

**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) [X] Title I    [ ] Charter    [ ] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Jeanne Gren

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

Official School Name Flemington Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 824 Simpson Road

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

City Flemington    State WV    Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 26347-6207

County Taylor County

Telephone (304) 739-4749    Fax (304) 739-4671

Web site/URL http://www.taylorcountyboe.net/fes    E-mail kgren@k12.wv.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\*Ms. Kathleen Green    E-mail kgreen@k12.wv.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Taylor County School District    Tel. (304) 265-2497

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. Austin Upton  
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	4	11
K	10	11	21
1	10	13	23
2	14	20	34
3	8	10	18
4	14	12	26
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	63	70	133

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 98 % 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: 9%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	139
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.094
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 81 %  
Total number students who qualify: 112

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %  
17 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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	7
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
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 19:1
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	93%	96%	99%	99%	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.

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

Our mission is to prepare our students to be self-directed, life-long learners able to thrive responsibly in a digital global society.

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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Nestled in the hills of West Virginia, Flemington Elementary School is a small school with big expectations. It is indeed “Almost Heaven”, as our school is located on one of those beautiful country roads that John Denver made famous. Despite the fact that our small school only holds 130 students in preschool through fourth grade and it was built in 1939, for most of our students, it is still the biggest, most beautiful, exciting, and caring place in the world.

The back of the school grounds is bordered by the railroad track, a reminder of the booming town it once was. It also provides the only traffic jam we see when the train comes through and might stop a car or two at the crossing. It is a twenty minute drive to the nearest stoplight, store or fast food restaurant. Only the post office, volunteer fire department, funeral home, and several churches remain in the town. The coal mines, bank, and high school have closed. Ten acres of greenhouses have stood empty for nearly 10 years. Some families still farm; others drive to bigger towns for employment. Over 81% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

The pride in this community, however, remains deeply rooted and the school remains at its center. Many of our parents and grandparents went to this school as a child. Many of them had the same teachers. Their trust and support is an important part of our success. They know the benefits of helping their child finish their homework or signing off on their reading log. Some of our teachers went to this school as a child and remain dedicated to this community. Their knowledge, experience and ambitious instruction are crucial to our success. The history, location, and size of our school have encouraged the development of a strong culture, expressed in our belief statements:

We are family.

We help each other learn and grow.

With hard work, anything is possible.

Typically, there is only one class per grade level. This forces an unusually high level of accountability. When school scores are published, everyone knows who teaches that grade level. When students go into the next grade, the teacher knows from where they came. If students claim they did not learn their addition facts last year, their current teacher will march them next door and ask! Teachers feel responsible to move their students as far as they can each year. Because teachers do not share planning times, they talk about their challenges or successes, and share strategies at lunch or at recess.

The size of the school also helps the students learn the tradition of hard work. They see their siblings, cousins and the older students working hard. The morning bus room before breakfast is a time to study spelling words, practice math facts or work on the computers. They hear the motivational talks and help cheer the big kids to “Do your best on the test!” They know that one day it will be their turn, and they can be successful too. In the past, Flemington Elementary was named as a West Virginia Exemplary School and a West Virginia Title I Distinguished School for multiple years. In 2013 and 2014, we were designated a High Performing Success School. In 2016, we received the distinction of becoming a West Virginia School of Excellence and a National Title I Distinguished School. These honors, as well as the nomination to become a National Blue Ribbon School, have started many conversations about what works at our school. We work hard to maintain our tradition of success. We want to identify and formalize strategies, procedures and programs so new teachers can maintain and improve the work we do here.

A seasoned and stable staff has created a culture of community and collaboration that is the foundation of our success. We know each other. We know every child. We know, despite their backgrounds, we can teach so they can succeed.

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

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

At Flemington Elementary, the core curriculum is based on the West Virginia Career and College Readiness Standards. In recent years, the state has had its share of controversy about the Common Core Standards, so we have experienced several revisions and name changes. Enough similarities remain that our state currently uses the Smarter Balanced Test at the end of the year, although it was renamed the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (GSA). The experience of our teachers has helped our curriculum and expectations remain steady throughout the turmoil, while adapting English Language Arts instruction to incorporate more nonfiction texts and writing that uses supporting evidence. Teachers have used their experience to build a base of resources that work without being overly dependent on textbooks. There is a great deal of collaboration and vertical teaming because there is only one class per grade level. Teachers have deep understanding of what comes before their grade and what comes after.

In the area of English Language Arts, much emphasis is placed on learning to read in grades K-2. Title I has supported intensive professional development throughout the years, and teachers use small groups, independent stations, and multiple leveled books to teach basic skills. They also know the importance of emotional confidence in learning to read, and the littlest students love putting on monster fingers to track the text and colorful ‘magic glasses’ (without lenses) to help them see and read the words. Writing workshops begin in kindergarten with modeling and support. They know by the end of the year that “Eight is great!” (Eight words in a sentence is great!) In grades 3 and 4, there is more emphasis on reading to learn. Content and comprehension becomes more important, and on occasion, a science or social studies textbook is also used as the reading lesson for the day. Emphasis is given to extended writing; students practice citing sources and writing for different purposes.

In mathematics, our textbooks are sorely outdated. Teachers emphasize basic skills and number sense. It is common to see classes practicing their math facts in the hall while waiting in line to use the bathroom or get a drink. With new standards, teachers have researched and supplemented the text with other resources. This year, we asked to pilot a new textbook designed for the Common Core. More emphasis has been placed on understanding concepts, not just learning procedures. Multiple strategies are encouraged and discussion is important, as students are expected to explain their thinking. They work in groups or with partners to solve problems and defend their answer. When procedures are practiced, students are monitored closely; teachers check their answers while they are working so mistakes are caught early and corrected.

Science is an opportunity for students to get messy, increase their observational skills, and apply some math concepts while keeping data in a relevant setting. Experiments stimulate their curiosity and prompt motivation to research, read and write. It is another venue for learning to write articles and cite evidence. Dissecting owl pellets was a favorite day for our second graders! Three raised garden beds next to the ball field provide more opportunities for real life learning. Fourth graders can study cellular biology, plant seeds, grow produce and then practice reading and math skills while trying out and ranking zucchini recipes.

In Social Studies, current events often provide relevant topics for discussion and civic learning. Citizenship and engagement is important to students in a small school. Older students serve as role models and enjoy the responsibility of school jobs such as helping in the cafeteria, cleaning up the playground, leading the pledge, reading announcements, or reading to younger students. History also provides incentive to read and write. Last year, second graders chose an individual to research and then portray in a living museum for their parents. This year, the fourth grade is researching and documenting the history of the school and how times have changed since it was built. They took a field trip to the public library to research historical records and old issues of the local newspaper on microfiche.

This year, our school has incorporated a preschool class for the first time. For the 15 years, Head Start provided a class next to our school, but bringing it into the building allows for greater collaboration between the preschool and kindergarten teachers. Following the HighScope Curriculum, the experiences in the classroom lay the foundation for the children's future. We will be able to collect data on the impact of this

change next fall when the kindergarten teacher screens each child for beginning skills with letters and numbers. In the preschool classroom, a plan-do-review process is implemented to encourage children to learn to plan activities, carry them out, and discuss their accomplishments with others. Learning centers are developed and maintained on a weekly basis using the children's interest and individual needs.

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

Creative arts classes are an essential part of achieving success in school, work and life. Students in kindergarten through fourth grade receive one class each day for 40 minutes, rotating through the week between art, music, library and physical education. Because there are fewer teachers involved, collaboration between classroom teachers and the creative arts specialists is both easier and harder. Communication can be easier when there is only one class per grade level and a specialist can support a specific topic. It can be more challenging as there is only one specialist each day and no one has a common planning period. Space is also an issue, as art and music share instructional space in the library. At Flemington Elementary though, we make the best of this situation. The classroom teachers and the specialists are alert to what is happening in the school and work to coordinate efforts whenever possible.

For many students, art is their favorite class. Creativity and expression are encouraged along with the study of different styles and media. It is a place where everyone succeeds. The visual representation of spatial concepts provides a direct link to the development of mathematical standards, particularly in the area of patterns and geometry. There is also direct correlation in vocabulary and comprehension development. Whether a child is looking at one or creating one, every picture has a point of view and tells a story. Their creativity decorates our halls as a source of enjoyment for everyone.

Physical education is also a typical favorite of our students, even though it meets in the cafeteria. Our building does not have a separate gymnasium, so some activities are limited because of the tables folded up against the walls. The students don't know any different though, and they are happy to move! Weather permitting, the students can also go outside and practice skills with the new basketball hoops. A mix of teamwork, competition and collaboration is stressed with the students as they work on personal fitness, ball skills and fun games. Mental alertness, improved health and endurance levels are a few of the benefits our students receive. As they exercise, play games, dance, or learn sport skills, they also improve their socialization skills. In addition to recess, teachers also incorporate brain breaks or movement activities throughout the day to meet the minimum standard for physical activity.

Health is incorporated into science instruction, but nutrition comes to life twice a week by the way of a food grant. It provides a fresh fruit or vegetable snack twice a week, and emphasizes unusual items that our students normally don't have a chance to see or try. Blood oranges and star fruit have been well-liked. Fresh mushrooms were not as popular.

Music helps build imagination and intellectual curiosity. Students learn rhythm, how to read music, and enjoy music from other cultures. The third graders are introduced to instruments with recorders. Our annual holiday program is a family and community favorite. Third and fourth graders can join a school chorus that meets once a week and performs for the local Veteran's Day program and our spring talent show.

Foreign language is not currently offered at our school.

Library class provides essential instruction in grade level appropriate research skills as well as encouraging recreational reading. Our librarian is certified as a Technology Integration Specialist, so she also helps teachers provide keyboarding skills, word processing, emailing, internet safety guidance, and identifying reliable sources of information.

Most of the time, technology is incorporated into classroom instruction. Each class has an interactive whiteboard and projector. Students in K-1 have designated computer lab time; students upstairs in grades 2-4 have access to mobile laptops, netbooks and tablets. Students use the computer for individualized lessons to reinforce or extend reading and math skills, word processing for writing assignments, and games for recreational use. All students also participate in the Hour of Code, exposing them to the logic of

programming and computer science. Our school partners with the County Vocational Center, visiting back and forth to explore new uses of technology with Lego robotics, Minecraft for education, Scratch (coding) and littleBits, small computerized circuitry that encourages engineering design and innovation. A small group of students stay after school once a week for Tech Tuesday. They love the chance to extend their skills in technology and participate in global invention challenges!

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

The educational growth of all students is first addressed through direct explicit instruction, often using the gradual release of responsibility (I do, We do, You do) model. Our students are immersed in literacy activities throughout the day by utilizing a research-based instructional program that blends phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, text-based evidence, and comprehension strategies. We reteach to mastery. Classroom teachers continually observe and check students' progress so students get off to a good start and proceed correctly. Teachers also differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of individual students. Individualized spelling lists, leveled guided reading groups, computerized lessons in reading or math, and cross-grade grouping are a few examples of how we meet the needs of each student.

power to be accountable for their own learning. Testing benchmarks and scores are shared with and analyzed by the students. They identify areas of strength and weakness, set personal goals and track their own growth. We stress that they can always do better. We challenge them to compete against themselves to improve, as we do the same thing as teachers!

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Through the years, the size and location of the school has forced the development of a strong culture. The experience and dedication of the teachers that have stayed here have determined that this culture is positive. Teachers are happy to be here, sharing their love of learning. The magic happens as students come into a classroom that makes them feel safe and valued. They learn to love learning too!

Pride in accomplishment is valued. There is a deliberate and explicit emphasis on hard work. Our school chant “FES means success!” is our students’ favorite cheer. They are told of our history and reputation. Even at the high school, teachers say they know which students came from Flemington Elementary because they work harder than anyone else! That does not mean we cannot have fun, though.

Sometimes competitions add excitement as they practice to earn their “black belt” in math facts. Classrooms compete against each other for attendance recognition. Teachers watch other schools’ scores. But even more important is a feeling of collaboration. Those who are done early help others. First graders gain confidence by helping kindergarteners. Growth in reading levels or benchmarks can mean a dance party. Reading and writing over the summer means an afternoon of water play on the playground and getting sprayed by the firetruck!

Individual recognition for attendance, achievement and behavior is done quarterly. Students love bringing home certificates or seeing their picture up on the bulletin board for attendance.

All of our kids are all of our kids. We are family. We help each other learn and grow. And just like a real family, sometimes there are misunderstandings and hurt feelings. We have learned to speak honestly but carefully. Manners are important; so is fixing problems and trying again. We have learned that there is little that can’t be solved by arranging a pot-luck staff lunch and eating together.

Good humor also abounds. If a teacher is frustrated or discouraged, there is always someone who can say, “But remember when...?” and restore a bit of patience and encouragement through shared laughter. We value and support each other.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

We truly believe it takes a village to raise a child! We realize parents play a critical role in their child’s academic achievement, so developing collaborations between home and school is one of the keys to our school’s success. As the center of this rural community, when we host a school activity, everyone turns out! Many of our parents attended this school, actually having some of the same teachers as a child. They know we care about their children, and trust us to have their best interests at heart. This atmosphere ensures our families feel comfortable approaching the staff with any questions or concerns they may have. Students in third and fourth grades use a daily planner and all students use a red plastic school folder to help facilitate communication of school work and important notes.

We have a variety of parent engagement activities each year. The year starts with our annual Fun in the Sun afternoon to celebrate our students who read and write over the summer. This event could not happen without our parent volunteers coordinating the water activity stations. Then, we host our Parent Night where we feed each family dinner, provide training on being a parent volunteer, and have classroom visitations. It is standing room only that night! Throughout the year, each grade level hosts a Parent Breakfast. This is an enjoyable time for all parents to eat with their child, meet new families, review the classroom procedures and learn how they can help their child at home. Each breakfast has 100% participation. If parents don’t send back the reservation form, we call them. We make sure every child has a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle in attendance. Our fall and spring carnivals are organized by the PTO, but our staff always helps out. Parents are invited each nine weeks to celebrate their child’s hard work with an awards ceremony. The end of the year ceremony is special, incorporating information about summer

reading and an introduction from their next year's teacher to help with the transition. The Title I program supports the position of a parent volunteer coordinator who is very helpful in coordinating these special events.

Our community churches provide support to our school with weekend food backpacks, clothing, and shoes. Our business partners help with school supply donations and presents for children at Christmas. The local Emergency Medical Services includes our students in their fall parade and safety training.

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

Our teachers are not afraid to ask for help! When there is a need for professional development on specific topics or strategies, we voice our wishes for additional training. We learn from each other and value the knowledge that another colleague may possess. Staying current is important for us and our students. This year, while searching for additional math resources to supplement our basic textbook, we ended up piloting a new series for the last half of the year. A two hour in-service was not sufficient to introduce the new manual; teachers continue to work and learn together to adopt new techniques and materials.

Without peers at the same grade level, we share our ideas with the teachers in other grades and often ask for help or suggestions for students who are struggling. The background of the child can be shared and a new idea or solution can almost always be recommended. When the district plans professional development and asks for one teacher per grade level, most of our staff gets the training. This past year, the focus has been on Thinking Maps, with various applications for writing and math.

New professional learning standards have been adopted by the state of West Virginia, moving into a 'Learning School' model. This takes the Professional Learning Community one step further. Not only do we plan, assess and respond to students' growth, as a Learning School, we should then identify the professional learning we need to help us address the needs of our students. Our school was asked to participate in an early pilot program of this model. The state has begun an implementation phase, and our district is planning to enable more choice at the school level. Although it is important to stay connected with major county initiatives, each school has different needs. The staff and students vary at each school, and we want our professional learning to reflect the needs of our particular school.

This is the perfect place for a brand new teacher to get their start. Everyone is so welcoming and willing to help a new staff member. We willingly allow others to observe our classrooms in order to gain new ideas that can successfully be used in their own classrooms. On the other hand, we also welcome the new and fresh ideas a young enthusiastic teacher can share with us. Our philosophy is reflected on our school shirts this year: "Learning is our Superpower!"

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

Coming into a school with an experienced staff and history of success was a wonderful experience for our principal. For the past four years, she has worked to identify and preserve effective practices, and maintain a culture of hard work. Her philosophy is of servitude leadership and works to support teachers, trying to clear obstacles from their daily work with students. Sometimes she sees her role as chief cheerleader, but also knows the importance of long range vision. Her focus is keeping the day to day discussions on track with long term goals and new research in the field. Her favorite moments, however, occur when she is working directly with the students, whether helping during a math lesson, listening to a child read, or helping students edit their writing,

The majority of ideas, concerns and planning for the school are discussed formally with the leadership team, which meets twice a month after the buses leave. The staff fits around one big table so communication is easy. The whole school frequently goes out to recess at the same time after lunch, so informal discussions about field trips, parties, new testing requirements or workshop experiences can involve nearly everyone. Smaller collaborative teams also work together because of the lunch schedule and classroom location. Preschool, kindergarten and first grade all have classrooms on the first floor and eat lunch together. Second, third and fourth are located on the second floor and call themselves "The

Penthouse.” Frustrations with a particular student, or instructional standards, are frequently worked out over lunch. Follow through happens easily when support comes from next door!

Due to having one classroom per grade level, there is a transparent accountability forced upon each teacher. It becomes quite apparent to the next teacher if the preceding teacher has not “done their job.” The staff does not hesitate to state to each other what the students need to know before they come to the next grade level.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) provide important leadership roles for parent and community involvement. The PTO provides input through fundraising activities. Their decisions support the school goals, and can also fund specific ideas of parents. The LSIC by state policy reports to the Board of Education once a year. This group also reviews school discipline policies and helps with strategic planning.

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

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At Flemington Elementary, the size, location, and experienced staff have encouraged the development of a strong sense of family with a culture and tradition of achievement. It is this family atmosphere that is the foundation of our success. But it is not just a family atmosphere of friendliness, fun and help. It is a family with big expectations – of ourselves as staff and of our students. A few core teachers with determination and competitiveness set the tone of achievement despite the home circumstances of our students. Over time, the culture has attracted and kept teachers that go above and beyond what is normally expected. The teachers who come and stay here feel at home with this atmosphere. We are invested in the success of our students. We know where they come from, and we know this school is the only opportunity most of our students have for improving their chances in life. All of our kids are all of our kids, and we will take care of them. We can make a difference, and we believe the biggest mistake is giving up.

The trust and expectation of this school family is apparent in our daily interactions. We plan together in the doorways as students unpack for the day, over lunch, or at recess. Sometimes the conversations are direct and honest. “You need to be here on time to help when I’m ready to start math.” Just like a family, sometimes feelings get hurt and problems need to be fixed. It reminds us of the importance of manners as well. We have to get along because there is nowhere to hide, and no one else with whom to have lunch.

It is often said that children are our future. At this school, we flip that quote around. We are their future. It is up to us to open doors. It is up to us to ensure they have the skills they need for the next year.

In a small isolated community that has seen better days, we remain at the center. We help. We inspire. We insist. We celebrate. We teach our kids to love learning. We are a family, with trust and high expectations. We believe with hard work, anything is possible!