

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Vickie Arrowood Smith

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

Official School Name Union Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 180 Union School Road, NW

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

Shallotte NC 28470-4002
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Brunswick

Telephone (910) 579-3591

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Web site/URL https://www.bcswan.net/UES

E-mail vsmith@bcswan.net

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*Dr. Jerry Oates

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail joints@bcswan.net

District Name Brunswick County Schools District Tel. (910) 253-2900

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 Mrs. Catherine Cooke

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 19 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	45	50	95
1	49	47	96
2	46	55	101
3	53	47	100
4	44	52	96
5	56	50	106
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	293	301	594

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 18 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 65 % White
 - 5 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 16%

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

The socioeconomic status of our families has declined over the past 10 years. This decline has led to an increase in student mobility as parents move to find work, or live with relatives. Our migrant population has increased as families move here for seasonal work at one of our local farms.

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	52
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	41
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	93
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	583
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.16
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11%
65 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese, Filipino, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 62%
Total number students who qualify: 369

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
71 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>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>9</u> Developmental Delay | <u>29</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>4</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: 10
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.	30
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.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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 20:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	95%	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 2018.

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.

Union Elementary will teach the hearts and minds of all children through character education and rigorous academics to make them successful in a global 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

Welcome to Union Elementary, "Home of the Dolphins". Friendly faces greet every student in the car rider line or bus parking lot to wish them a great day or safe travels home. There is no mistaking the family atmosphere in our school! We encourage school pride by joining with our PTO and purchasing every student and staff member a school shirt each year to wear on Fridays for Dolphin Pride Day. This year, our school shirt displays a bright yellow sunshine that is made of words that describe our school. It creates a positive atmosphere where students feel safe and happy and know that no matter what is going on in the rest of the world, "The Sun is Always Shining at Union"! Union serves over 600 students in grades K-5 from the Shallotte and Ocean Isle Beach communities. We are nestled in the rural town of Shallotte, 45 miles south Wilmington, N.C. and 30 miles north of Myrtle Beach S.C. The tourism industry is alive and well as families gravitate to our beautiful beaches and waterfront communities. Area neighborhoods range from golf and beach retirement communities to neighborhoods, subdivisions and mobile home parks where most of the residents with school-age children reside.

Union Elementary, formerly known as Union High School, was built in 1950 and was the high school for African-American students during that time. Since then, it has been Union Primary and is now Union Elementary. Our campus has gradually added wings and buildings over the years to accommodate growth. The 3rd/4th grade wing is the only building remaining from the 1950 original campus. There is a lot of community pride in our school that dates back to the 1950s as many of our current parents and grandparents attended Union as a child.

Union's student body has become more diversified in the past three years. The once predominantly White subgroup has decreased from 73% to 65%, while our Hispanic population increased from 16% to 18%. Our African-American population remains at 9% while our Asian, Multi-Racial and American Indian populations are each less than 1%. Our English Language Learners (ELL) population has risen from 9% to 11%, while our Exceptional Children (EC) population increased from 8% to 12%. Our free and reduced lunch percentage increased from 47% to 62% currently. One of the biggest challenges at Union has become the transiency of our students, who are constantly enrolling and withdrawing. Our socio-economic status has dropped drastically. We now have more students living in poverty, with grandparents, or with multiple families living together. Our school utilizes our parent facilitator position to coordinate resources through the churches and community organizations for our children such as weekly backpacks of food, clothing, school supplies, and meals for holidays and gifts at Christmas. We also coordinate tutoring and support services for needy students and their families.

Our Individual Student Team (IST) meets two hours or more each week to discuss ways to help students academically and behaviorally. Students are referred by their teachers after initial documentation is recorded on an At Risk Plan. Data from formative and summative assessments, classroom observations, anecdotal records, and classroom work is used and interventions are planned and implemented. Our IST team consists of the teacher, parent, counselor, administration, and an EC teacher. We utilize our behavior specialist to assist and support students with behavioral concerns once data is collected from Educator's Handbook for discipline referrals.

To aid our students in their emotional and social development, it is first important to establish clear expectations and to communicate those expectations to all stakeholders: our students, our staff, and our parents. This starts with positive morale. Our staff is welcomed back to school each year with a nice breakfast at a local restaurant on the water. After a week of preparation and professional development, our families receive a similar warm welcome from their new teachers at our Back to School Night. Families are encouraged to join Class Dojo, a communication tool that allows teachers and parents to connect from day one, promoting a positive school relationship. Class Dojo gives parents a peek into what is happening in their child's classroom, as teachers post messages, positive school events, and points for positive behavior choices. Students can even post in their portfolios to give parents a glimpse of what they are learning in school.

Our school has been recognized as a PBIS Green Ribbon School for our implementation of our Positive

Behavior Intervention and Support program and this year we were recognized as a Model School. Our students understand the school's expectations for being respectful, responsible, and safe in every location of our school campus as well as the bus. This helps to promote a school wide culture of safety and promotes a learning environment allowing all students to thrive.

We strive to educate the hearts and minds of our students. Our students receive excellent instruction by our highly qualified staff in academics, as well as the arts. Dolphin pride is evident as you tour our school, talk with students and staff, and observe in classrooms. In each classroom, high quality instruction is occurring, reflected in our state test scores, in the voices of our chorus as it sings, and in the artwork and work samples displayed in our hallways. Each week teachers plan core instruction and common assessments based on data analyzed in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This ensures a high quality education for our kids!

Although our demographics have changed, we continue to challenge our students through rigorous instruction and maintain high student achievement. Union, a Title 1 Distinguished School Nominee in 2011, a Distinguished school winner in 2017, and a nominee again in 2018, has been recognized in the past as a School of Distinction and an Honor School of Excellence. For the past 4 years, we have been named a Title 1 Reward School for high sustained student achievement. Over the past six years, our school has consistently performed well on the NC EOG test. Our reading proficiency remained at 73.3% in 2013 but increased this past year to 80.3%, while math proficiency has grown from 67% to 91.5%. Science has increased from 81% to 92.3%. Overall, our achievement score increased from 78% to 86.8%, while our overall growth index has exceeded growth for the past six years. Our school performance grade is an A.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Embracing a balanced literacy approach based upon the NC Standard Course of Study, our teachers plan challenging, standards-based lessons. Our teachers are trained in Reading Research to Classroom Practice, which enables them to meet the various needs of our students. They utilize data from mClass assessments and NC Check-ins to note students' instructional levels in order to form small ability-based groups. Our teachers utilize Jan Richardson's Guided Reading Model in grades K-4. In grades K-3, students are learning to read with the five basic components of reading including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Leveled readers are the main source for guided reading. Teachers are able to analyze reading behaviors as they listen to students read individually and take anecdotal notes. Through differentiation, they vary the content (leveled readers or various texts,) the process (strategies for reading and comprehending,) and the product (written response). Our teachers create literacy centers which include word work, writing, and technology. By utilizing technology based programs such as Letterland, Moby Max, and RAZ Kids, students practice literacy based activities in English and in Spanish. These stations help students with phoneme segmentation, nonsense word fluency, fluency, and comprehension. Students in grades 4 and 5 are reading to learn with a focus on different genres, comprehension skills, and higher order thinking processes relating to more complex texts. Chapter books, Storyworks, Flocabulary, Readworks, Read Theory, EPIC!, and CommonLit are some of the resources or websites helping our older students with their acquisition of vocabulary and comprehension proficiency. Read aloud is an important time for students to hear quality literature being read fluently.

We also utilize the Empowering Writers Framework to provide students with the tools to express themselves in written form, share their opinions with valid reasons, and provide a written response to text. Teacher modeling is important in writing. Using mentor texts, students strive to emulate the writing of famous authors. Our students write across the curriculum in all grade levels daily, as is evident in the writing samples on the hallway walls, interactive journals, and collaborative projects in Google Classroom. In addition to differentiation in the classroom, research-based interventions are provided to students who have areas of concern with their reading skills. These interventions are discussed during Individual Student Team (IST) meetings with the teacher, parents, instructional coach and administration, and implemented by the teacher.

1b. Mathematics:

Professional Development in Math Foundations has proven to be essential in raising our math scores and helping students grow in their math skills. Math foundations was designed to develop teachers' mathematical content knowledge and ability to deliver a coherent mathematical message through instruction. It is crucial that all teachers use the same academic vocabulary that is in our mathematical standards. Math has a language that we should all use consistently from kindergarten through fifth grade. Our students need time to engage in hands-on learning, going from concrete to abstract concepts, depending on the readiness of the students. Through guided groups, the teacher is able to analyze the students' ability to solve complex word problems. Math automaticity is encouraged in each grade level. Xtramath.org is used in grades 2 - 5 to ensure that our students know math facts, as well as the processes to solve problems.

During PLCs, our teachers collaboratively plan rigorous, engaging lessons by utilizing the standards, data from the K-2 math assessment, historical EOG data, common formative assessments, data from NC Check Ins, Mentoring Minds resources, and other resources from the NCDPI (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction) website. Our teachers use a similar approach for small groups in math as they do in reading.

Students in K-5 are ability grouped for math daily. Teachers lead guided math groups where a new concept is taught or retaught at the teacher table. This enables teachers to identify student misconceptions and give immediate corrective feedback as well as challenge students to develop their higher order thinking skills.

Teachers use a variety of manipulatives such as counters, 3D shapes, attribute blocks, base 10 blocks, fraction tiles, Double Dice, geoboards, baby bear balance, and mini clocks. We also use representations such as number lines, fraction clothesline, tiles in the hallways for area and perimeter, and lots of other visual and tactile supports, to provide concrete experiences for our students. Students keep an interactive math notebook to record vocabulary, strategies, and math examples for later reference. Videos from Kahn Academy, Learn Zillion, or Math Antics provide demonstrations to introduce or reinforce concepts. During the math block, students work in small groups with task cards, in spiral review stations, or in a technology group where they use a program such as Moby Max, Reflex Math, Freckle, Prodigy or IXL to reinforce their math skills. Our School Performance Grade in math is an A.

1c. Science:

Union Elementary students are not only taught science, but how to think like scientists. Teachers and students have been spotted wearing lab coats and goggles as they “do” science by exploring, conducting experiments, and observing. Their science lessons come alive for them. Students are seen in the hallways building different structures such as roller coasters to check out force and motion. Weather is more memorable when a local TV weatherman visits our school and talks with the students about the different weather patterns. Chirping can be heard in the second-grade hallways when our students are charged with taking care of eggs in an incubator until they hatch to study life cycles. Butterflies seen in the courtyard might have come from observing the four stages of butterfly development. Virtual reality kits allow students all grades to experience virtual field trips, helping to build background knowledge that is so important, especially for our ESL population. Seeds of Science is a research based curriculum that teaches essential science understanding while building literacy skills. Union uses the kit resources including such items as soil, batteries, rocks, minerals, salt, and the leveled readers as well as Science Weekly newspapers and hands on experiments to supplement our standards.

The community is also involved. Union hosted a STEAM (Science, technology, engineering, arts and math) night where teachers set up and facilitated many science stations including a life size inflatable whale from our UNCW partner in the gym. We heard many “oohs and aahs” as students marveled at the size. There was also a display of ocean artifacts from the Coastal Museum in Ocean Isle Beach, a soil and erosion table from the Brunswick County Soil and Water Conservation, hands-on experiments, and a 3D printer from our CTE (Career Technical Education) High School. Future inventors were able to display their new ideas at the Invention Challenge. Ozbot robots were available for students to learn to code. Our STEAM Wall of Fame pictured many scientists for students to view showing the many careers available in science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Student Council members dressed as famous professions or heroes in the STEAM fields in a walking wax museum. Over 200 families participated in this fun-filled event.

Our 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders participate in Science Olympiad, a competition held annually at a local high school. For months, students and teacher leaders prepare on particular topics, becoming experts on a certain quest. On the actual day, there is much competitive buzzing as our excited students compete in such activities as rocket launching, bridge building, backyard biologists, super sleuths, and science sketchers. The excitement isn’t just about this day, Teachers have been working on these activities with dedicated students after school for months. STARbase visits Union each year and students are exposed to hands-on, minds-on experimental activities. Teamwork is stressed as they work together to explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate concepts. With our real-life, engaging, inquiry based science curriculum, Union’s students are prepared to compete successfully in a global economy.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

What do you get when you combine soda bottles and biographies? Bottleographies of course! Our students research famous people, and create a bottle in their image, complete with clothing and hair. Speaking skills are enhanced as the students present about their person in class. Students participate in a live wax museum and line our hallways dressed as a famous person. Just like in a museum, you push their button and they speak about their character. During the holidays, as a part of their economics unit, students work in a “factory” learning about supply, demand, and quality control as they hand make items to sell at their “classroom shop.”

Again, in an effort to make learning fun and since geography skills can be challenging, students learn about history when teachers have them set up toy soldiers on maps to reenact war battles. One grade level does a postcard project where they add postcards from all over the world to a map to visualize where the places are located. Union's writing club worked to create a history of Union Elementary. The students interviewed former students (some from the class of 1954) and people from the community to gain rich knowledge of our school. They even learned that Union was previously an African-American School.

Social studies comes to life through meaningful field trips. Brunswick Towne, during Heritage Days, is set up as the old colonial port as it was in the 1700's. Students get to visit stations where they see colonial toys, weapons, stocks, and pillaries. Excitement flares when they make candles and butter. Fourth graders get to visit Raleigh, our state capital as well and tour the science and history museums. As a culminating activity in fifth grade, students go to Washington, D.C. to view the National Monuments and museums. All of our social studies activities continue to support the concept of helping our students become productive, well informed citizens in our communities and instills in them the heritage of our state and country.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Union's amazing enhancement team consists of art, music, physical education, guidance, and media/technology, weaving all of our students in a five-day rotation once a week. The resource team works together in lesson planning to align their lessons to the NC standards. They meet with classroom teachers to provide support and resources to enhance lessons from the classroom. They also support instruction by teaching small groups of second graders daily during Dolphin Enhancement time, our intervention block. The team facilitates school wide programs or grade level performances such as plays, musicals, or a fifth-grade talent show. One example of their teamwork is our Veteran's Day Program honoring our veterans with patriotic songs, artwork, and poetry written by our students. Students applaud as our visiting Veterans sign a flag displayed on our wall. Imagine our excitement when one Veteran came from overseas duty to surprise his daughter at the program! Our enhancement team meets for lunch daily to plan such celebrations as dances, Art in the Park, and duty-free lunch for teachers as a part of PBIS.

Union's halls resemble an art gallery as our art teacher works with her students to create "frameable art". Students study famous artists and recreate pictures in their style. NC standards are met through teaching genres, art vocabulary, writing, patterns, tessellations, and measurements. Student artwork with NC symbols (fourth grade) and USA symbols (fifth grade) are displayed throughout the building. Multiple mediums such as clay, pastels, chalk, paint and colored pencils are used to teach art concepts. Our students are entered in various contests and participate in county-wide Arts Alive. Our art teacher produces a beautiful yearbook providing our students with a collection of memories to treasure each year.

When it comes to music, our students are in tune and engaged in a variety of experiences ranging from singing to playing instruments to performing. We see math concepts integrated through music note values, counting rhythms, and beats. Writing is also included as students research and write about famous musicians. Our students thoroughly enjoy the holidays as they get to travel the world and learn about celebrations in other countries. Students experience traditions of other countries through music and stories. We feel this promotes an awareness of cultural differences around the world. Students are invited to join the Union United chorus which practices weekly before school starts and performs several times throughout the year for students, staff, community members, and parents. A select group of students are chosen to participate in a county wide concert as part of an Honors Chorus.

Union's physical education program can run with the best as we participate in many county initiatives including First Tee school program with Champion's Challenge, and Project Fitness. Both programs are county led initiatives that Union participates in to build our students' character and self efficacy. First Tee and Champions Challenge are programs that teach character education, including their nine core values through the game of golf. Project Fitness gives the students a chance to participate in track type events and interact with students across our county to develop teamwork and sportsmanship skills. Inside our school building students take physical education classes weekly where they learn the history of sports, dances from other countries, the rules of different sports, and even practice spelling with jump ropes. Physical fitness and character education are the themes of this class.

Union dolphins receive character education lessons weekly during guidance class where our goal is to create responsible, respectful and safe citizens for life. Our counselor also pulls small groups of students weekly to provide support with topics such as grief, social skills, compassion, and impulse control. Our students love Red Ribbon Week where our guidance department bring awareness and provide strategies to "Say No to Drugs." Students wear different items each day such as crazy socks and boots to stamp out drugs.

Our Media Center is an inviting mecca of books and technology. This year, we added two stationary bikes for students to ride and read, along with some high-tech equipment to produce a quality news program daily. Union's media and technology teacher works on a regular basis to coordinate with classroom teachers to integrate their standards into her classes. The media program supports global awareness, digital citizenship, and cultural understanding through research projects directly related to classroom subject areas. She takes student interest into consideration as she orders books they will love to read! The students are equipped with chromebook to use for their research. Students are exposed to a digital learning experience in a method that helps them become knowledgeable about 21st century skills. At least once per year a book fair is hosted in the media center where students can browse and purchase books for reading at home. One of our unique traditions at Union is that every student receives a free book of their choice each year before our Christmas break. This encourages reading over the break and also places another book in their home. It promotes the joy of reading thus encouraging our students to become lifelong readers. We feel that their love for reading plays a huge part in their success as evidenced in our EOG (End of Grade) reading scores.

3. Special Populations:

Union's student population reflects the community in which we live. Our teachers plan rigorous lessons and use a variety of methods and resources that differentiate instruction for our students. Examples include but are not limited to leveled readers, small homogeneous groups, as well as texts both in spanish and english. As evidenced in our demographics, Union hosts a high percentage (18%) of Hispanic students. To support our ELL students, we actively sought and hired a Hispanic teacher assistant who represents their population and is a liaison between school and home. ELL services are provided to support students as they facilitate assessments and utilize the data to provide appropriate leveled instruction. Our migrant teacher visits and communicates with the families who enroll due to seasonal work, thus helping them transition into our school. To assist with our non-English speaking ELL students, we recruited a Spanish speaking volunteer who comes weekly to assist with language acquisition skills and basic communication between the student and their teacher. Visual supports, as well as peer helpers, are a valuable asset in helping these students.

We are growing our EC students at Union by ensuring that they have core instruction and are provided EC services in and out of the classroom. It was a huge undertaking this year to implement inclusion services for our separate setting EC students in grades 3-5. This enables those students to hear and experience core instruction with the support of an EC teacher. We have found this especially valuable with academic vocabulary and hands on experiences. When EC students collaborate with regular ed students about their learning, it helps close the gap and great things happen! This strategy is also good for our regular education students and teachers as it makes them aware that when we utilize each other's strengths, everyone benefits.

Union is determined to grow their academically gifted students as seen in the development of a nurturing program for grades K-3 and as witnessed in the rigor and extension of the curriculum with our AIG students in grades 4 and 5 who are identified through COGAT and ITBS testing. This year students in grades 4 and 5 who scored a Level 5 in math are being challenged through an accelerated math class. In addition to core

NBRS 2019

curriculum, these students are challenged through more problem-based learning and enhancing of their critical thinking skills. Rigor is obvious as these students “LIVE” in the upper levels of Bloom’s where they analyze, create, and evaluate in all subject areas during the course of the day. It is these students who SHINE in county competitions such as Battle of the Books and Science Olympiad. Learning is enhanced when they utilize technology such as Google Classroom to collaborate, communicate, and create presentations via Google slides. The use of differentiation by our teachers enables us to challenge all students in our school, whether identified or not. We feel our students do well because of our high expectations and the level of support they are provided on a daily basis.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

A unique feature of our school is the quality of our staff. Every staff member, from the teachers and assistants to the front office staff, from the custodians to the cafeteria workers, works hard and truly cares about our children. According to our Teacher Working Conditions Survey, teachers at Union are very happy and feel supported which attributes to our low teacher turnover rate. Normally teachers only leave if they retire or move away. Our highest scores on the TWC survey were in the areas of having sufficient access to instructional technology, maintaining clear and two way communication with the community, community support, safe environment, encouraging teachers to be leaders, maintaining an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the school, holding high expectations for our teachers, using data to improve learning, providing teachers valuable feedback, and protecting instructional time. Our scores in every single category went up from 2014-2016.

At Union, our students have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular many programs/activities. In 2015, we started a Student Council with elected officials. They meet monthly and drive community outreach programs such as community food drives and school wide service learning projects. We also offer programs such as Battle of the Books to engage our readers in friendly competition while expanding their reading comprehension and Science Olympiad to encourage our students to problem solve and explore STEM activities. Our Dolphin Dashers Running Club and Project Fitness Team both encourage healthy lifestyles, while the Writing Club nurtures creativity. Our First Tee program teaches character education to our students through golf. Our students enjoy expressing themselves and making a joyful noise in our Union United Chorus. Our Dolphins On Air morning news program encourages social skills and good communication. All of these clubs help build student leaders and give students another reason to love school. Students are invited to be involved in these before and after school activities managed by teachers. Times are alternated between mornings and afternoons to ensure that our students who ride the bus can attend meetings.

We utilize PBIS to teach appropriate behaviors for our students, just as we teach reading and math. Rewarding students through classroom stores, PBIS school store on a cart, and our school-wide 9 week celebrations encourages our students to exemplify positive behaviors. This year, our school earned the PBIS Model School Recognition. We have a Buddy Bench which was built by one of our parents with funds raised through our Student Council. It was placed on the playground to give students a place to sit when they need a friend. Our Student Council plans and leads service learning projects to benefit charities. One of our 4th grade classes started a Food Share Program where students can leave unopened, non-perishable food in a basket on the cafeteria table instead of throwing it away. Other students are allowed to take the food so that no one goes hungry and food is never wasted. That 4th grade class presented the idea to the Board of Education and received the green light to implement. Ultimately we believe all of these factors contribute to creating an atmosphere that is “Always Sunny” and always loving for our students staff and parents.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of the unique features of our school is the abundance of community support. We are blessed to have a parent facilitator/volunteer coordinator, because our school hosts over 150 volunteers from the community. These volunteers share our philosophy that our children come first. This is evident as they read, eat lunch, and work with students each week on such things as reading, multiplication facts, and sight words. We have a variety pack consisting of retired educators, parents of past and present students, local business owners, pastors, and church members. Our Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program has drawn more male volunteers into our school. While the expectation is one day, most become addicted and end up returning over and over. We also host the Canine Angels, therapy dogs who come in each week to “read” with our 2nd graders. Our Wings Ministry Backpack program serves more than 25 students in our school, providing them with a backpack of food to take home each week. To connect with the community, our school hosts a Union Eat Out Night at one of our local restaurants each month. Families and school staff

gather together to eat and fellowship. The restaurants send back a portion of the proceeds to our school to help fund our school-wide PBIS celebration at the end of the school year. Our community support also comes in the way of donations. The amount of financial support we receive from corporate sponsorships (\$25,000 in 2018,) such as churches, local businesses, and even the ABC store, enables us to stay up to date with the latest technology as well as playground equipment. Our PTO strengthens our relationships with the community as they reach out for support through our fall festival, corporate sponsorships, and other events that raise revenue and increase parental support at school. They support classroom instruction by providing funds for instructional supplies as well as supplemental resources such as Storyworks and Social Studies/Science Weekly. They are instrumental in providing the “extras” that help our teachers and students be successful. For example, they have dressed even a 1:1 chromebook initiative for each of our 2nd-5th graders. Our teachers also reach out to the community by writing grants that help fund website subscriptions, school events, field trips, or classroom materials. They have brought in thousands of dollars through Donors Choose, ATMC, Bright Idea Grants from our Duke Energy and Burroughs Wellcome.

Twice a year, our students are rewarded for their academic performances at our school-wide awards programs. Citizenship is recognized by our local Rotary Club, and Principal’s Awards are given to students who shine in all areas. Children who meet academic goals, participate in clubs, or have perfect attendance, receive recognition. At this programs, parents and grandparents fill the gym to praise the efforts of our students. Our final hurrah is a big celebration at a local water park to reward our students and staff for a job well done! Some of our students have their first experience in a water park under the watchful eyes of our staff.

3. Professional Development:

Annually, teachers complete a county survey stating the types of professional development (PD) they believe they need to serve their students. Using that information and our School Improvement Plan, our school aligns our professional development plan to district initiatives. Our county encouraged all teachers to have PD in Learning Focus Lesson Planning, Reading Research to Classroom Practice, and Math Foundations. Two summers ago most of our teachers participated in Teacher Academy, working as a united front to plan long term lessons for each grade level. Our county allows teachers to select PD of interest, especially in the area of technology. Tech Camp offers a wide array of topics to keep our teacher up to date with technology. Teachers can also earn micro-units independently by taking courses related to digital learning competencies. Our District Instructional Technology Facilitator tailors PD relating to technology to needs of each grade level.

All of the teachers at Union have had professional development in reading to increase fluency and comprehension. We chose the Jan Richardson Guided Reading Model as our framework. Students in K-5 are involved in literacy groups daily which supplement the guided reading instruction taking place at the teacher’s table. Our teachers also utilize their Reading Foundations training during this time. We feel this attributes to our kindergarten students being 86% at or above grade level (7% on grade level, 79% above grade level) at the end of the year when 53% of them were intensive (far below) when they entered. Our data also shows that in grades 1-5, students continue to make huge gains in their reading. Our School Performance Grade in reading is a B. We know our students are growing because our EVAAS growth score is 91.7 (Exceeded), and data from mclass and EOG testing shows this as well. In addition, we have had professional development in Learning Focused Lesson Planning, Empowering Writers, and Letterland.

In place of staff meetings, we have provided teacher led in-house PD in guided reading, guided math groups, writing, strategies for helping ELL students, math foundation strategies, and Mindset de escalation strategies for students with behavior concerns. Teachers in our building are involved in quarterly grade level walk through sessions as well as monthly individual peer observations. Our teachers were involved in a Ron Clark “Move Your Bus” book study. A team of teachers from Union visited the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, Georgia last October and returned to energize our staff! Two of our fifth-grade teachers had the opportunity to attend NCCAT at Ocracoke to learn more about writing. In turn, they shared their newly found knowledge with the rest of our staff!

professional development outside of our county are: SEA Summit, N.C. Social Studies Conference, Governor's Teacher Network, Collaborative Conference for Student Achievement, and N.C. Reading Conference. Some of our teachers on staff are National Mentors for Class Dojo, Go Noodle Ambassadors, EPIC and Freckle-A-Team, and Flocabulary Master Educators. Union hosts the VFW Teacher of the Year, NC Social Studies Teacher of the Year, as well as several teachers who were voted by the community as being the Best of Brunswick. We are so proud of our teacher leaders, but our proudest accomplishments lie within our students!

4. School Leadership:

According to administration, relationships are the most important factor in creating a school where students love to learn, and teachers enjoy teaching. Fostering trusting relationships between administration, staff, students, and parents is top priority. Shared leadership is also important and is seen as teachers and other support staff are a vital part of the interview process as well as making major decisions concerning our school. Our hiring process has served us well. We require interested applicants to video themselves teaching at least 2 lessons and submit to our interview team. A team of teachers help interview every chosen candidate and hire the most qualified and best fit for our school. This hiring practice results in a high-quality teaching staff which has a direct correlation to our proficiency and growth. It's important to note that 33.3% of our teachers have a master's degree and 25% of our teachers are national board certified. According to 2018 EVAAS growth data 47% of our teachers are blue (exceed growth) and 53% of our teachers are green (meet growth) in their overall composites. Union has 10% of our teachers exceeded in multiple subjects and one teacher exceeded in all four subjects. Consider this: 80% of our teachers have been teaching ten or more years. I feel their experience is an asset for our students. All of our teachers are highly qualified and hold high expectations for all students.

Our School Improvement Team (SIT) exemplifies shared leadership by creating our school's schedule for enhancement classes as well as lunch and recess. They are given parameters with specifics concerning amounts of time per subject. Preference is given to our fifth-grade team because they are departmentalized unlike teachers in kindergarten through fourth grade who teach all subjects. Working together as a School Improvement Team, we analyze data from EOG scores, TWC survey, mClass, and math assessments to create our School Improvement Plan. We utilize our SIT as a living, breathing document and edit it every nine weeks to reflect progress on our goals. At our monthly SIT meetings, we discuss ideas and concerns submitted by staff regarding curriculum or logistics of the school as well as analyze PBIS and IST data.

High expectations are evidenced in the work ethic of administration as well as staff. The desire for our students to grow and be successful is contagious throughout our school. As noted in the book *Leadership Isn't For Cowards*, we are reminded that having honest, sometimes difficult conversations with our staff is necessary to drive performance. These conversations are always respectful and supportive because we nurture a growth mindset. Another way that administration supports teaching and learning is through the protection of the instructional day. All meetings and parent conferences must either take place either before or after school, and teachers never have to worry about disruptions such as all call announcements. We utilize all support services such as our behavior specialist and psychologist to ensure that every physical, educational, and emotional need of our students is met.

Our administrative team is first rate. They know every child and which parent, grandparent, or guardian belongs with the child. Both school leaders are involved in every aspect of the school culture, from attending all team meetings to spending time in the classrooms, actively engaging with the students. The principal once kissed a pig when the students met a fundraising goal and the assistant principal recently dyed his hair blue and green after a challenge was made by the PTO. They smile. They dance. They give high fives and hugs or wipe tears and discuss ways to make better choices. This administrative team loves the students and the students love them. They are well respected by the staff and morale at the school is high. This school stands out because the culture is so positive and it starts at the top!

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” Dr. James Comer’s quote provides the insight to the success of Union Elementary School. Every unique child who steps into our hallways has a team of cheerleaders supporting that child in his or her path. As our population has changed, we are seeing more children who live in poverty. Several of our newest students have arrived without knowing a single word of English. Often, we have no idea the challenges these students are facing at home, but we do know that our school is a happy safe environment, shielded from the woes of the world.

The best way to make a big difference in the life of a child is to make that personal connection. According to Eric Jensen, by giving children year after year a chance with a caring adult throughout the entire elementary experience, there is significant evidence that the effects of poverty can be erased. At Union, our entire staff is invested in building relationships. First, we greet our students with a smile and a hug. We speak to our children often, promoting vocabulary. Since low-income homes often speak fewer words per hour than average homes, we realize the importance of asking personal questions and promoting casual conversations. Some teachers provide coupons for the student to sit by the teacher at lunch. These lunch dates allow students to share informally what is going on in a child’s life. Many of our teachers use the “Teacher, I want you to know . . .” slips of paper to allow students to pass on any information he or she would like to provide. Our children appreciate that their teachers care!

Union’s teachers have empathy, understanding that our students’ behavior patterns may be the result of a problem at home such as hunger or stress. By providing a family-like environment, teachers can encourage students to work and play together, to respect each other, and to have each other’s backs. With a growth mindset mentality, our students are allowed to make mistakes, but our staff members foster ways to guide students into making positive choices.

Our teachers share personal stories with the students to promote a two-way relationship. Children are like puzzles and as teachers it is our job to put the pieces all together. Students will work harder when they believe their teachers care enough to invest time in them and have a genuine desire for them to succeed as a person. Only then can the academic piece be added to the puzzle. Union Elementary School was first designed as a school of unity in the 1950’s and has continued the tradition of being united for everyone’s success.