

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Carolyn Martin Harris

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

Official School Name Union Hall Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 100 Union Hall Circle

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

City Chatham State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 24531-0000

County Pittsylvania County

Telephone (434) 724-7010 Fax (434) 724-1850

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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. Mark Jones E-mail mark.jones@pcs.k12.va.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Pittsylvania County Public School District Tel. (434) 432-2761

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 Mr. Calvin Doss
(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):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 18 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	7	8	15
K	18	20	38
1	16	20	36
2	19	16	35
3	22	30	52
4	12	17	29
5	16	16	32
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	110	127	237

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 25 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 67 % White
 - 3 % 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: 15%

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	22
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	35
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	237
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.148
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 72 %
Total number students who qualify: 170

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
20 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	55
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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 17:1
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%	96%	96%	96%	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.

The mission of Union Hall Elementary School is to provide a quality education to all students in a caring and supportive 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

Union Hall Elementary is located in the south central region of Virginia in rural Pittsylvania County. It is one of 10 elementary schools in the school district. The current building was constructed in 1963 and is located in the Callands community on Route 612. The school is approximately ten miles from Chatham, fifteen miles from Danville and thirty miles from Martinsville.

The philosophy of Union Hall Elementary is to foster a positive learning environment where all students can learn. It is rare to have turnover of staff, and when teachers retire, they either volunteer or become a substitute teacher at the school. It is not uncommon to hear parents and the community who visit the school say, “I attended this school. “

Union Hall has an enrollment of 240 students, in grades Pre-K through fifth grade. The student population is 67% Caucasian and 33% minorities; 72% of the students receive free or reduced-priced lunch.

The school has a tradition of high expectations for students and staff. The school has a commitment to educating every student, a focus on improving the quality of instruction, developing strong personal relationships, and careful attention to successfully implementing multifaceted strategies for continuous improvement in student achievement. Union Hall’s school motto is “All Students Will Learn”. The highly committed staff views improved student achievement and effective school functioning as its shared responsibility and seeks to continuously develop teachers’ professional skills. The staff is encouraged and supported in updating and refining professional skills. Professional development topics most discussed in vertical team meetings are reading and writing strategies, curriculum alignment, standards and assessment, technology, and data-driven instructional decision making.

The small school environment encourages collaboration and a team approach to instruction and remediation. Each week teachers participate in structured collaboration meetings where they co-plan and co-teach differentiated lessons, share successful strategies, create supplements, analyze vertical standards alignment to challenge students, and plan intervention strategies with support staff. Teamwork and collaboration are regularly practiced.

Every minute counts at Union Hall Elementary School, and all students are actively engaged to maximize student learning. Students benefit most from consistent, focused, and well-designed instruction. Teachers vary the presentation, format, and instructional activities as they adapt the pacing and content of instruction for individuals and groups of students, including English Language Learners and struggling readers. Students with special needs are served through an inclusion model in grades two through five. This allows students with special needs to receive instruction in the general education setting, have the benefit of team teaching, peer interaction and the opportunity to experience higher level questioning with their peers. Additional time and support are provided to students having difficulty with grade level skills. Flexible grouping, intervention and remediation practices, and systematic assessment are essential components of the instructional program. Instructional decision making is driven by the question: “Does this improve student learning?”

Union Hall believes the key to a successful student stems from a solid reading foundation. The goal is to have all students reading at or above grade level by third grade. A consistent and focused literacy program from preschool through fifth grade has been the major priority. Phonics and decoding, as well as fluency and comprehension, are emphasized in the early grades. The school also recognizes the need to balance the use of fictional and non-fictional materials across the curriculum. This is supported by our efforts to continually increase the inventory of books in the school’s main library as well as in classroom libraries. In addition, teachers share strategies during inter and intra-grade meetings to teach reading across the curriculum, develop vocabulary through planned exercises and projects, and use writing for a variety of purposes in all curricula areas.

A key component in the school’s instructional model is the use of technology. Students have access to technology on a daily basis whether for their own use, or instructional purposes. Union Hall has 3 mobile

labs, 2 full technology labs, and 2 mini-technology labs. All classrooms have SmartBoards as well as a minimum of 2 computers for student use, including special education classrooms. Teachers have received multifaceted technology training and incorporate technology into daily lessons and activities. It is a priority for all students to be technology literate, as well as being given opportunities for technology leadership and enrichment.

Union Hall Elementary School became fully accredited in 2004 and received the Virginia Board of Education Competence to Excellence Award in 2009, 2010, and 2011. In 2012, the school was awarded the Virginia Board of Education Excellence Award and the Title 1 Distinguished School Award in 2015-2016. These achievements were made possible by the hard work of parents, students, and staff as the school has strived for academic excellence for all students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Union Hall Elementary School’s curriculum is aligned with district and state standards as outlined by the Virginia Standards of Learning. Believing that state standards are minimum requirements, the teaching staff sets learning goals that exceed the standards.

Language Arts includes reading, writing, research, and oral presentations. The language arts curriculum makes up the largest block of instructional time in each student’s day, and students are exposed to a variety of instructional strategies, methods, and resources for this part of the curriculum. Instruction at each grade level builds on the previous year’s learning, so the vertical team conversations among grade levels are an important part of continuous improvement.

Reading focus is both explicit and systematic with an emphasis on comprehension skills and strategies that have been identified as most critical for reading success. Students are provided activities which regularly reinforce the essential components of reading instruction such as drawing conclusions, comparing and contrasting, sequencing, identifying main idea and supporting details, and increasing vocabulary. The curriculum also incorporates technology-based programs that expand opportunities for student practice and mastery of skills.

The math curriculum also builds on prior knowledge, and the teachers use math boards for daily review in order to continuously review and assess concepts previously taught. New material is introduced during the math instructional block of the day, and the teachers continue to find new methods to bring relevance to math instruction into their daily lives.

Math instruction is provided through the use of various instructional methods as well. Direct instruction is supplemented with the use of manipulatives, cooperative learning groups, math meetings, daily problem solving, and daily review. A structured math vocabulary list for each grade level ensures students have knowledge of important terminology and this vocabulary is incorporated into daily instruction and “math talk”. Teachers utilize the same vocabulary across grade levels in order to promote consistency in student understanding and knowledge. A school-wide problem solving model is another key factor for students as they learn to apply this model at each grade level.

The staff works together in individualizing instruction to meet all students’ needs. Both advanced and low achieving students are allowed to move within the school to interact with students on similar levels. Advanced students are exposed and challenged to a higher level curriculum to meet their individual needs. Lower level students are given the opportunity to fill the gap of missing foundational skills. This interaction between grade levels allows all students to experience success.

The social studies curriculum is extensive and provides opportunities for students to learn about citizenship, responsibility, local history as well as the larger world. The history and social studies curriculum is based around themes in history, geography, civics, and economics with emphasis on students knowing and understanding our national heritage and how they can shape its future. Text and stories such as biographies and historical fiction are integrated into reading and library activities for cross-curricular support. The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Outreach Education Program is responsible for providing living history presentations to the fourth and fifth grade students each year. The fourth grade presentation is “Cultures in Contact” and the fifth grade presentation is “Colonial Life.”

A hands-on, inquiry approach is used to teach science. The fifth grade students visit the STEM Academy regularly for more in- depth and hands-on science activities, and the Danville Science Museum provides presentations to all students on various topics based on the Standards of Learning. Fourth grade students participate in the annual Agricultural Days activity sponsored by Pittsylvania Soil and Water Conservation District. This annual event is held at the Geyer farm in Tightsqueeze, and is an opportunity for the students to understand and promote the agricultural products of the community.

Science Coaches is a joint American Chemical Society (ACS) and American Association of Chemistry Teachers (AACT) educational outreach initiative dedicated to enhancing science skills in students across the United States. Union Hall Elementary is in the second year of being paired with Science Coaches. The assigned science coach helps plan and demonstrate presentations, experiments, and lessons, and makes learning more meaningful by relating concepts to real-world applications while being supportive of the science teacher.

The preschool program's design and instruction are based on the Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning, the High/Scope Curriculum, and the Child Observation Record and operates a full day, Monday through Friday. The program incorporates developmentally appropriate activities for four-year-olds in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, history and social science, health and physical development, personal and social development, music, and the visual arts. The preschool program has a huge positive impact on an individual students' level of school readiness and success in the kindergarten classroom. Parents are encouraged to participate in planned activities where the children and parents play and learn together.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The arts instruction is integrated into the core curriculum by the classroom teacher. Students are provided opportunities to recognize the connection of the visual arts in relation to history and culture, and make connections between the visual arts, other disciplines, and the real world. Student artwork is displayed proudly throughout the school.

Union Hall students have a rotating schedule for music, library science, counseling, and physical education. The students participate in lessons in each of these areas throughout the week, and these classes provide opportunities for all students to be exposed to a variety of well-rounded activities.

Music is taught for 40 minutes twice a week to students by a certified music teacher. During this time, children focus on listening, rhythm, note recognition, tempo terms and concepts. Students enjoy traditional folk songs along with seasonally appropriate music that helps make class an inviting and enjoyable experience for all students. Children learn to recognize musical instruments by sight and sound and learn among other concepts, the basics of music. Students have the opportunity to participate in musical performances during the year to showcase their skills. Beginning in the fourth grade and continuing into fifth grade, students learn to play the recorder. Additional opportunities are available for students to participate in the All County Chorus.

Students participate in health and physical education classes twice a week for 40 minutes and through that class, they are encouraged to participate in annual events such as Jump Rope for Heart and other activities that promote health and well-being. They also participate in Field Day at the end of the school year; during this event, they run relays, navigate through obstacle courses, and compete in games for prizes and recognition. In addition, teachers use energizers (classroom based physical activities that integrate activity and academics) to transition between classes and lessons.

The school encourages healthy eating habits and physical activity during school events, parent sessions, and health and physical education classes. Through a USDA federal grant, all students received a fruit or vegetable snack during the 2015-16 school year. The cafeteria staff provided nutritional training workshops for parents and the preschool classes. Prior to the implementation of this federal grant, several students had not heard or seen certain fruits and vegetables and the students were eager to try them.

School counseling classes are conducted once a week for 40 minutes for preschool through fifth grade. The counseling program assists students in developing an understanding of themselves, developing an understanding of others' rights and needs, developing conflict resolution skills, acquiring self-respect, and learning how to be considerate of others. Personal/social counseling may be provided in individual settings with students or in groups which focus on the specific concerns of the participant(s) to help prepare them to become productive, responsible citizens.

The school library media center is an active partner in the school instructional program and supports students and teachers in effective practices for teaching and learning. The media center provides books and other resources to support students as they become lifelong readers and users of information. All grades visit the library once a week for 40 minutes which includes a lesson and book check-out. The media specialist collaborates on a flexible schedule with teachers on projects, research, and technology.

Gifted education is a coordinated structure of informal and formal services provided on a continuing basis. This program intends to effectively nurture and challenge gifted learners to realize their strengths and creative abilities in order to attain their highest goals. The gifted program resource personnel work with the classroom teachers in K-5 to differentiate instruction by providing activities and enrichment materials appropriate for gifted students.

All classes have access to computer labs at least twice a week where they work on learning activities and other educational websites. Students utilize classroom computers and Chromebooks. Students work on their technology skills in the computer lab and in the classroom, through the use of desktop and laptop computers, iPads, SmartBoards, and other means. Technology is used to differentiate instruction through Study Island, Reading Eggs, Math Seeds, IXL, and other web based programs that provide grade-appropriate content which can be accessed at school and home.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Instructional methods are based on best practices which have been proven effective in establishing foundational skills in all subject areas. An important element of student success is the emphasis placed on mastery learning. Teachers incorporate information gained from workshops such as Differentiated Instruction, Literacy Centers, and Multiple Intelligences to meet individual learning needs.

The implementation of Differentiated Instruction is visible in all classrooms and focuses on student needs rather than textbook structure by assessing prior knowledge and using the results to make decisions about what the students need to learn. Flexible grouping allows students to work at their own pace based on areas of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use tiered activities to teach the same skill or concept to all students. This allows teachers to choose different reading materials and match them with the students' varying reading levels.

Literacy centers are used as study labs or as designated places that house pre-selected materials and activities that supplement or enhance learning. Independent of the teacher, students can participate in exploratory, practice, and enrichment activities. In addition to centers, teachers use flexible grouping to create temporary groups for specialized study that may be skills-based and/or interest-based.

Special attention is given to students' multiple intelligences, recognizing their individual differences and learning capacities. The school recognizes the benefits of students being exposed to multiple teaching strategies and varied fictional and non-fictional reading materials to meet their many learning styles and needs.

Teachers begin each year by analyzing the previous year's assessment results from the Standards of Learning Assessments as well as end-of-year assessments of non-tested subject areas and grade levels. Data analysis allows the staff to provide research-based, whole group, small group, or one-on-one instruction based upon the needs of the students. Grade level aligned benchmark tests are used to assess academic success throughout the school year and provide teachers with strengths and weaknesses for individual students. For the past several years reading comprehension of fiction and non-fiction texts has been a major focus. The math focus has been on improving computational skills.

Teachers continually utilize data to drive instruction and set clear, individualized student goals. Teachers coordinate instructional methods and skills needed to improve student achievement as teachers realize instructional modification is a continuous process based on data analysis. The ongoing and consistent collaboration among all staff members has allowed the school to make sure each child is focusing on the

specific skills necessary for achieving grade level success. During weekly collaboration meetings, teachers develop intervention, re-teaching activities, and ways to differentiate curricula based on data analysis. Through established intervention procedures, students receive additional assistance and progress monitoring to make sure they are demonstrating growth or making progress. Remediation plans continue or are modified based on those results.

Union Hall Elementary has embraced the use of Interactive Achievement and MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), the two division-wide web-based student assessment systems to formatively assess students and monitor their progress. School division and school level benchmarks are created and revised to evaluate student progress on a regular basis. At the end of each six week period, students take benchmark assessments which teachers use to complete tracking sheets and set individual student goals. This allows for tailored remediation to ensure each student's success. In addition, Study Island is utilized to assist with individual instruction and benchmark assessments. Realizing that student achievement is a group effort, during conferences, teachers and parents discuss methods to support students in taking ownership of their learning in order to reach their academic goals. The school also utilizes incentive programs to promote student success and pride in their accomplishments.

Teachers recognize that all students have individual needs that must be met if they are to be successful learners. Therefore, a thirty- minute remediation/enrichment period is a part of the daily instructional design. The classroom teacher, in addition to other trained personnel, provides assistance and support for those who are experiencing difficulties in reading and/or math.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Union Hall Elementary School implements the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Program. PBIS provides a positive focus to encourage desirable student behaviors. A set of universal expectations for behavior, positively stated, are established for all students in various locations of the school. These expectations promote core values such as respect, responsibility, and academic success. Interventions and strategies are designed to teach and reinforce these expectations. Students are provided with character education lessons that highlight a monthly character trait. These weekly lessons correlate with the school's SOAR behavior matrix: Self-Control, On-Task, Achievement & Respect.

The principal sets the tone for the school as an instructional leader with high expectations for the students and staff. It is critical for the principal to provide visibility and accessibility for all stakeholders.

Students are encouraged and motivated by their teachers with positive rewards in the classroom daily and weekly. On a weekly basis, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards vary by grade level. In addition, there are school-wide rewards such as the Star Student Award that recognizes students who have shown positive behaviors by posting their names on a board, in the hall, and announcing their names during the morning announcements. Students also have the opportunity to select school-wide rewards for positive behaviors.

Students are known by staff personally and greeted each morning to start their day in a positive way. If students are having a bad day, they are referred to the school counselor in order to address social, emotional, and behavioral needs and to help them with coping in order to have a successful day at school. The personal attention the students receive and the proactive initiatives in place allow for the students to have a positive learning environment where they feel valued, encouraged, and appreciated.

Union Hall Elementary is an inclusive school as special education services are integrated into the daily routines, classroom structure, and curriculum. The regular classroom and the special education teacher collaborate to adjust the class curriculum, as needed, so that every child's abilities and learning style can be fully accommodated.

Students who excel academically are given opportunities to stretch and grow. These students are challenged in a variety of ways. Those who qualify for the district's gifted program participate in weekly lessons and activities with the gifted teacher. Self-directed projects and activities allow them to think at a higher cognitive level and advance beyond the general curriculum.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parents and community volunteers assist in classrooms and the media center, listen to students read, play educational games, and chaperone field trips. Educational fun nights, such as Reading and Math Game Nights and Science Fair Nights, are also held to engage families and the community. There is excellent participation in these events, whether academic or social.

The Parent-Teacher Organization helps with class and after school activities. The PTO's goal is to enhance the students' education and promote family events. The PTO sponsors family events such as guest speakers on topics of interest to parents, movie nights, carnivals, music night, and family fun night.

The school has partnered with many community organizations for the benefit of the students. Several churches in the community provide weekly snacks for students and provide meals for the families during Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Students are taught that giving back to others is important for everyone. Each year the school organizes a canned food drive in which all proceeds are donated to a local food bank. Students also write cards and letters to patients in the local nursing homes.

Due to a lack of internet access in the school community, the school relies on a variety of methods to communicate with parents and keep families engaged. Parents receive email and telephone communication from the school through the School Messenger program.

Another important tool for regular parent communication includes applications such as Remind and Class Dojo, notes, phone calls, weekly newsletter, emails, and conferences. Teachers use the various methods to share strategies with parents. Parent surveys are also conducted through the Title I Parent Advisory Committee to obtain input in planning events for the school. Furthermore, parents can access students' grades through the PowerSchool parent portal, allowing them to monitor their child's academic progress twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Union Hall continuously partners with community groups and organizations to provide opportunities to enhance students' learning and development. The school partnered with the 4-H Club to provide after school classes in public speaking. The students have competed and won regional public speaking contests. Union Hall Elementary also partners with local community service organizations such as the Ruritan Club. Each year, the Ruritan Club provides dictionaries for all third grade students each year, and the United Way of Danville-Pittsylvania County also sponsors the Book Buddies tutoring program to provide early reading intervention.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is a vital component of the school's professional learning community with the main goal of building capacity of teachers and the administrator. This is achieved through a variety of methods, and the programs provided to the faculty and staff are designed to have maximum positive impact on student achievement and school improvement. To support this endeavor, the school houses a video library of professional development content that is used with the entire staff and individual teachers based on need.

The school division provides various staff development opportunities for employees, including county-wide programs for instruction, special education, curriculum development, and technology training. Several days are included in the normal teacher contract days for professional development. Most of the division-led professional development occurs on these days.

A variety of methods are used to determine a specific plan for professional development implemented at the school including teacher surveys, informal feedback, and results from teacher evaluations. The School Improvement Plan goals, which are developed from data collected each year, drive professional development, grade level collaboration and instruction.

The school's professional development plan addresses teaching, curriculum, assessment, and leadership. It also focuses on the concepts of differentiated instruction and technology enhanced lessons. Teachers attend training and workshops, and then follow-up training is presented to the total staff as a series of modules that include assessment, high-impact strategies and activities, differentiating content, and managing the differentiated classroom. Teachers frequently share strategies and best practices in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) to improve and empower the entire staff. Professional development training and educational research are on-going processes that are key for improving student learning and achievement.

In addition to providing staff development, the leadership team presents model lessons, supports teachers new to the profession, and assists others needing instructional guidance. Formal and informal evaluation methods are used to assess teachers' effectiveness of professional development implementation. Classroom observations and staff surveys are tools used to evaluate staff development initiatives and additional training.

Staff members are involved in inter-school and intra-school classroom visitations to gain insight into effective best practices. Mentoring is used for all teachers new to the school or to a grade level. Moreover,

professional development also includes mini workshops conducted by the special education staff. The workshops focus on strategies for organizing the classroom to create a student-friendly environment, transitions, classroom management, and differentiation of content to meet the needs of diverse learners.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership team consists of the principal, the lead teacher for each core subject area and special education, and the reading teacher. The team is responsible for creating the school improvement plan, analyzing test data, and providing programs for students in need of additional academic and behavioral support. The team collaborates with the staff to establish clear expectations, reflect on instructional delivery, interpret data, and monitor and adjust instruction based on the findings.

This leadership team conducts a meeting each summer to review end-of-year test data and make plans for the upcoming school session. During the school year, the team meets monthly to report concerns from each grade level and to make any necessary changes to school routines and policies. The principal and the leadership team have created a culture that embraces and empowers teachers to take ownership and shared responsibility in data practices. Achievement data is routinely used to plan for instruction and guide teachers to continuous improvement.

The principal stays abreast of current educational trends and research and provides the latest journal articles and books for the faculty to read and discuss. The principal is responsible for monitoring the classrooms to ensure that quality instruction is taking place each day, teachers are adhering to the curriculum framework and pacing guide, and that students are engaged and on task. The principal conducts routine walkthroughs and observations in order to provide positive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Whether greeting students at the door in the morning, supervising lunch in the cafeteria, or walking through classrooms, the principal establishes and frequently monitors expectations for instruction, behavior, and procedures to ensure optimal fidelity.

The lead teachers serve as the liaison between the teachers and the school division. Lead teachers attend scheduled division liaison meetings and receive monthly updates from the district's Lead Directors regarding instructional strategies and state initiatives. They conduct regular meetings with their content area colleagues to share information, answer questions and concerns, and provide assistance and support as needed to help students achieve.

The Title I reading teacher assists in implementing best practices for literacy instruction throughout the day and across content. Her responsibilities in literacy include coaching, modeling lessons, co-teaching, collaborative planning, conducting professional development, conferencing with parents, analyzing data, and collaborating with administrators to plan and set goals for literacy instruction. Additionally, she works with students individually or in small groups to assess and improve their literacy skills.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Union Hall Elementary, an aligned curriculum, good teaching, continuous progress monitoring and the belief that all students can succeed at high levels are some of the keys to Union Hall Elementary School's academic success. Caring faculty and staff work relentlessly to provide whatever is needed for all students. Acts of kindness may include an encouraging word, extra food, clothing, or attendance at a special event. The teachers fully understand that their role determines the success or failure of every student.

The fourth and fifth grade instructional schedules have been modified for the past two years to include two teachers at each grade level. One teaches reading and social studies and the other teaches math and science. Both teachers are teaching math and reading to both groups in the morning. They teach the science and social studies in the afternoon. This change has greatly benefited the students and the teachers.

A Balanced Literacy Model is used to provide instruction in Guided Reading, Independent Reading, and Word Study. The students who need additional assistance receive daily assistance in reading and/or math in addition to the regular reading/math instruction. The special education teacher works with the general education teacher in the classroom to assist the students, pulling them out for individual instruction or small group as needed.

Particular emphasis is placed on practicing for the rigor of the tests and the technology enhanced items. Teachers have monthly vertical team meetings to allow the grade level below them to know how the students can be better prepared for math and reading. This has made a significant difference in the school's math scores. Second grade students take benchmark tests in math and reading several times during the year to prepare for third grade.

Each grade level also has a minimum of 30 minutes per day dedicated to remediation and /or enrichment. This time is set aside for individualized instruction, including intervention for students who have not yet mastered learning targets. Since Union Hall is a Title I school, during these skills times, any student who needs Tier 2 intervention support in reading can receive it from the Title I teacher who collaborates with classroom teachers to further target students' instructional needs. Grade level core subject instructional teams have 40 minutes of common planning time daily. Most teams collaborate daily for at least a portion of that common planning time, including discussing strategies and student data.