

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Ryne Phillips

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

Official School Name Hilton Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 211 4th Avenue

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

Zillah WA 98953-9533
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Yakima

Telephone (509) 829-5400

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Web site/URL http://www.zillahschools.org

E-mail ryne.phillips@zillahschools.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Doug Burge

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail doug.burge@zillahschools.org

District Name Zillah School District Tel. (509) 829-5911

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. Sandra Adams

(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):
- 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	17	14	31
K	45	35	80
1	49	47	96
2	38	46	84
3	49	51	100
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	198	193	391

*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):
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 58 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 34 % 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: 9%

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

N/A

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	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	403
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 25 %
98 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 58 %
Total number students who qualify: 227

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %
54 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>2</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>14</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>17</u> Developmental Delay | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>41</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 21:1

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	84%	96%	93%	93%	94%
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.

Through a responsible, respectful partnership between families, students, staff, and community, the mission of Hilton Elementary is to provide a safe, positive, and challenging learning environment that sets high expectations for all students. The Hilton Elementary School staff believes that working collaboratively enhances the educational experience of all students. We believe in the education of the whole child regardless of their individual needs and abilities. Together, with passion and with purpose, we want to ensure the individual success of all students.

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

Hilton Elementary is one of four schools of the Zillah School District residing in the small rural community of Zillah, Washington with a population of roughly 3,500 patrons. The school itself serves 430 students in grades pre-k through third. The perception of the schools is we are comprised of mostly white, middleclass families, but, in fact, we have a poverty rate over 60 percent with approximately 63 percent of our students identified as Hispanic or Two or More Races. The majority of our families are rooted in the agricultural industry either as seasonal support, year-round laborers, or field/orchard management. Other than being rooted in agriculture, the other thing that ties our community together is our schools. Patrons of our community invest time, energy and other resources regularly because we all believe public education is the foundation of our community. Parent and community involvement is always high which results better systems of support for our students. This is what makes our school special.

Historically, there has been a lot of pride in excellence at Hilton Elementary School due to the positive relationships built with students and families as well as high expectations for ALL. Staff conduct themselves professionally with the intent to help each student and support families. In most cases, this is the first experience our families have with the District, which makes Hilton's efforts so important to the school system. In addition to that, staff have always challenged each other to be better at their craft, which has resulted in self-directed book studies and professional development. That practice has bled into the other schools and is now a district-wide practice. The product of this positive school culture and climate are third grade state assessment score that annually outperform regional districts and are well above the state average year after year. Recently, Washington State's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has recognized Hilton Elementary with the Washington Academic Achievement Award in 2013 for high progress, 2014 for high progress and 2016 for closing the achievement gap.

As mentioned before, the start of success for the school started with the staff taking it upon themselves to provide support through book studies and professional development opportunities on best practice. Ultimately, they created a Professional Learning Community before it was a buzzword in education. This has fostered an environment of growth and high expectations. When veteran teachers change their practice because it is best for students, the culture is in the right place. In addition to that, Hilton has always treated each student as an individual. It is not a one size fits all environment. The past five to ten years the school has focused on creating intervention supports for different levels of learners while protecting core instructional time. This has developed into a multi-tiered system of support that is roots-based and naturally driven by staff because it is best for students. Not only does this have a positive impact on student academic success, but also social and emotional success is embedded because individual needs are always addressed.

In recent years, building staff were discouraged with the idea of specific student groups being considered "my" students versus "your" students and wanted to focus on students being considered "ours." What this has done is created shared responsibility for the success of all students. Teacher began to ask for students to stay in their classroom rather than be pulled for services. From this, a new initiative for push-in support was established. Specialists carefully determine which students to pull for support and which to support in the general education classroom. More students have access to grade level standards throughout the school day and staff collaboration increased. Now when students are being pulled out of classrooms, staff are questioning the decision and how they can get the students back in their classroom.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The approach in Reading/English language arts focuses on a “core and more” philosophy. This means our staff must provide core instruction to ALL students and ALL students must receive “more.” For example, student who excel should receive enrichment activities, while those who struggle with concepts should receive intervention support. This is true for students who qualify in specific programs like English Language and Special Education. The core curriculum is McGraw-Hill’s Wonders Curriculum, adopted building-wide, that provides an online platform and blended learning opportunities. This provides our students with a balanced literacy approach. Based on student data, the staff determined which student groups struggled with language acquisition. The last few years we have pushed Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategies incorporated into instruction. All staff have worked towards GLAD certification and all staff incorporate those strategies throughout instructional activities because we know it benefits those with English as their second language and those of poverty. Through common and benchmark assessments, grade level teams make instructional decisions based on student need. This also provides the intervention team data to select specific student groups for tier III intervention in our multi-tiered system of support. Curriculum for tier III interventions is the Enhanced Core Reading Instruction series, which ties into Wonders. This provides our students in tier III intervention continuity between the core instruction. For all of this to be possible, cross-grade level teams meet to determine a scope and sequence from pre-k to grade three, which we consider to be backwards by design. The pre-k program bases much of their content on the WA Kids early learning inventory so students are kindergarten ready and on track for standards based learning.

1b. Mathematics:

The approach for our mathematics program can also be considered a “core and more” philosophy because all students must receive core instruction and dedicated activities based on individual need. The difference between mathematics and reading is the established curriculum. Staff at Hilton Elementary are master educators and have been able to use a variety of resources to develop grade-level scope and sequence based on grade-level standards. The foundation of all mathematical concepts is rooted in number sense. Staff have dedicated instructional opportunities for students understand how to interpret and manipulate numbers. This has allowed our students to move from the concrete to the abstract of acquired math skills. We also believe that precise language is necessary for mathematics, which has resulted in deepening our staff understanding of mathematical language. We have relied on GLAD strategies throughout math instruction to help promote the use of academic language for all of our students. Similar mathematical language is heard in our kindergarten and third grade classrooms. The building relies on common and benchmark assessments to determine multi-tiered intervention supports. Tier I and II interventions are developed and conducted by general education teachers while the intervention specialist supports tier III intervention. The building has invested in working with a regional math coach to help develop intervention curriculum, as there is no specific core curriculum. Grade level teams provided scope and sequence, third grade state testing performance data was analyzed and a team was able to identify key concepts that student were missing throughout the lower grade levels. Specific activities are assessed for and focused on during intervention cycles.

1c. Science:

The approach to the science curriculum has changed over the last couple of years with the transition to a hands-on, project-based learning approach through the implementation of the Smithsonian Science Kits aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Each teacher receives professional development to implement these kits. Pre-k through 3rd grade incorporates high yielding vocabulary strategies that allows for language acquisition and development while learning grade-level science standards. Over the course of the school year, each student has access to three different science kits are implemented during the fall,

winter, and spring. Students learn standards and skills are aligned to the statewide assessment in 5th grade. As students transition from one grade level to the next, we want them to have learned the foundational science skills and standards to be successful.

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

The majority of our social studies curriculum is embedded and layered within the English language arts curriculum, Wonders. This is in effort to maximize the learning opportunities for our students. The focus of the social studies curriculum centers on social, cultural and historical perspectives while drawing comparison to our students' lives. Because of the building's initiative to provide language support to all students, grade-level teams have developed specific activities such as learning maps and chants for social studies concepts. In Washington State, we are required to implement Since Time Immemorial content as a part of our social studies curriculum. This provides our students with regional and state perspectives of the indigenous people from our state. Staff have been learning about this new requirement and have been working to develop learning opportunities for our students. A result of this work is a strong relationship with our local tribe, the Yakama. Students participate in annual events focused on the Yakama that culminates with a visit to the Yakama Nation Museum and Cultural Center as third grade students. Tribe members spend time with our students and share stories of their rich history, culture and heritage that draw connections to our students and local surroundings as well as bringing communities closer through an appreciation and respect for the Yakama culture.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

The focus of our preschool program is early literacy, early numeracy, and social/emotional learning. It is also a fully inclusive model that serves all students including those with significant learning delays and those with profound disabilities. We utilize the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five, as the foundation of our curriculum. We also consult with the kindergarten team and student data to determine areas of focus within the framework so we are best meeting the needs of our students. We are able to measure student success on district and state assessments including the WA Kids Inventory for immediate feedback. The success rate of students from our preschool is far greater than those who do not attend early learning programs.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The only curricula/program needing to mention is our effort to provide social and emotional learning to all students through our Character Education program. Students receive no less than one Character Education lesson every two weeks from our Physical Education teacher. Students learn about self-awareness, self-management, decision-making, social awareness, and relationships through Character Education. With a relatively low mobility rate, the majority of our students receive the same message for four consecutive years. We believe the positive school climate and culture can be contributed this program. In addition, the Character Education program, every student receives Physical Education and Music class no less than twice a week. We value the importance of well-rounded, whole child education in our school and district. Each student also receives instruction and learning in computer science and technology once per week. With the new adoption of computer science standards in Washington we want to ensure that every child, as early as kindergarten, are exposed to STEM related opportunities and activities aligned to those standards.

3. Special Populations:

Special populations of students that tend to be highlighted as needing support and to which specific improvement efforts are geared toward are in the area of English Language Learners, Special Education and Low-Income. Many of the efforts cross-over to each of these populations, but we have, most recently, made effort to push-in support for students in the EL and Special Education programs. Staff have high

expectations for students and want to see all student meet standard. Whenever we can determine the general education classroom is least restrictive, we push-in the support. To support our students in the EL program and those whom are low-income where we know language can be limited, the school has made effort to provide language support within the general education curriculum through the implementation of GLAD strategies. The results of such efforts have proven successful with 64% of low-income students passing grade level standards in ELA and 85% met standard in math. Students with disabilities met standard at 55% in ELA and 83% met in math and students from the EL program passed both assessments at 64%. With 84% of our total population meeting standard in math and 75% meeting in ELA, these special groups have done relatively well in recent years.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Hilton Elementary, one of our most important core values is building positive relationships with students. Developing and maintaining these positive relationships has fostered an environment in each classroom that is highly engage where students are motivated to do their very best. Our school and teachers have high expectations for all learners and we are very clear about what those expectations are with our students and their families. We want all stakeholders to know that we want to nurture, develop, and improve each child’s overall success. We are firm believers in the whole child approach to education and that we are not just in the business of improving Math and ELA scores, but we are setting the foundation for each child’s future success and growth. One of the biggest shifts in our thinking about our school culture and climate is changing teachers’ thinking from the thought that these are “my” students or “your” students, to the idea that thought that these are “our” kids. This approach has really made our staff be strategic with how we think about school, district, and state initiatives that have an impact at our school. Instead of thinking, how do changes affect “me, we now think about how changes affect “us.” In addition to changing the mindset of how we thinking about our students at Hilton, we truly are a family. In our family, we support one another, challenge one another, and celebrate each other’s accomplishments. There is a very strong network of collaboration and communication at our school and it is evident in the growth and success of all of our students. If someone were to walk our halls on any given day, they might hear conversations between teachers asking about how one of their former students is doing. They might also see students going back to visit their former teachers during lunch or recess, just to say hello and see how they are doing. Many of the things about our school climate and culture cannot be measured by a set of data points, or how a certain subgroup performs on a district or state assessment. Although those things are very important, but the real foundation of our school success for all students is rooted in the foundation that we have passionate teachers building positive relationships with all students in order to achieve lifelong success.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

There are many different platforms Hilton Elementary uses to engage our families and the community in the success of our school. During our fall and spring parent/teacher conferences we get well over a 95% attendance rate. Conferences are not the only opportunities we have to engage our families about what is happening in our schools. The Hilton Parent Association has a large number of volunteers and we meet once a month to discuss school-related events, share data about our school performance, and plan ahead for future activities. During the 2017-2018 school year, we took a big leap and invited a parent representative to our School Improvement Team. This has been transformational, as it has given the parents and families in our community a voice about school improvement efforts being made at Hilton. Other opportunities we provide our community to participate in include STEM Nights, Math and Reading Academic Nights, Dad’s Dessert, Mom’s and Muffins, Kids Hope, and many other volunteer programs to support student learning and success.

In addition to the many ways, parents can get involved at Hilton, our teachers are required to send home weekly newsletters each Friday to share what is happening in the class, provide materials to support their children at home, and to provide information about future classroom activities. Many parents of our students’ have voiced their appreciation for these newsletters sent home each week. Due to the changing demographics of our small community, we are starting to provide newsletters and information sent home in English and in Spanish. This has expanded to all printed material, which has meant a strategic use of resources to support that process. In addition to the opportunities within our school, we have made an effort to solicit feedback from our community through outreach. The District provides the school with a Home/School Liaison who has supported the transition of new students to our building and by conducting home visits for student in need. Our staff often rallies around students and families in need to minimize barriers to their education. Building administration now attends Parent Action Committee meetings that consist of families from the Migrant Program. Due to parents work schedules, it is sometimes challenging for parents of the Migrant Program to attend organized events and conferences. Outreach in this format has

proven beneficial for both parties because the school has learned valuable feedback from parents and parents are able to receive helpful information to navigate the school system.

3. Professional Development:

The District has revamped the approach for professional development and improvement over the last few years. Prior, schools were independent in developing needed improvement and professional development, but the more recent approach analyzes trends across the District to develop a cohesive plan. The District has strategically made the decision for all professional development to support improvement efforts as part of a process we call the Organizational Learning Project. Once district improvement efforts are determined, building level teams identify sub-categories that directly relate to district efforts. To take this a step further, teachers determine student growth goals, as part of their evaluation, aligned to building improvement efforts. For Hilton, this has strengthened the Professional Learning Communities within our building because it has allowed for more cross-grade level discussion focusing on the same concepts. Staff are able to learn from one another at a greater and more diverse rate because there are more resources available. This has also helped us to become closer as a team. With improvement efforts clearly defined and everyone on staff working towards the same goals, we all analyze student performance together, determine next steps and adjustments, and are champions for each other's efforts.

Professional development is predicated on improvement efforts from both the district and building level. The focus on best practices in the areas of differentiation, student engagement, and assessments have been primary drivers. Staff have been diligent to incorporate intervention support for tier I and II students so we work on understanding summative and formative assessments. Once we know what our students know and need to know, which allows us to develop intervention groups, we better understand how to differentiate core instruction to maximize student learning. Differentiating instruction and student engagement go hand-in-hand. The more you can tailor learning to individual need the more engaged a learner will be. Staff at Hilton have worked with regional instructional coaches from our ESD to develop units of study as well as understanding how to shift learning to meet the students where they are ready to learn. With an overall low achievement rate from the district's English Language Learners, specific efforts were made to support staff's understanding of language standards and strategies to explicitly teach the appropriate use of language within the core curriculum. Again, Hilton staff work with regional Guided Language Acquisition Design coaches to develop such strategies across the building. Being the professionals they are, building staff voluntarily are working toward GLAD certification with a goal to have everyone certified within the next two years. Results of professional development efforts have increased performance according to staff evaluation form, increased district level assessment results, as well as maintained the high performance rate on state assessments.

4. School Leadership:

The school's leadership philosophy can be identified mostly as a shared leadership approach between the principal and the school improvement team with all members on staff including classified staff. The principal's leadership philosophy is based on servant leadership with a focus on instructional practices and growth mindset. The principal has committed to building and maintaining a school environment that sets high expectations for all staff and students, utilizes data to drive instructional decisions, provides multi-tiered support systems for staff and students, and involves all stakeholders in decision-making. The school improvement team at Hilton is a reflection of our school's commitment to closing the achievement gap and sustaining the school climate and culture of meeting individual needs. Our leadership team consists of a diverse group of individuals ranging from principals, certified staff, classified staff, and community members. We have made a commitment to include all stakeholders in the development of improvement efforts aligned to the district's vision that will directly have an impact on student learning and achievement. For example, the school leadership team recognized a need to implement a multi-tiered support system for students still not meeting grade level standards and expectations without compromising core instructional time. Staff felt students in need of academic support or in special programs deserved full access to core instruction. After long discussion, planning, research, site visits, and ultimately the hiring of an Academic Intervention teacher, the leadership team developed a building schedule that allowed for all interventions and special program services to take place outside of the core curriculum time. This was a sacrifice to staff

because it eliminated any flexibility in scheduling instructional activities. This decision was about students not about staff. This example sums up how Hilton Elementary School operates because it is always about our students and if we can find a way, we will do it.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most instrumental shift Hilton Elementary School has taken in our approach to the overall academic success was first recognizing the needs of our students have become more complex and diverse at our school and in our community. Once we recognized our student population was becoming more and more diverse, there was a greater sense of urgency from the school improvement team and building leadership to set goals regarding professional development to meet the needs of this diverse population. Through ongoing professional development, the school created a sustainable model for staff to grow professionally. The model of professional development was rooted in providing teachers with research-based, high-yielding, best practices that allowed ALL students to acquire essential academic skills to be successful as they move through the school system.

The model includes maximizing district-level professional development by providing follow-up activities specific to the grade band of the building. As mentioned before, district-level professional development is based on improvement efforts so the concepts are relevant. Hilton felt it was best to tailor this learning to the students whom walk our hallways. Staff from the building take on leadership roles by leading the professional development once every three weeks. Two areas that have been a constant focus for Hilton are differentiating instruction and language acquisition.

The product of this work is our staff's ability to differentiate learning through interventions as well as providing different levels of entry to core instruction. Instruction is no longer a one size fits all approach. Because of the constant focus on differentiation, the building has developed a true multi-tiered system of support for student in math and reading. Evidence of success for this is shown through our rising student achievement data on the state assessment. In three years, overall achievement has grown by 15% in math and 35% in ELA; both of which are well above the state average. Although differentiation plays a major role in achievement results, we cannot ignore what language acquisition has provided our students. Focusing on implementing language strategies during core instruction has provided all students with rich opportunities to use academic language. Staff worked with a regional coach to develop "playbooks" for core curriculum to ensure all grade levels and team members had resources available. Then teams practiced strategies while observing each other in order to provide feedback. Instructional activities in math and ELA have a focus on language. Before implementing such professional development, roughly 8% of English Language Learners met proficiency. Since, we average 17% of English Language Learners meeting proficiency.

Ongoing professional development that is relevant makes Hilton Elementary staff the professionals they are!