

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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	37	25	62
1	36	25	61
2	27	30	57
3	31	30	61
4	28	22	50
5	26	28	54
6	27	22	49
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	212	182	394

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 98 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 14%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	21
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	41
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	62
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	440
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.14
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
2 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 51%
Total number students who qualify: 199

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %
56 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>3</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>8</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>5</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a 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.	3

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.

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	94%	93%
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 2017.

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.

To ensure for each student a globally comprehensive education in a positive environment which provides individualized and cooperative learning opportunities, produces responsible citizens, and instills a desire for life-long learning through quality instructional programs, sound fiscal management, visionary leadership, and a partnership involving home, school, and community.

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

Paintsville Elementary School (PES) is the only elementary in the Paintsville Independent District, founded in 1885. PES serves 400 students kindergarten through sixth grade and offers a Headstart program. Our building underwent extensive renovations and expansion in 2013. We are located in downtown Paintsville, the county seat of Johnson County, in the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. Our town is located along the Big Sandy River and with the development of coal mining in the 1900s, the general population steadily grew. With the loss of coal jobs, Paintsville's population and average household income have declined in recent years. Over 50% of our current students come from low-income homes, and many are raised by someone other than a parent.

Though the general population has declined, student enrollment remains steady. In fact, our district is one of only two Eastern Kentucky districts that has not dropped in enrollment since 2010. Thirty-five percent of our students reside in neighboring districts but choose to enroll at Paintsville- a testament to our reputation of academic excellence. ACT averages are above both state and national norms, and we were a 2016 Kentucky District of Distinction. Students and staff strive to improve and give our best. We constantly look to improve student achievement by setting goals, beginning with the end in mind.

PES was named a "needs improvement" school in 2013, but in 2014 and 2015 we rose to the level of "proficient" school. We improved again in 2016 and became a Kentucky School of Distinction. This improvement came through the combined efforts of students, faculty, staff, parents, and community stakeholders. Clearly-defined academic and behavior expectations are in place, and our Growth Mindset program promotes a positive learning environment where students are not afraid to make errors. We believe mistakes are the basis of true learning.

We also have large numbers of parents and community members who believe in the value of learning and support our school. For students to have continuing success, there must be a strong connection between school and home. We have high turnout for annual events like our Back to School Bash, Open House, parent conferences, Fall Carnival, Career Day, Grandparent's Day, Veteran's Day luncheon, Reading Nights, Living Wax Museum, Talent Show, Christmas Concert/Play, and Math Nights. However, our parents and community partners don't just attend events- they are active partners in making opportunities possible for our students. Our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) initiates and manages multiple school-wide fundraisers. Parent volunteers come frequently to classrooms and offer several extracurricular opportunities, including Junior Pro Basketball, Tiny Tiger Dance/Cheer Team, and a school-based Girl Scout Club. Other extracurricular activities available to our students include band, Future Problem Solving (2016 Junior State Champions), Academic Team (14 of the past 17 regional Governor's Cup titles), Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP), football, archery, and 4-H clubs.

PES students also benefit from the assistance of community partners. Senior citizens serve as tutors through partnership with the Big Sandy Area Development Council. The Christian Appalachian Project sponsors summer camp, and the local health department enables students to receive free dental screenings. We also partner with our city to provide a daily after-school program at the recreation center. School staff work with city employees to provide snacks, homework help, recreation, and childcare for the children of working parents. As a member of the Appalachian Renaissance Initiative through the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC), our classrooms in grades 5-6 have been outfitted with 1:1 technology, multiple resources have been provided at all grade levels, and teachers have the opportunity to apply for mini-grants to carry out specific learning projects with students.

We work daily at PES to insure our curriculum is rigorous and aligned with both state and national standards. We focus on closing the achievement gap for at-risk students and improving the achievement level for all. We structure our master schedule so grade level teams have daily common planning, enabling them to meet in Professional Learning Communities to analyze student work and assessment results. All students are administered a universal screener three times annually to evaluate progress and common assessments are used throughout the year. We use these results and our PLC discussions to plan ROAR (Raising our Academic Rigor), a daily "core time" at each grade level. During this time, students receive

intervention/enrichment that increase their academic achievement.

At PES, our family atmosphere, quality staff, high expectations, parent involvement, and community support are the key components of our success. Our district motto, “Reaching for Excellence”, perfectly describes our philosophy towards student education. Combined with our motivation to continue improving, we believe these qualities make us an excellent candidate for the National Blue Ribbons Schools Program.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The curriculum of Paintsville Elementary is based on Kentucky Academic Standards. Faculty frequently reviews/amends our curriculum in order to ensure rigorous instruction in all grades and subjects. Formative assessments are also used to make instructional adjustments to meet the needs of students. At PES we do not just “cover the standards,” but focus on student understanding.

We believe reading is the key that unlocks learning. We incorporate reading instruction into all content daily. Reading instruction focuses on phonics, phonemic awareness, sight words, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and fluency. We use Scott Foresman’s Reading Street, and a variety of other resources including trade books, Reading Coach Books, Ready Common Core, and Read Works. We use the Accelerated Reader program so students improve reading comprehension and select books they enjoy. Online programs, like Reading Eggs and Lexia allow for remediation/enrichment and Flocabulary is used to build vocabulary. PES has received a Read to Achieve Grant that allows us to have an additional teacher at the primary level to work with struggling readers.

Writing is also an emphasis. Representatives from each grade level form a professional learning community to plan writing instruction and analyze work samples. Teachers attend professional development focused on improving writing.

At PES we have focused heavily on mathematics instruction. In the 13-14 school year 47% of students scored proficient/higher on state mathematics assessments, and 16% of students scored novice. By the 16-17 school year 71% of students scored proficient/higher, and 7% of students tested novice. This improvement can be attributed to multiple factors including: staffing/scheduling adjustments, increased professional development, and an increase in differentiation in mathematics instruction. The Kentucky Academic Standards drive math instruction and we use Envision as our primary math text (K-6). Additionally we use Engage NY, Calendar Math (at the primary level), and IXL, Khan Academy, and Study Island. Teachers have access to Ready Common Core and design lessons so students are constantly reviewing previously learned material. Students work in groups/individually to apply problem-solving strategies and spend daily class time on individualized math activities.

Prior to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), science began with the scientific method, followed by content lessons, then an experiment. Teachers were encouraged to identify and correct student misconceptions. This was reinforced by fact-based memorization lessons that left out the most important part of science, practices and critical thinking. We now understand with NGSS that children’s science-related ideas/identities are grounded in their personal experience of the world. Science classes ensure each student has the opportunity to learn, think, solve problems, and design solutions. Students are getting specific/actionable feedback on their learning. Each performance expectation combines a relevant practice of science/engineering, core disciplinary idea and crosscutting concept. We have gone from hands-on activities to critical thinking. It’s not just about doing an experiment, but examining and understanding the world around us like a scientist. To address this shift teachers train with consultants from the Kentucky Department of Education to align curriculum with NGSS. We use the Harcourt science series, but teachers prepare learning experiences aligned with STEM using Through Course Task scenarios.

Social Studies standards include: historical perspective, culture, geography, economics, and government/civics. Specific scheduled time at each grade level is devoted to instruction, but it is also woven into other content areas. We use Harcourt’s SS series as a main textbook, but rely more heavily on other strategies/resources to actively engage students. These include QFT (question formulation technique), simulations, inquiry-based instruction, as well as direct instruction. Additionally we use Study Island and CNN classroom and our teachers in our school have participated in a professional action network (PAN) focused on social studies through Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC). PAN allows teachers from a variety of districts to share resources and strategies including professional development and opportunities to meet with a KVEC Social Studies Specialist. We place heavy emphasis on civic

engagement/community service including cleanup days, Jump Rope for Heart, St. Jude's Math-a-Thon, and food drives. Many grades adopt a needy family at Christmas from our Family Resource Center's Angel Tree project.

We use the Brigance for all K students to determine readiness. Headstart and Kindergarten are in the same section of the building, which allows teachers to work together for a smoother transition to Kindergarten. We welcome Kindergarteners and their families with a K Open House each spring, and Kindergarten University each July to ease adjustments.

Paintsville Headstart (for 3/4 year olds) focuses on school readiness. Students are exposed to multi-sensory learning, play opportunities, and large/small group instruction. The curriculum aligns with Headstart Performance Standards, Teaching Strategies Gold, and Kentucky Early Childhood Standards. Teachers use programs such as Visual Phonics, Step Phonics, and Calendar Math. In 2017 our Headstart was designated a 5-star program, the highest state rating given. PES houses the district's Headstart office, further facilitating collaboration with K-6 personnel.

PES provides a strong core curriculum and remediation/acceleration at each grade level. Grades K-3 are self-contained, with grades 4-6 departmentalized. In addition to core instruction, students are provided daily scheduled instruction in other curriculum areas.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Paintsville Elementary desires for our students to be successful life-long learners. We provide multiple opportunities and resources (in addition to our core curriculum) to enrich the lives of students.

All students (K-6) attend music class each week for a 45-minute period with a full-time certified music educator. In music class they do many things including: singing, dancing to music, learning about instruments, playing instruments, studying different musical styles, learning local and state musical traditions, and learning about music in different cultures. They also learn to read music. Students in all grades participate in our annual performances at Christmas and Grandparent's Day. These performances incorporate singing, drama, dancing, and playing instruments. Upper grades students also have opportunities to expand in these areas by joining the school band that performs throughout the year and/or participating in the annual school talent show.

All students (K-6) attend weekly physical education class at Paintsville Elementary. A full-time certified elementary teacher, who is also a trained fitness instructor, teaches the 45-minute class. The class focuses on physical activity, health, and nutrition education, aligned to the National Health Education Standards. Beyond the regular classroom students can compete in Jump Rope for Heart as community service for the American Heart Association. PES also has unique physical education opportunities such as the Jump Rope Queen/King Challenge and Field Day (organized by our physical education teacher). We were also awarded pedometers for the entire school this year (as part of an Appalachian Renaissance Initiative mini-grant). This allows our students to set up personal daily step goals and for our school to have a "Step War" to promote physical activity during the school day.

Paintsville Elementary has invested heavily in technology in recent years. In addition to computers, Chrome books, and Mondo/Smart boards in the classrooms we also have a computer lab, staffed full-time by a lab facilitator. The facilitator collaborates with teachers to help them with technology troubleshooting, provide technology resources and assistance for students, and schedule/assist with computer lab time for classes. She also sponsors our school's Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP) that provides interested students with the opportunity to do enrichment activities/projects related to technology.

PES has a library/media center that is directed by a full-time librarian/media specialist who is National Board Certified in this area. Students have scheduled library/media center time each week for 45 minutes. During this time they receive direct instruction on such things as how to use the library for research, how the library is organized and types of books. The librarian/media specialist also collaborates with teachers to provide instruction/enrichment that goes with what students are currently learning in core classes. For

instance, there are dedicated minutes each week during library time for vocabulary acquisition activities (related to our reading instruction). Our library/media center also houses a smaller computer lab and teachers can schedule to bring their classes in to use the resources provided. Our librarian/media specialist also facilitates our Accelerated Reader Program and conducts AR parties and AR awards programs for students who meet or surpass reading goals.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Paintsville Elementary serves grades K-6, and also houses our district's Headstart program. In our school we collaborate from grade to grade and attempt to have all of our classrooms be positive places where learning, questioning, and student discussion are valued. For years PES has used Title 1 funds to add staff because we know that the most valuable resource in a classroom is an effective teacher.

PES is self-contained in grades K-3, while grades 4-6 are departmentalized. Our students receive daily instruction in math, reading/language arts, social studies, and science. We also have weekly instruction in physical education, music, art, technology, and library/media.

Our school places great emphasis on small class size, and tries to classroom enrollment 20 students or less. We know that the best way to impact student achievement is to give them access to effective teachers. In addition to three teachers assigned to each grade level/department we also have 3 full-time teachers/therapists in special education, 1 part-time therapist, and 6 instructional aides. We also have a Read to Achieve teacher who provides instruction to our most struggling first graders on an individual basis, and small group instruction to others in grades K-3. Data indicates our faculty is high-quality. Eighty-three percent of them have master's degrees or higher, and our average teacher has taught for over 14 years. District gathered data also indicates that our teachers remain with us once hired. Of the 10 open positions that have occurred at PES in the past 5 years, only 1 was due to resignation. The rest were due to retirements.

We have invested great time, resources, and training in recent years on technology. Each of our classrooms is equipped with a Smartboard or Mondoboard and computers, laptops, and/or Chromebooks. In grades 5 and 6 we have gone 1:1 with Chromebooks, and students and teachers use Google Classroom heavily during the instructional day.

In order to plan effective instruction we must know what students already understand and are ready to learn next. We rely on frequent formative and summative classroom and common assessments. We also use MAP 3 times per year to measure student progress in reading, math, and science. We use this data to plan not only classroom instruction, but also to determine Response to Intervention/Enrichment placements for each student.

Our teachers then collaborate to plan lessons aligned to KY Academic Standards that use various instructional strategies (Question Formulation Technique, Hands-On, Simulations, Effective Questioning, etc.). As part of this daily instruction teachers gauge student understanding through formative assessments, and students are allowed to redo or improve their classroom work. At PES we see the purpose of classwork not to be "for a grade", but to help students learn.

Our school also has scheduled ROAR (Raising Our Academic Rigor) time each day. During each grade level's ROAR time additional teachers (done through intentional scheduling) work with the teachers already at that grade level to take students in smaller groups to work on intervention/enrichment. This allows each student to get more individual attention and instruction geared to their specific needs.

Students in grades K-3 who are identified as gifted/high achieving based on Raven assessment results are placed in our Primary Talent Pool. Our district's gifted and talented teacher works with these students on a rotating basis. Gifted/talented students in grades 4-6 are in a pullout program that meets daily throughout the week to work on problem solving, critical thinking, and/or accelerated learning.

After analyzing our state assessment data for the 2016-2017 school year PES reached high levels of

proficiency in reading and math when compared to other elementary schools across our state. In reading 73.2% of students scored proficient/distinguished (compared to 54.3% for all students statewide). Our at-risk students (gap) also outpaced the state average for all students, with 62.3% of our gap students scoring proficient/distinguished in reading. In math 71% of PES students reached proficient/distinguished (compared to 49.1% statewide). Again our gap students outperformed the state average for all students, with 58.2% of them reaching proficiency or higher. Even though there is a significant difference (greater than 10%) between the reading and math proficiency rates for our gap students compared to all PES students, we are seeing the benefit that Response to Intervention (ROAR) has brought. In 2014 only 43% of our gap students were proficient in reading and a mere 36% in math.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Paintsville Elementary we have a strong family-like atmosphere. We build strong positive connections between students, their families, community members, and our faculty/staff. Positive school culture helps increase academic achievement.

We offer many extracurricular opportunities for students to explore their personal interests including Girl Scouts, 4-H, Student Technology Leadership Program, Academic Team, Future Problem Solving, band, dance, cheer, basketball, and football. Students can also participate in activities such as our talent show, conservation poster/essay contest, coal fair, and entrepreneur fair. We want students to be successful in life, and that involves learning and experiences beyond the classroom.

We seek to develop school pride with celebrations for academic, as well as athletic accomplishments. In addition to our in-school celebrations we also use our website, social media, and local media outlets to share the good news of what our students do. We not only celebrate the successes of PES students, but also host celebrations for the accomplishments of our middle and high school students. We want our students to know we are a Tiger family (K-12). We also have frequent theme weeks (such as Spirit Week and Dr. Seuss Week).

We believe in acknowledging/rewarding students for their efforts and accomplishments. We have MAP reward days for students who meet their personal progress goals, students of the month at each grade level, the AR store where students can “spend” the AR points they have accumulated for reading, monthly attendance dances for those with perfect attendance, and prize raffles for attendance and appropriate behavior. Honor Roll students are awarded certificates quarterly, and students who earn proficient/distinguished on state assessments are presented with medals (provided yearly by an anonymous donor) during our KPREP celebration. We also have whole-school cookouts or popcorn days when we meet a school-wide goal, and local businesses have provided all students, faculty, and staff with t-shirts on multiple occasions to celebrate accomplishments.

The greatest thing we can provide to our students is a highly effective teacher. At PES we strive to make our teachers feel valued and supported and create an environment where “work is fun”. Our SBDM Council and Instructional Leadership Team give teachers leadership roles in our school. We provide positive feedback to our teachers and mentoring support. Throughout the year we hold multiple “goodie-table” days, host a Christmas dinner for faculty/staff and their families, and our PTO coordinates a weeklong teacher appreciation week in May where food and other treats are provided daily. Our faculty/staff also conducts their own secret sister program and schedules other events, such as the recent staff talent show.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Paintsville Elementary is located in downtown Paintsville, and many consider PES the hub of the town. We place high value on having strong family/community connections. We frequently open our doors to host community events, and in return have been provided with a high level of community support.

At PES we reach out to families through frequent communication using a variety of methods. Paper communication is still sent home with students, but we also use a school website and Facebook pages. Teachers also communicate through phone calls, home visits, classroom social media pages, and emails. Our guidance counselor leads the effort in keeping parents informed about student progress by sending home reports and setting up Infinite Campus accounts so families can view their child’s progress. Our Family Resource Center provides assistance to families and breaks down barriers to learning.

Parents are encouraged be partners in the life of the school. Our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) coordinates volunteer opportunities throughout the year, ranging from decorating for an event up to assembling our yearbook. Parents also serve on our Site Based Decision Making Council and Family

Resource Center Advisory Council. They provide input about school budgets and planning and give voice in the decision making process. Parent coaches organize our primary grade intramural football, basketball, and dance/cheer teams.

At PES we schedule events year-round that bring families in. We want them to know that they are welcome and instrumental to what we do. In addition to sports events and academic meets we also have the Back to School Bash, Fall Festival, Open House, Grandparent's Day, Veteran's Luncheon, Christmas Play, Field Day, Reading Night, Math Night, Evening Book Fair, and Living Wax Museum.

Community partners are essential for success. Our long standing relationship with Morehead State University allows many university students to enter our doors to do observations, complete experience hours, or be student teachers. We put them to work with our students, so it is mutually beneficial. Big Sandy Community and Technical College (two blocks away) provides us with space when needed (PES students were housed in one of their campus buildings during our renovation), and frequently organizes events our students attend. The County Extension Office and Johnson County Library provide learning/enrichment opportunities throughout the year. The local police and fire departments give us daily assistance during arrival/dismissal and are key partners in safety planning. Rotary Club, Kiwanis, and the local Masonic Lodge also provide our students and classrooms with needed resources. The Big Sandy Area Development Council even pays the salary of two employees in their senior citizen project to serve as part-time aides in our first grade classrooms.

3. Professional Development:

At Paintsville Elementary professional development is about increasing student achievement. Improving our craft as educators improves our effectiveness with students. Our teachers (and paraprofessionals/aides) complete an annual minimum of 24 hours of professional development.

Planning for professional development begins with analyzing a variety of student data to determine the needs of our students. We set goals for improvement and determine strategies that will help us achieve those goals (which includes professional development). Some professional development is organized at the district level as part of district initiatives, or state/local requirements. For example, district teachers engaged this year in professional development focused on creating higher levels of student engagement. This was determined to be a district-wide student need through our analysis of data from AdvancEd visits and our own walk-through data.

Although our teachers participate in district driven professional development, most p.d. comes from the school level and its needs. At PES we focus on job-embedded professional development, such as our Professional Learning Communities. We also utilize consultants from the Kentucky Department of Education, the KY Association of School Councils, and the two educational cooperatives our district is a member of to provide in-class consultation with teachers, after school p.d., or planning-period trainings on a variety of topics. Our teachers also have access to online professional learning programs.

Even though professional development funds are becoming more and more limited we know there are times when funds must be used to provide teachers with learning opportunities outside our district. We have teachers travel to observe in other schools and classrooms, and multiple teachers go to nearby educational cooperatives as members of professional learning networks.

To maximize our in-house talent we also have teachers facilitate professional learning opportunities for other faculty members. A frequent strategy we employ is to have an individual or small group attend an out of district professional development and then lead a learning session on that topic once they return. Recent examples include growth mindset, the Ron Clark Academy (for student engagement), writing academy, and the Kentucky Reading Project.

4. School Leadership:

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” This quote by Helen Keller describes the leadership philosophy at Paintsville Elementary. Our school’s leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, Director of Student Success, Site-Based Decision Making Council, and Instructional Leadership Team. The leadership roles available show that while the principal is the primary leader, leadership is a shared responsibility. Our belief is that we all work together to benefit students. At PES, every voice counts...every opinion matters.

The principal has a strong commitment to ensuring that students achieve at high levels. She seeks input from the Site Based Decision Making council (made of elected teacher and parent representatives) and an Instructional Leadership team. Faculty members from each grade level/content area are represented during Instructional Team meetings. In order to include more opportunities for leadership, the instructional leadership team membership changes quarterly. During meetings teachers collaborate with the principal to provide input, ask questions, and have brainstorming sessions, enabling us to improve instructional quality and better use available resources. The principal meets weekly with the Superintendent and other district leaders to foster an environment of “team” and relationship building opportunities.

Our assistant principal is assigned most of the day as Headstart Director, but takes the role associated with assisting the principal very seriously. He deals extensively with behavior issues, particularly with males. He is an exceptional role model to troubled students, and spends a great deal of time mentoring them. He assists with morning arrival, welcoming families as they drop off children. He also assists in afternoon pick-ups. He is a positive presence and has built wonderful relationships with students, teachers, parents, and community members.

Three years ago, our district created the Director of Student Success position. Our district exhibited its dedication to student achievement, by providing this opportunity for student success to be a focus and priority. The director spends half of her time at PES, and half at the middle school/high school. She oversees MAP testing, works with the principal/teachers to facilitate testing windows, analyzes scores, and structures appropriate Response to Instruction opportunities.

With the creation of Site Based Decision Making Councils in the 1990’s, our school developed policies and procedures to ensure that curriculum and instruction are the highest quality. For over 30 years, we have remained an excellent example of how SBDM leadership can greatly affect high standards and quality education.

The PES Leadership team has one predominate goal: for all students to achieve at high levels. Our dedication to making sure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in leadership roles exemplifies the qualities of a Blue Ribbon School. When we all work together, opportunities for success are boundless.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

“Surround yourself with those on the same mission as you.” This anonymous quote sums up the practice that has been the most instrumental to the success of Paintsville Elementary in recent years. When you visit you will even see this quote displayed on banners throughout the building. These are words we live by at PES!

In late summer 2014, in the closing stages of an 18 month renovation/expansion that forced multiple grades to be housed elsewhere, we had a principal resignation. Our school community was faced with selecting a new leader, preparing the building to reopen, and shaping the existing, returning, and new staff into a cohesive unit.

This challenge turned into an opportunity for improvement. The steps we went through that summer as a faculty/staff created long-term processes we still utilize. Despite not having a new principal named until July, moving furniture/equipment/books back into the building from other locations, final steps of the renovation/expansion, creating schedules, and all the other “must-do” things, we knew the most important thing we could do was to build cohesiveness/common purpose as a faculty/staff.

Once our principal was selected she immediately began meeting with all faculty members, both individually and in groups. We looked at school data, discussed things we did well, what we needed to improve on, and what we felt should be the goals of our school (both short and long-term). Input given at those meetings was used to create our first faculty goal, as well as steps we would take to complete it. While some may consider this process a waste of time, this did positive things for us including: setting the tone for communication/relationship building, providing direction, giving a clearly defined focus, and providing motivation and a sense of purpose.

For the 2014-2015 our goal was to become a proficient school, and not only improve overall instruction, but also have a particular focus on improving mathematics. Our decision-making was based on that goal and it gave us a rally point as a faculty/staff. We accomplished that goal, and have used that same process each year to set the next goal that we work on...together!

An added benefit to this goal setting is by working diligently to accomplish it we can actually go “above and beyond” the goal. For the 2016-2017 school year our goal was to repeat our School of Distinction status, and have a focus on improving student proficiency in language mechanics. We also set a long-term goal (within 3 years) to become a National Blue Ribbon School, but felt we would have to address other areas prior to that to accomplish our goal. We were pleasantly surprised to be nominated earlier than we anticipated, but feel our common goal setting has led us to success. Continued goal setting will lead us (and more importantly our students) to success in the future as well.