each year, which is hosted at The Peace Center for the Performing Arts. In addition to leading our Skyland Singers in after-school events, she also provides incentives for musical excellence in a variety of ways. Our school's morning news show and our newsletter are utilized to post and honor students' musical success and showcase exemplary performances.

One of our largest annual school events is our Shining Stars Arts Night celebration each spring. Each student in our school has an original piece of artwork on display for our parents and community to enjoy. This year, our students focused on folk art. At this event, our students participated in folk dancing, folk songs, and played the dulcimer (trained by one of our artists-in-residence). This year, students' artwork was based on the work of local South Carolina folk artist, Ernest Lee and made possible through a community grant.

In addition to weekly physical education classes, our students participate in a morning fitness routine led by their peers on our morning news show. (Routines are learned in our after-school Skyrobics Club.) We also monitor students' overall fitness through a FitnessGrams assessment which is administered in the fall and spring to all students in fifth grade, allowing us to set fitness goals with students, monitor progress, and celebrate success. Our school PTA recently funded a walking track to provide our students, staff and community members with a safe place to walk—encouraging a healthy lifestyle for the entire community. With this track, we've also been able to offer an after school running club called the Skyland Sprinters and host an annual Color Run Event. This event is open to the community and proves to be a great way to further involve parents and community members while promoting and instilling healthy lifestyle choices for all. This is also true of our annual field day event. Skyland has also been an ongoing recipient of the Live Well Greenville Grant, which is community funding that supports creative and innovative health and fitness practices at the school level.

We made the transition several years ago to a more nutritious lunch menu to further promote healthy lifestyle choices for our students and families. As a result, we have fresh fruits and vegetables on the menu daily. Our PTA is also on board with this initiative and is mindful of the need to choose healthy choice sales options when selecting fundraisers and student incentives.

As we continue to infuse technology into our curriculum, we are participating in a digital learning cohort

where teacher leaders and administrators are being trained in the utilization of one-to-one devices to support individualized learning. This project based learning approach encourages higher level thinking as our students work both independently and collaboratively to extend their knowledge beyond the classroom walls. Students currently visit the computer lab on a weekly basis where they practice individualized skills. iPad carts and Chromebooks are also available for checkout, allowing teachers to integrate technology into their daily classroom instruction to make learning more meaningful, interesting, and enjoyable. Many teachers have written grants to purchase additional tablets for their classrooms--thus allowing students more opportunities for technology-based curriculum integration opportunities.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

We view children individually and strive to meet the unique needs of each and every student. Because of this, we do not use a one-size-fits-all approach. Our instruction encompasses a plethora of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments to ensure that each student is successful.

Our implementation of balanced literacy has helped our teachers instruct children on their specific reading levels, which not only strengthens them academically, but helps students build the self-confidence needed to become independent readers and learners. Our school has invested time, energy, and funding into training for our teachers in this critical area. Collaborative planning sessions and a quality leveled library further support teachers with small group instruction. Our classroom teachers and literacy specialists monitor students on a continuous basis to ensure they are progressing in their skills levels through frequent progress monitoring. Students are also given support of vocabulary development, reading fluency, decoding, and comprehension skills. The Leveled Literacy Intervention program further supports our balanced literacy approach to learning, providing high interest leveled readers for students. Intervention groups are kept small to intensify direct instruction, to provide differentiation, and to support a more targeted approach.

We utilize a variety of assessment data, including teacher-created common assessments, MAP (Measures of Academic Progress Testing), state norms-based testing (SC Ready & PASS), and benchmarking across all curricular areas. Teachers are also required to have two student learning objectives per year. These objectives are decided upon by the classroom teacher after reviewing the class' baseline data, including strengths and weaknesses. Students are then tiered in order to best develop realistic achievement goals, scaffold differentiation, and ensure student success.

As we work to quickly respond to students who are demonstrating at-risk behaviors, we utilize an early intervention response warning system to identify students who are displaying one or more triggers in the areas of academic grades, behavior, and/or attendance. Once a child has been flagged in our data bank, we meet with the student, parents, teachers, and administration to create an intervention plan. This plan is monitored frequently and dialog remains open among stakeholders until the student is successful and on target again.

In collaboration with classroom teachers, we involve our gifted and talented teacher, our limited English proficiency teacher, and special education teachers in data disaggregation meetings to ensure each child's individual progress. These teachers also work with students to create individual goals. Once individual goals are set, students chart their own progress and success is celebrated regularly.

Differentiated instruction is utilized across all curricular areas. It focuses on whom we teach, where we teach, and how we teach—whether it's through the use of problem-based learning or technological support. This requires us to create flexible teaching-learning routines that enable academically diverse student populations to succeed with rich, challenging academic content and processes. It further allows us to create classroom environments that are both supportive of learning and challenging for the students for whom those conditions will differ. Utilizing an inclusive practices model for our special education students, both the special education teacher and the classroom teacher collaborate and plan in a manner that allows the majority of our special education students to be served inside the general education environment. A co-teaching model of instruction supports our students academically and socially. Utilizing local discretionary funds, our school employs three support facilitators to further facilitate student achievement for all at-risk learners.

As a high performing school recognized consistently by our state for absolute performance and closing the achievement gap, we constantly strive to maintain the highest levels of student achievement in all subject areas and all subgroups. By design, our school-wide schedule ensures a block for daily collaborative planning. This block supports teachers in providing consistent implementation of rigorous instruction across the curriculum. In addition, professional learning communities (PLCs) meet regularly in order to provide opportunities for teacher reflection, growth, and professional development on research-based best practices. Data drives these collegial conversations as we focus on student growth and achievement. Explicit instructional practices are developed as we plan next steps for remediation or acceleration with the support of professional peers.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school culture is one of positivity. Our belief is that school should be the next best place to home and great strides are taken to make sure that our school is clean, colorful, safe, and inviting. Guests often remark that our school has a very positive climate. This is evidenced in many ways, such as our outstanding student, parent, district, and state survey results, a very low teacher turnover rate, and a long waiting list for school choice assignment requests. Our students begin each day being greeted by a student safety patrol member who opens their door and greets them good morning. Once inside the building, they are welcomed again in the atrium with a big smile and hug from a member of our administrative team. Our school-produced early morning news show also allows us to start our day together on a positive note showcasing school news, school events, and concluding with a workout for our entire student body led by our Skyrobics student team. To support a positive school climate, we also regularly acknowledge student, faculty, and staff successes over our afternoon announcements, in our school newsletter, and with a variety of accolades. Quarterly celebrations are held for students when they reach their math, reading, writing, and attendance goals. The Principal's Art Gallery, Writer's Lane, Shining Stars Arts Night, Skyland Singers, and Skyrobics teams are some positive venues where students can showcase their unique and individualized talents. We believe strongly that students should have opportunities to excel in areas outside of academia in order to develop the whole child and to celebrate diversity. We have found that recognizing students, faculty, and staff in a variety of ways further stimulates and promotes self-efficacy. We further believe that a positive school climate in any school organization is founded on a strong character education program for students. At Skyland, we utilize interactive read-alouds as the foundation for guidance lessons that focus on character building, as well as a wide range of topics from making friends to internet safety. Students are recognized through our Terrific Kids program (sponsored by the Kiwana's Club), as well as celebrations mentioned above. Faculty and staff members are often treated to catered lunches when our school earns district and state-wide recognition. By acknowledging and recognizing the varied contributions of our many members, Skyland truly is "a place where children flourish."

2. Engaging Families and Community:

A set of deliberate partnerships with our families and surrounding community are the backbone of our school. At Skyland, we understand and value the importance of community involvement and building strong relationships with our business partners. We strive to engage all stakeholders both in and beyond the walls of our school. Our families make up our PTA (Parent Teacher Association), PTA Board, and SIC (School Improvement Council). Their input is valuable as we seek to stay current with student and community needs. We make concerted efforts to ensure that parents are invited into our school multiple times throughout the year, whether it is to volunteer, attend a performance, be a part of a celebration, chaperone a field trip, or participate in a student-led conference. Our school expectation is that our teachers meet annually with 100% of their parents/student guardians for a minimum of one face-to-face conference. This sometimes entails making home visits or meeting parents at their place of business. Teaming with parents in times of need is also essential to supporting students with challenges. Assistance teams are created to develop student interventions and bridge parents and educators for the benefit of the student. Family Game Night and the Fall Festival are two ways that we promote involvement, in addition to our performances and regularly scheduled PTA meetings. Our principal has an open door policy where she is accessible to all, with no appointment needed. Community businesses and organizations also work closely with us to support initiatives like Math and Science Day, Career Day, Field Day, and Literacy Week. These valuable experiences for our students would not be possible without their support. Local businesses and civic groups also work closely with us to provide student incentives, support our balanced literacy program, enhance and encourage good nutrition, fund artists-in-residence programs, and provide teacher grants for innovative projects and proposals. We also benefit from the partnership with many higher education institutions due to their close proximity to our school. This provides additional resources for student tutors, mentors, and teacher helpers. These institutions continue to provide professional development opportunities at a reduced rate for our teachers. The generosity and support of these interest groups allows our students to soar to greater heights.

3. Professional Development:

Our professional development plan is uniquely designed annually to align with our school's specific goals. While supporting district initiatives, we provide professional development opportunities directly related to our school's precise needs, which are determined through the disaggregation of data and with teacher input. This on-going analysis of student data through grade level meetings, leadership meetings, and professional learning meetings assists us in forming student-centered objectives and providing teachers with the necessary supports to enhance best instructional practices, ultimately impacting student achievement. This year, our primary focus has been on the integration of technology across the curriculum. A group of lead teachers has piloted a project-based learning approach in their classrooms as we prepare for our one-to-one device rollout for the upcoming school year. Students are executing critical thinking as they take more control of their learning and pacing with the scaffolding of their teacher. As teachers learn how to facilitate student learning this way it allows them to work on more individualized levels, ultimately differentiating instruction.

Our dedication to continuous reflection of best practices encompasses all subject areas. Balanced literacy also continues to be a primary focus for teacher professional development. Although teachers have been trained and our leveled libraries have been built, we continue to strive to support students and teachers to reach optimal success under this initiative. As a result, we utilize teacher leaders within our building to provide mentorship to all teachers, both experienced and novice. In addition to book studies, article reviews, and administrative presentations, we have found that our most meaningful and invigorating professional development opportunities are when our teacher leaders facilitate the training. These sessions called Teachers Teaching Teachers allow for our staff to choose an area of expertise to either present or attend. Allowing for choice not only meets teachers' professional goals, but has allowed new leaders to emerge. Teachers are also encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities offered at the district level during the school year and during the summer. We believe that it is through ongoing and meaningful professional development that we can truly meet the professional needs of our teachers and support the optimal performance of our students.

4. School Leadership:

Our school leadership does not operate in isolation. Along with the role of our principal, we have leaders serving in a variety of capacities. Our grade level chairs comprise our Leadership Committee, which serves as a liaison between our staff and administration. Not only does this allow all voices to be heard, but it also provides support and intervention with the problem-solving of school-wide issues. Our principal believes that a climate of trust and supportive relationships serve as a foundation for school improvement. Many creative ideas and suggestions are made through teacher leaders, committee leaders, and curriculum leaders that support administration in making decisions that best support the unique and individual needs of our school. Our principal has taken many steps and procedures to implement our philosophy and vision throughout the school community. In doing so, each and every strategic step has been concentrated on building a community of learners—one in which everyone is teaching and everyone is learning, including our principal. Everything that takes place at Skyland contributes to this end. In our school's community of learners, our principal occupies the central position—the head learner engaging in, displaying, and modeling the behavior expected. Our principal sets the tone for the entire school learning community. As a result, teachers and students have emulated this behavior, creating an atmosphere of success within our school. On a weekly basis, you can find teachers at our school engaged in professional collaboration, examining programs and practices that actively engage learners, exploring and implementing early intervention strategies, seeking to create common varied assessments that provide all students with an opportunity to share their knowledge, and investigating effective differentiation techniques and models, just to name a few. No doubt, she has helped us to realize that we can achieve more together than we can achieve on our own. Her philosophy summed up is that principals, teachers, students, parents, and community members working together can create within the school a climate of reflection, growth, and refinement—a community of learners.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice that encompasses our school's success would be our primary focus on our children. Student-centeredness is a phrase that permeates throughout all of the latest research, but is found in its purest form at Skyland Elementary. Every decision made is based on our students' best interests. All stakeholders are intentional in the advocating of students' needs. We take survey results from students, parents and teachers seriously as we strive to meet the needs of the children and the community we serve. We view every child as an individual with unique talents, circumstances, and challenges. Countless hours are spent on scheduling to ensure that children receive appropriate services, including special education, support facilitation, and early intervention. Local discretionary funds are used to support these models—proving that students' needs are our top priority. While we are goal-oriented and make data-driven decisions, we also focus on the well-being of every child. We understand that children's basic needs must be met before they can succeed academically. As a result, we have many initiatives in place to support our most at-risk learners. Because of our rural setting, many of our families do not have access to community-based services. Therefore, our school guidance counselor and administrators graciously work closely with students and families to fill the gap in the need for services and/or direction. Whether it be a scholarship for a field trip, a backpack of food, school supplies, clothing needs, housing, utilities, or medical needs, we are always there to offer support, direction, and guidance. Sometimes this support can also be as simple as offering a lending ear or an empathetic heart. Moreover, we are blessed to have the support of community partners to assist in these efforts. Although student achievement is of utmost importance, we choose to nurture the whole child in order to build the confidence and interest of a lifelong learner. Skyland offers multiple opportunities for students to participate in after-school activities in art, music, athletics, service learning, and academics. These opportunities support school as an extension of the home, increase student leadership, build citizenship, strengthen the talents of our students, and provide students with the means to develop a unique skill or talent that they have discovered. These positive attributes will enrich their lives for many years to follow. There is no doubt that our belief and support of the fact that children are unique and excel in different ways promotes an atmosphere of success for all.