

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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	6	6	12
K	63	66	129
1	72	72	144
2	77	66	143
3	84	67	151
4	62	69	131
5	69	58	127
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	433	404	837

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 12 % Black or African American
 - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 75 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 5%

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	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	28
(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, 2016	738
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

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

African, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Lunda, Polish, Spanish, Tamil, Tagalog, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 11%
Total number students who qualify: 88

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
135 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>11</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>17</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>89</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 9
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	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	39
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	20
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 22:1

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	97%	96%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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.

Donelson Elementary is committed to providing a strong educational foundation, encouraging all students to become productive citizens, and exploring the needs of an advancing 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

Donelson Elementary School (DES) is proud to be a part of the small town of Arlington, Tennessee. In 1900, with a population of approximately 600, the town of Arlington was incorporated and served as a railroad town. Today, Arlington has a population of more than 12,000. With its small-town charm, Arlington has managed to reach all parts of the globe with its many international businesses. The town can boast the following designations: Best City in Tennessee to Raise a Family, Best City for Young Families in Tennessee, Most Affordable Places in Tennessee, and Best City for Homeownership in Tennessee.

Donelson Elementary, a K-5 school, opened its door in Arlington in 2009 to alleviate overcrowding at Arlington and Lakeland Elementary schools. A unique history, Donelson was once part of Shelby County Schools (SCS). In December 2010, Memphis City Schools forfeited its charter and later merged with the SCS, paving the way for one consolidated system with more than 200 schools. By the fall of 2013, Donelson Elementary was directed by the leadership of the newly merged Shelby County Schools.

However, change was again on the horizon. Following the merger, citizens in the outlying municipalities, including Arlington, fought for local control of their school districts. Following a town-wide vote, Arlington succeeded in forming its own school district, and in August of 2014, Arlington Community Schools (ACS) began - incorporating Donelson Elementary with it.

ACS allows families living outside of Arlington and the school zone to apply as non-residents. Every year since the opening of our district, the number of students who choose to join Donelson Elementary continues to increase. This school year, 195 of our 837 students live outside the district. Due to rezoning, many students have also transferred from Arlington Elementary to Donelson. While there have been significant changes, our new families have quickly acclimated to the established culture.

In its short existence, Donelson has quickly earned a positive reputation in the community. The faculty and staff work tirelessly while focusing on each student's individual needs. We believe that every child deserves the best possible education, so our teachers push them daily to achieve their maximum academic potential. At Donelson, we strive to go beyond just test scores. We believe in educating children as a whole, so we offer many before and after school and summer activities to include: Mad Scientist, drama, chess, art, sign language, Buddy Bootcamp, coding, World Travelers, running, Scrabble, Lego Robotics, and STEM. Tutoring is also available for all grades.

Donelson Elementary exemplifies its motto: Dedicated to Excellence for Students. We have a pattern of academic excellence and have been the recipient of many recognitions. Every year since 2009, DES has achieved straight A's on the State Report Card. In years 2014-2016, DES earned the distinction of being a Tennessee Reward School for student achievement. Additionally, our principal earned the 2014 West Tennessee Value-Added Achievement Award from the Educator Consumers Foundation and was voted District Principal of the Year by peers and district-level administrators in 2016. Other accomplishments include: the 2015 third best public school in the Memphis-Metro Area awarded by Niche Ratings, an A+ School in Elementary Math as named by the Memphis Business Journal, and the third best out of all 647 elementary schools in the state of Tennessee by schooldigger.com. We look forward to adding additional noteworthy distinctions as we continue to strive for excellence.

Donelson Elementary School consists of teachers, students, administrators, staff, parents, and community members who are driven to see our school succeed. Each year since inception, DES has reached more than 100 percent of its annual PTA membership goal, signifying that parental involvement is an integral part of our success. Donelson's excellence is also exemplified by the involvement of our community partners, through the support of their time, expertise, and donations. For example, a local non-profit organization has adopted our school by giving several monetary donations to various projects and established an after-school program for our students. Several local businesses have also created "Donelson Night," where a portion of proceeds are given to DES.

Our classrooms and clubs also give back to the community through various grade-level service projects,

such as local park cleanups, care packages for local fire fighters and emergency responders, and chess matches with local seniors from the Senior Citizen Center.

It is evident that Donelson Elementary School has established a legacy of distinction in its only nine years of existence. As we continue to increase our prominence among other outstanding schools, Donelson Elementary will be truly Dedicated to Excellence for Students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Donelson Elementary offers a comprehensive K-5 curriculum, which focuses on building a solid foundation in reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The curriculum is research-based and rigorously aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards. Our teachers work collaboratively with the district to develop pacing guides, which are designed to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment and serve as a framework for the core content that is taught in each grade. Each grade level team meets weekly and works together to plan for instruction and share best practices.

Each grade level has an established literacy block, which is concentrated on developing foundational skills in order for students to become successful readers and writers. Teachers provide instruction through a balanced literacy approach of modeled, shared, guided and independent reading and writing experiences. In the early grades, instruction follows a research-based scope and sequence of phonics skills development through explicit instruction and application of skills in the context of text. Beginning in Kindergarten, students are introduced to the 42 sounds of the English language through a multi-sensory approach using the Jolly Phonics curriculum. K-1 teachers also utilize the Michael Heggerty program, which employs a systematic, auditory training process that guides students through isolating, manipulating, blending and segmenting sounds into spoken and written words. K-1 teachers have also created and implemented text set units which are typically aligned to our science or social studies standards. The focus of the text set is to build content knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension skills using rich, authentic text.

In grades 2-5 DES uses the Ready Reading curriculum, which engages students in close reading of complex, authentic text from a wide range of genres while supporting students with a proven-effective, gradual-release instructional model. Texts are approached at a deeper level and teachers utilize think aloud strategies and a variety of question types in prompting students to respond to text in multiple ways and cite text-based evidence. Teachers also utilize novel studies to strengthen reading comprehension and vocabulary.

Writing is integrated throughout the day across all content areas. Teachers also utilize a comprehensive, writing curriculum that supports the traits of writing. K-1 students are engaged in meaningful and enjoyable writing activities that challenge them. In grades 2-5, teachers provide guided writing instruction focused on the different genres of writing. Through this instruction, students are provided with the tools to incorporate descriptive writing and powerful word choice in a structured format. Students also are provided the opportunity every year to hear from published authors who share about their craft and inspire our student authors.

During the daily math block, students are provided with a variety of engaging and hands-on activities to develop not only procedural skills but also conceptual understanding of mathematics. We selected our Ready Math curriculum because it promotes mathematical practices, reasoning, and discourse and encourages students to think about math at a much deeper level. Students are continuously prompted to explain their thinking with increasingly challenging problems that require greater levels of higher-order thinking. Students are also exposed to a variety of strategies, which helps to better equip their toolbox as mathematical thinkers.

In social studies, the focus is on developing a foundation of understanding of culture, economics, geography, history, government and civics. The curriculum is supported by a variety of resources including text set/novel studies, primary sources, web-based media, and Studies Weekly publications, which all integrate a variety of literacy and writing activities. Students are often engaged in simulated learning experiences such as first graders experiencing the role of a city planner and fourth graders learning about the missing Roanoke colony by reviewing documents and conducting an investigation as members of a cold case detective unit.

In science, students are engaged in inquiry-based learning experiences that teach them about the world around them during studies of life, physical, earth and space sciences and engineering. Students experience

first-hand ways in which the world works through activities such as Kindergarteners creating oobleck to learn more about the properties of matter, first graders observing and journaling about caterpillars throughout their life cycle, and second graders participating in STEM Olympic challenges. In grades 3-5, students continue to explore the scientific world through an adaptation challenge where students compete for a habitat's resources, and experiments with potential and kinetic energy where students use their iPads to make slow motion videos to determine how high balls dropped from different heights bounce.

Our school also houses a preschool program for special needs students. Our program is a language-based program that also incorporates basic math skills. Even though many of these students are developmentally delayed, the preschool teachers work very closely with the kindergarten teachers to align the curriculum to give our students the best opportunity to be successful in a kindergarten class. In addition, students who turn five years old during the school year visit the kindergarten classroom to gain social skills as well as to assist with transition into kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Donelson Elementary School believes art, music, library, guidance, and physical education classes are an important component of curriculum in developing the whole child. Our Pre-K through 5th Grade students receive 45 minutes of each course as stated above every week with the exception of library and guidance which is 45 minutes every other week. For many of our children, it's their favorite part of their day! In addition to these classes, DES and Arlington Community Schools strive to incorporate technology into the classroom as often as possible.

Referred to as specialists, these concentrated educators consistently find ways to incorporate grade-level standards into their lessons by obtaining weekly newsletters from the general education teachers. For example, while performing jumping jacks in P.E., the students will practice spelling words for the week. In art, the specialist will read a book used in English class to enhance both the art project and the reading curriculum. Alternatively, specialists also meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss what they are doing in their classrooms and how they can incorporate that into general curriculum.

Donelson's art curriculum focuses on two key components: technique and art history. The art specialists guide the students to develop their creativity through various mediums, such as paint, pastels, and clay. When complete, students' artwork is displayed throughout the school, and select pieces are chosen to be framed – creating a competitive desire to work hard and exert effort in the classroom. At the end of every year, a program is held to unveil the top-tiered “masterpieces” for all students and parents to view. Students are also invited to join the Art Club in the after-school and summer programs.

Creativity vividly expands beyond the art room in Music, where the lively classes are filled with singing and dancing children. Here, music teachers focus on two components: vocal and instrumental music. Using the Orff Approach, instruments and vocal performances are learned to combine music, movement, drama and speech into lessons. Students then have the ability to take those performances to a live stage. Past performances include the Memphis Redbirds baseball game, the NBA Memphis Grizzlies game, and other various community and local events. Additionally, every student at Donelson performs in a musical production geared towards our Parent-Teacher Association. First through fifth grade students also have the opportunity to join our after-school chorus program.

In P.E., the focus is promoting and maintaining healthy lifestyles while following the Tennessee standards. Our specialists teach students games and skills that can be used throughout life. The instructors are also actively involved in the community and invite special guests to help drive home the lessons. For example, a local Karate instructor was brought into Donelson to teach students self-defense skills appropriate for their age. Furthermore, our students participate in the annual Jump Rope for Heart event. Donelson is also very proud that our P.E. teachers spearhead the committee for our Coordinated School Health program.

When it comes to guidance, our counselor is the heart of the school. An educator for more than 40 years, she continues to show passion for our students. She works tirelessly with classroom guidance classes, role-playing with small groups of students, and conducting and counseling with individual students. She also

gives school tours to prospective families and facilitates parent classes.

Donelson believes reading should be at the core of every students' learning, and our librarian works diligently to make that a reality. She chairs our Accelerated Reader Program (AR), an outlet where students can earn reward points to purchase prizes in the AR Store. She invites people from the community to read to our children, including locally and regionally-known authors, who in turn make signed copies of their books available to the students. Through collaborative efforts, our librarian is always finding ways to make reading fun and valuable.

Technology is an invaluable learning tool used every day at Donelson. Our teachers are instructed and encouraged to integrate technology into everyday learning. Fifth grade students through high school students in Arlington Community Schools each receive their own iPad to utilize in class and at home. We also have iPad carts and laptop carts that are utilized daily in the other grades. We also have two state-of-the-art computer labs where special projects and learning takes place. Furthermore, every classroom is equipped with an interactive smart board that teachers use daily for instruction and guided practice with students. Our Computer Technology Teacher is on campus at least two days per week to work with teachers on how they can better utilize technology and applications in the classroom and with curriculum.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

At Donelson, we know that Tier 1 instruction is of utmost importance as it is our first chance to make sure that every student understands the skills. Our faculty has spent countless hours studying Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to integrate rigor into our classrooms. We put great emphasis on modeling concepts and using "think aloud" strategies for students to understand every standard that is taught. We demand higher-level questioning and problem-solving methods in every lesson to ensure that our students understand the concepts presented before them. Our expectation is to integrate higher level DOK questions into every lesson.

While our goal is to reach every child through rigorous Tier 1 teaching, we also know that is not entirely realistic. We believe that every student at Donelson is different and deserves the education specifically designed for their needs and learning behaviors. We use a universal screening test (AimsWeb Plus) three times throughout the school year to measure students' individual skills. The Case achievement test is administered twice each year to measure state standards. These results, as well as formative assessments, offer a holistic and accurate picture of the students academically.

Our Response to Intervention (RTI) team, which consists of the principal, school psychologist, interventionist, district RTI specialist, and grade-level teachers, meet every month to discuss the student's progress. We develop a specific plan for each student who falls into Tier II or Tier III or has deficits according to the results from AimsWeb Plus. The interventionist and classroom teacher work in tandem to assist the student with gaining the needed skills and monitor progress to see if the student is meeting goals. At the subsequent RTI meeting, progress, or lack thereof, is reviewed to determine what type of intervention is further needed – be it a different method or integration back into a routine schedule. If several interventions with our Tier III students are tried yet unsuccessful over the course of 12 weeks, the student is referred for psychological testing to determine if a learning disability is present; if one is found, an Individual Education Program (IEP) is written for the student and the student is assigned a special education teacher to help the student grow in his or her learning.

In reviewing last year's scores, we determined three subgroups fell below the achievement score, creating a 10 percent or more gap: 106 African American/Hispanic/Native American students, 70 economically disadvantaged students, and 32 students with disabilities. However, many of the students who fell below the threshold are categorized in all three subgroups. Nevertheless, our focus this year remains committed to improving the test scores in each of those subgroups. Our teachers determined which students needed improvement and carefully examined their data to determine the best course of action for each student. Now in place is a protected, dedicated time daily – consisting of 45 minutes of reading and 30 minutes of math – where each student works at his or her ability level. During this time, some students leave the classroom to work with the special education teacher, gifted teacher or interventionist, while others remain in the

classroom and work on the identified area of needs with the teacher.

Overall, Donelson is a high-performing school, according to the state of Tennessee and several publications. School Digger – an online publication that analyzes test scores, rankings, and other metrics – named Donelson the third top school in the state of Tennessee using our Average Standard Score. We have also scored an “A” on the state report card for nine years in a row, a feat considering Donelson has only been open for nine years. Our challenge is to always have high expectations in our Tier I teaching, while moving our Tier II and Tier III students forward. We will strive to meet our students’ needs, regardless of their starting point, to move towards grade-level expectations and beyond.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Donelson Elementary has a school climate of excellence. All staff members and students know that nothing else is acceptable. Administrators, teachers, and students all work collaboratively to maintain the positive climate. Students are truly the center of our school. We have a team of Student Ambassadors who are chosen through a rigorous process to be the leaders of the school. Responsibilities of our Student Ambassadors include greeting visitors, conducting hallway patrols, and sharing ideas about school improvement with the guidance counselor.

Our children are enthusiastic about our Students of the Month program. Every homeroom teacher selects a student based on behavior, attitude, attendance, and work ethic. These students' names are announced school-wide, and they receive a ribbon and certificate. Their names are also placed on a bulletin board for all students and parents to view. The students are mesmerized at the final part of this program: lunch with the principal. One student from each grade-class is selected to have lunch with our principal, a time where they can talk about their favorite parts of school and ideas they may have for change. The student's parent also receives a picture and positive message about their child. We have had an overwhelming positive response from the parents about this program.

Donelson works to provide a strong and positive teacher community. A school morale committee has been created to help build morale of all school employees. Throughout the school year, teachers willingly bring food treats for other grade levels to share. Birthday cakes are provided for teachers by our PTA, as well as lunch and/or dinner for special events. The Sunshine Committee works to provide gifts to school employees who have a special need in their personal lives, such as a sick family member. The Spotlight on Staff committee recognizes employees for their positive attributes by displaying their headshots in the teacher's lounge along with positive notes from their colleagues. The school principal also helps boost morale by lending advice and tips during difficult situations and praising teachers individually when they do an exceptional job.

Finally, every year the entire staff votes on Teacher of the Year, New Teacher of the Year, and Classified Person of the Year. These individuals are recognized for their hard work with a plaque that is presented during a school-wide assembly. A perpetual plaque is also hung in the main hallway for all to admire. We believe that it is important for our students to see adults as well as students being rewarded for hard work.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Donelson and the Arlington community continuously work together to ensure that our students are provided with support to be successful. In an effort to encourage parental involvement, our principal plans at least one event per month to invite the parents and community members into the school. A Math and Literacy Family Night is held yearly to engage families in various math and literacy activities that can also be completed in the home. Not only does this event help promote math and literacy achievement, it also encourages positive relationships between families and school personnel. Our school counselor holds workshops for parents that assist strategies to help with discipline in the home. Title 1 parent meetings are also held for our interventionists to provide families with resources and information. Another event is our Kindergarten Meet and Greet Night to welcome incoming kindergarten students and answer any questions our parents (or jittery students) may have.

Due to our change in demographics because of rezoning, the principal scheduled a Meet and Greet for new students to Donelson in grades 1-5. Parents and students were able to tour the school and ask administrators and teachers questions. Fifth grade parents were also invited to learn strategies for helping their children with the iPad technology. Other events include bi-monthly PTA meetings, musical productions, and our Watch Dog program – a way for dads to get involved in the school and set an example for our students as male role models.

Our students also participate in community events such as singing at Arlington in April or playing chess with members of the local Senior Citizen Center. We invite the community to be a part of Donelson. We have grandmothers who make copies weekly for the entire school or tutor students. In addition, we invite community members into the school to read to our students. We also partner with the University of Memphis to house year-long student teachers every year so that we receive some extra assistance for our students as well as help the university prepare excellent teachers. Traditionally, we are able to hire some of the teachers who have student taught in our school.

We believe parents play a critical role in the success of our students, so we provide several avenues for parents to stay up-to-date on their child's progress. Besides regular progress reports and report cards, parents can also view grading and curriculum information online, in weekly packets, weekly newsletters, teacher websites and in-person meetings. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are also utilized by the district, school, and individual grade levels to share student pictures, projects, and accomplishments.

3. Professional Development:

This year, the district's theme for professional development is "Redefining Teaching and Learning," which encourages and expects teachers to find new, hands-on ways to guide students and curriculum.

Donelson teachers and administrators participate in a variety of professional development sessions through the year. School administration spends one day each year in professional development focused on services for students, new instructional initiatives, legal counsel, and finance. These activities help prepare administrators for the expectation of the upcoming school year.

Yearly, new teachers meet with district personnel to learn the ins and outs of the town of Arlington and the district. Known as the district's "on boarding process," teachers learn about human resources, student services, and best teaching practices. Teachers also learn how to prepare for their first days and first year at Arlington Community Schools.

Administrators and teachers review student test data each year to determine which areas need strengthening, and administration also reviews teacher evaluation data to determine needs. The School Leadership Team meets in the summer to discuss plans for the year and develop a teacher survey to ascertain their requests for professional development. The plan is then shared on the first day of In-Service week prior to the students' return.

Routinely, we collaborate with our sister elementary school by using the "train the trainer" model. These teacher trainers will present best practices learned at the national summer conferences to both elementary schools.

Our teachers also meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities to address four guiding questions:

1. What do we want our student to know/be able to do?
2. How will we know when they've learned it?
3. What we will do if they do not understand it?
4. What will we do if they already know it?

^[1]_{SEP}The Donelson administration has spent several years molding an effective PLC routine. Due to the collaborative guidance, teachers now engage in PLCs independently as grade-level teams. Formative assessments and benchmark tests are analyzed to guide future instruction. Administrators are asked to assist when teachers encounter problems that need in-depth solving.

Technology has been one of Donelson's main priorities when it comes to professional development. Due to the purchase of new devices, it was incumbent on us to provide many training opportunities from Apple so that our teachers and students could reap the benefits. All of our teachers and administrators are working towards becoming Apple Certified Teachers. The company will also provide in-person coaching sessions with our classroom teachers and Leadership team.

4. School Leadership:

Donelson administration strives to promote servant leadership in all daily aspects of school life, while always putting students first. Donelson's administrators display this philosophy through their willingness to do whatever it takes to help Donelson succeed, whether it be working in the cafeteria line, taking out the trash, or helping a sick child.

Donelson's administrative team includes a principal and two assistant principals, who have a combined total of more than 60 years in public education. This administrative team knows they cannot develop a culture of collegiality without exceptional teachers and parents. Therefore, a strong Instructional Leadership Council (ILC) was established, consisting of administrators, a teacher leader from each grade level and specialty area, and a parent. The council meets at least quarterly to discuss celebrations, state and district mandates, and ways to improve instruction and procedures. These leaders invest in the lives of others around them, and their actions display a commitment to the school's vision, values, and policies. Many times, ideas are presented to the ILC and later positively promoted to staff members throughout the school.

Donelson also has an enthusiastic PTA board of parents, who meet with the principal monthly to create a sense of togetherness and common purpose among school families. Events, such as Pastries for Parents and WatchDog Dads, are planned for students and families by this board. These parents also go above and beyond and are a vital part of our school environment and culture. Daily, you will see a group of parents working to help make Donelson better for students.

Teachers at Donelson help create a nurturing environment through their leadership roles. Teachers show empathy for students and help build a strong school community focused on the school vision. We also have a group of teachers, known as Teacher Leaders, who guide and mentor other teachers and provide positive team building activities for the staff. We have two trained Instructional Support Coaches and a TEAM Facilitator who are vital to helping new teachers in the building or those that need extra assistance. A PLC Coach is also trained to help our PLC meetings to flow smoothly.

Donelson has also created a culture that encourages student leadership. Roles for students include Junior Beta Club tutors, completing grade level service projects in the community, reading to younger students, and being Student Ambassadors, who are selected based on work ethic and conduct. These ambassadors serve as leaders in the building through assisting visitors, helping students during arrival, and meeting with our school counselor to provide new ideas. Donelson strives to show servant leadership in all areas of the school.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Our school truly believes that every child deserves the best possible teacher. If the child has an effective teacher, academics, assessment, and socio-emotional needs will all be addressed.

Therefore, we believe the one strategy that has made such a difference with our student achievement is molding all our teachers to be “Rock Stars.” While all our teachers have talents, one may be talented in instruction and another be skilled in building relationships with students. Each teacher has strengths and weaknesses, so our administration is consistently observing teachers to determine which talents exist and how we can provide support for our limitations.

This support is provided in many different ways. One method is through national conferences. After reviewing evaluation data, select teachers attend seminars and later train other staff members on what they’ve learned. We train a TEAM Facilitator to observe teachers’ lessons and share with them areas of strength and areas that need improvement. We also have two Instructional Support Coaches who work with our first-year teachers, new teachers to Donelson and other teachers who need additional support to assist them in acclimating to our instructional climate.

Additionally, we offer peer-to-peer learning. We engage in Integrated Teaching, which is a multi-faceted system where a grade level collectively plans a lesson, another teaches the lesson, and other group members observe the lesson. The group then debriefs and offers advice as to how to improve the lesson. Furthermore, teachers are also paired across grade levels where one teacher observes the other teacher teaching a lesson and then completes a form where the observer indicates two strategies that are areas of strength and two items that are suggestions to make the lesson even better. The observer places the form in the teacher’s mailbox after the lesson, and the teacher reflects on the comments. This spurs conversations about improvement from both teachers as many times the observing teacher learns a new strategy as well.

Finally, we identify teachers that have expertise in certain subject areas and allow them to lead professional development sessions. For instance, one teacher at Donelson is highly skilled with disaggregating data and recently trained others in this area. Donelson is consistently encouraging and looking for teachers to lead professional development sessions, something we believe has led to a ripple effect of excellence and engagement. Our teacher commitment shows that Donelson Elementary is truly Dedicated to Excellence for Students.