

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name New Simpson Hill Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 95 Tunnel Hill Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Tunnel Hill State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 62972-3200

County Johnson

Telephone (618) 658-8536 Fax (618) 658-5034

Web site/URL http://newsimpsonhill.com E-mail jnighswander@newsimpsonhill.com

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. Joe Nighswander E-mail jnighswander@newsimpsonhill.com  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name New Simpson Hill District 32 Tel. (618) 658-8536

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Vince Hoffard  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

1. 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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	26	12	38
<b>K</b>	7	12	19
<b>1</b>	16	13	29
<b>2</b>	12	11	23
<b>3</b>	7	9	16
<b>4</b>	10	12	22
<b>5</b>	18	6	24
<b>6</b>	12	14	26
<b>7</b>	8	12	20
<b>8</b>	14	10	24
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	130	111	241

\*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):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0.5 % Black or African American
  - 0.5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 94 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 7%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	217
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

None

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 52 %

Total number students who qualify: 126

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %

38 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>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>7</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</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: 2

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 17:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	95%	94%	94%	95%	95%
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 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

To provide a safe, nurturing environment that fosters positive self-esteem, honesty, manners, and respect. To prepare students to be respectable, responsible, and productive citizens.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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New Simpson Hill School (NSH), located on a beautiful hill in Tunnel Hill, Illinois, is a small school with a big heart. NSH is a single school district that serves approximately 250 students pre-K through 8th grade. Tunnel Hill is located in rural southern Illinois in the midst of the Shawnee National Forest. Pastures and farm fields surround our school property. It is a beautiful, serene setting and a wonderful place to teach and learn. The area was once a bustling small town that the railroad intersected, but since the closure of the railroad, the population and businesses diminished. The old railroad tracks have been converted to a bike trail that is visited by people from all over the world. The tunnel still exists and bikers and walkers enjoy a peaceful journey through the tunnel and continue on the Tunnel Hill State Trail. We are a bedroom community with most jobs being 30 minutes to an hour away. Farming is prevalent in the area and many other community members work in the state or federal prison system. Our school has a high number of blended and broken families. The number of students with emotional problems impacting their ability to learn are increasing and the number of students on the autism spectrum is also growing. We do not view this as a disadvantage, but as an opportunity to build something unique and special in our school.

Each student at NSH is made to feel like they are special from the moment that they arrive within the school. Not only do the students have this sense of belonging, but their families do as well. Staff members of the school are able to make connections on a daily basis with students and their families. Questions such as, "Are you feeling better today?" or "We missed you yesterday." are common questions/statements that are easily made in a small school with a family atmosphere like New Simpson Hill. Students enter the school as 3 and 4-year old students and end as 8th graders. The very first teachers that students form relationships with, are in the same building with them until they leave for high school. This allows teachers to develop relationships that last for years. Teachers maintain those relationships in order to help in all aspects of student development. A pre-K teacher may see a 4th grade student in emotional distress and be able to help that student overcome the issue because of the initial relationship they shared. Teachers also continue to cultivate relationships with parents even after the student has moved to another grade. This builds that community of family and trust that is schoolwide. One aspect of New Simpson Hill that sets us apart from many schools is that our school is family oriented and strives to make students feel a part of that family. Our teachers care so much for our students that a couple have taken part in what is known as kinship placement and are fostering students in their homes. Despite the fact of being a rural school, we try to be on the cutting edge of education. We do not accept being a rural school as an excuse for any challenge or barrier, but together as a team, we try to find innovative techniques that fit our students, families, and communities to help us succeed. One of our more recent innovative, academic initiatives is the implementation of "The Reading Room". All students in grades K-4 visit the Reading Room that develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills through reading.

The social-emotional aspect of education has become the central part of our job as educators. We know that if we can't succeed at that aspect, then there's no way our students can reach their true potential. One incredible advantage we have as a small school is we place an extreme importance on knowing our students and families. We want to treat each student as an individual, and recognize their strengths and build up their weaknesses as a complete student. We want to wash away the stereotypes and celebrate students and help them find their passion(s) in life. We have recently implemented a Resiliency Team to help foster positive relationships with students that experience adverse conditions. Each month we recognize the students of the month based on a different character trait we emphasize throughout the school and within our classrooms. We feel that when each student feels accepted, respected, and appreciated for who they are, then they will trust and respect their teachers to perform at their best in the classroom.

Another attribute that sets New Simpson Hill apart from other districts is our commitment to respecting one another. This has been a long tradition that is continually passed down. This character trait is also reinforced that many current staff members graduated from New Simpson Hill and have had this tradition ingrained in them years ago. As in any workplace, we will not always agree, but we respect each other's expertise in education and the decisions that follow. We feel students see these behaviors and they, too, have mimicked this in how they deal with one another. When students learn to respect each other, the education can really begin because the doors of communication and discussion really open up. Our world is driven by communication, so it is essential that our students learn to communicate with respect, but also learn how to listen to other's ideas with respect. We believe this is a great strength at New Simpson Hill.

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

At New Simpson Hill, our overarching philosophy that spans the entire school, teachers, and staff is a dedication to social-emotional learning (SEL). It is our duty not only to prepare each student academically, but also provide a safe environment to develop SEL skills. CASEL defines SEL as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL.org). This definition best describes what each member tries to inject into each student every day. Teachers infuse SEL into their normal routines, activities, classwork, and curriculum. Each student has at least one staff member they can go to if they need help or someone to talk to. This support makes each student feel valued and that they have a voice.

There have been many programs that have been developed to help us be successful in implementing SEL into every aspect of our school. Teachers have been provided with multiple training's (ACES, Resiliency, Poverty simulation, Mental Health First Aid) to help learn what SEL is and how to incorporate it into their classrooms. Once a quarter, teachers are arranged into Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to discuss issues within their classroom, techniques to help solve individual student or classroom issues, issues within the school that need to be addressed, discussions of successes and/or struggles in classrooms, how each teacher is implementing SEL to provide techniques for others, and aligning the curriculum between grades to help eliminate gaps in learning. A resiliency team has recently been implemented to help students faced with adverse childhood experiences. One of the student initiatives includes implementation of a "Student of the Month" Program. Another initiative that is currently being implemented is an Advisory Period in which each employee at New Simpson Hill has a group of 9 or 10 students to help work on SEL goals through activities.

All subject areas are aligned to the New Illinois Learning Standards based off of the Common Core Standards. One major shift that was developed schoolwide to increase student achievement was going beyond rote learning. It is common to hear a teacher ask a student to "explain their answer, describe steps they took to solve a problem, or explain this concept to classmates" as you walk down the hallways. NSH teachers realize there is more than one way to arrive at the same answer and we want students to be exposed to multiple methods of learning.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

Our school focuses on six pillars that promote reading success: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. New Simpson Hill has adopted a research based basal series in grades K-5 which aligns well with our Illinois Learning Standards. The high rigor balanced Language Arts program focuses on close reading of cross-curricular complex texts that are used for purposeful writing. In 2019, our Language Arts teachers met with a curriculum specialist to ensure that our chosen academic program met the state standards at each grade level. The school chose to follow the scope and sequence listed within the basal series.

In grades first-fourth, students have small and whole group instruction daily. One of our innovative initiatives is the addition of a "Reading Room". Small group instruction is offered in a Reading Room in groups of six or less, based on their reading levels. Students receive differentiated instruction in vocabulary and comprehension strategies. Students read leveled stories that are displayed on Smart Boards and use Osmos and iPads to reinforce Tier 2 (cross curriculum) academic words as well as content specific words. The Reading Room focuses on problem solving skills and critical thinking skills through reading. The below-level readers also receive pull-out Title I reading services daily. Whole group instruction occurs within the regular classroom. The instruction focuses on one weekly essential question. Activities include:

activating prior knowledge through the use of high interest digital resources, reading one basal story that reinforces a comprehension strategy, reading another selection in a literature anthology that allows students to practice a comprehension strategy, and writing projects that allow students to make connections between text to self, text to world, and text to text.

In the junior high, there is a focus on high-quality literature with various genres in a basal series. Each month, students also read from a current events magazine which facilitates comprehension and writing strategies. The magazine provides leveled resources for differentiated instruction. Students use a Smart Board to view many resources, including background information to activate prior knowledge, helpful tips and slideshows to enhance their understanding and knowledge pertaining to these articles. Tier 2 academic words are also presented in the selections. Students use Chromebooks for purposeful writing that is emphasized through debate, poems, essays and public service announcements. Opportunity for connections between text to self, text to world, and text to text connections are made in these writing prompts.

All students are administered three benchmarks tests during the year through a computer-based RTI (Response to Intervention) program. Individual students are placed on a learning path to help focus on skills and strategies in which they are deficient. Whole group results are examined by teachers to identify concepts that need to be emphasized in daily lesson plans. In the lower grades, students are assessed weekly over a comprehension strategy through completing a “cold read” passage. Assessment data is used to group students for RTI instruction. At NSH, every student is a writer. Writing assignments and writing projects start very early in the study skills and language arts program and continue through 8th grade. Students also complete a unit writing project as a summative assessment every six weeks.

In the junior high, formative assessments include exit tickets in order to reinforce Tier 2 vocabulary words, interactive games on the Smart Boards or white boards, the use of dry erase boards, in-class discussion, RTI, spelling games, creating graphic organizers and thumbs up/thumbs down to assess for comprehension. Summative assessments include the creation of dioramas and brochures, chapter and unit tests and book reports.

### **1c. Mathematics**

The core curriculum used throughout our K-8 school district is Ready Math along with the online component of I-Ready and is implemented on average of 60 minutes per day. This program was recently chosen by our district due to the variety of resources, instructional approaches, and that the program’s skills scaffold throughout all of our grade levels. The teacher provides individual and small group work, interactive videos, hands-on lessons, and incorporates rigorous problem-solving skills. Teachers promote higher-level thinking skills and this is a driving factor in the math instruction to help prepare students for IAR (Illinois Assessment of Readiness) assessments.

The school uses an online RTI (Response to Intervention) component, which personalizes instruction to each individual student’s academic needs. Students work for an average of 60 minutes on the RTI learning paths per week. The school uses diagnostic assessments that generates differentiated instructional lessons to help struggling students strengthen their academic skills and for higher level students to be academically challenged. Diagnostic assessments are given three times a year as formative assessments to monitor student growth and adjust the differentiated instruction of the online lessons. In addition to the online lessons, teachers have access to printable activities to enrich learning and close learning gaps. This allows the district to identify student deficiencies to provide interventions to struggling students. Instructional interventions are provided through the online lessons, as well as, individual and small group work with classroom teachers during the scheduled RTI times. Additional educational support is offered by allowing students the opportunity to login to their online learning paths at home.

Data from the summative unit curriculum assessments, IAR testing, classroom formative assessments, and online diagnostic formative assessments such as exit tickets, skills tests, and quick checks are also used to drive instruction. The assessments helps pinpoint instructional needs.

learning and provide modifications for individual learning plans. Some examples of accommodations include reducing multiple choice options, providing work spaces and academic cues, more detailed directions, building academic vocabulary, providing larger print and/or work area, and decreasing the number of problems.

In addition to the core math curriculum, a huge focus is put on learning math facts in all grades throughout the school. Addition and subtraction facts are learned in grades K-1, while multiplication and division facts are learned and mastered in grades 2-8. Students that meet their goal, are rewarded with an incentive day at the end of the school year.

#### **1d. Science**

At the elementary level, a cross-curricular approach is used to incorporate science in the classroom. Science instruction occurs through the reading curriculum and science excerpts in our educational classroom newspaper, as well as writing assignments. Certain classes take on year-long science activities related to other curriculum, including taking care of fish or studying volcanoes. Teachers utilize community resources available through the University of Illinois Extension Office and 4-H to engage students in hands-on science learning experiences.

Students in grades 6-8 use a curriculum that incorporates the three major sciences into each school year so that they will be exposed to components of Earth, Physical, and Life Science annually. This ensures that we are not only meeting the Next Generation Science Standards, but are also working through areas at different depths of knowledge as they progress through grade levels. Science courses include general instruction as well as the use of many hands-on activities including labs, experimental processes, project-based learning, real-life applications, and research. Students have access to many resources within the science lab as well as the use of technology. We have a 7th/8th grade Science Fair where students can use their knowledge of the scientific method to create a project and then present to other students their findings. Sixth graders are included in the 4-H classroom and 8th grade students are in charge of our school's recycling program. Junior high classes also complete projects and use the materials to educate younger students about different science concepts.

Students are assessed by using traditional tests and quizzes to ensure understanding of basic concepts, but also through project rubrics, lab observations, and problem-solving techniques used during scientific inquiry. Students in Grades 1-7 are administered the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) test yearly to assess their knowledge of science and this year a schoolwide initiative was set to implement STEM activities in every classroom. Students in grades 5 and 8 are assessed yearly when they take the state Illinois Science Assessment. Results are used to drive curriculum decisions in science.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

Social Studies in the primary grades are taught through the basal reading stories from the reading curriculum, with stories that teach about maps, social skills, and influential historical figures. To further learning, we use a combination of picture books and videos to teach about important historical figures, holidays, and geography concepts. Students also are engaged in Social Studies through our Reading Curriculum. The reading text absorbs students in Social Studies by having many of their stories be about historical events, important people in history, different cultures, and geography. Students get to explore these topics further when they enter the Reading Room and are exposed to level 3 and 4 Depth of Knowledge questions regarding reading passages.

Beginning in 5th grade, students have a dedicated Social Studies time during their day. They focus on land forms, geography, using globes, oceans, continents, and regions of the United States. They also study explorers, early colonization of the US, and the Revolutionary War. Some of the tools they use to help teach these topics are maps, globes, pictures, songs, videos, and virtual tours using the SMART projector. The most important aspect they learn about is Civic Duty and being part of the community. Each year, students collect donations of dog/cat products and money and then go to the local animal shelter, Project Hope, and help them with any projects or duties needed. The junior high social studies curriculum engages students in

history, culture, government, economics, and culture. As per state and federal law, students learn structures of government, with reference to the US Constitution, as well as the Illinois Constitution. In addition to the focus on America, a substantial amount of time is spent on world cultures to help our students understand the world around them. The school administers the ITBS Assessment to provide data to drive curriculum decisions in Social Studies. Additionally, the school assesses students understanding through project based assignments and presentations.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

New Simpson Hill School recognizes the importance of preparing the students for college and career readiness. Students in junior high, participate in a number of activities throughout the year designed to prepare each student for future goals. Junior high students complete career interest surveys to help them develop an idea of possibilities that fit within their interests. Students research the career in terms of secondary and post-secondary requirements, licensure or certification requirements, average pay, and current job availability needed to pursue the career. Students in the 8th grade participate in a trade careers field trip that show students, from experts in their trade, the basics into entering each specific trade as a career. New Simpson Hill also encourages parents to "take their kid to work day" and excuses any absence related to a student exploration of careers. We feel that each student that graduates the 8th grade from New Simpson Hill is on the path to college if they choose to attend a college.

We work closely with the high school district that serves New Simpson Hill students to ensure the student is enrolled in classes that will prepare the student for college or their career choice. Collaboration meetings are held annually between New Simpson Hill and the high school district to articulate class schedules to best prepare each student for their future. These meetings include New Simpson Hill administration, teachers, and social workers working alongside high school counselors and teachers. Each student is addressed individually and set on a path for success. Additionally, each class in grades 2-8 completes a community-based project that allows students to explore careers and give back to the community. Students are also exposed to career exploration throughout the use of the school curriculum. Science textbooks outline science related careers embedded into the text and allow students to explore a variety of different careers in this field. Junior high teachers also embed college and career concepts into their weekly lessons.

#### **1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

The New Simpson Hill Preschool for All Program promotes learning across multiple domains and implements a curriculum that promotes positive relationships for all children and adults, using developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches. The school uses the ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) approved curriculum Teaching Strategies Gold. The core curriculum areas from Illinois Early Learning Standards covered are Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Development and Health, the Arts, Social-Emotional Development, English Language Learner Home Language Development.

Child development and school readiness information is collected through direct child assessment and teacher report. Trained assessors conduct child assessments in the spring of the preschool and kindergarten upcoming year using ESI-P (Early Screening Instrument Preschool) and ESI-K (Early Screening Instrument Kindergarten.) Kindergarten students are assessed again in the fall of the kindergarten year using ESGI (Educational Software for Guiding Instruction) as well as the KIDS assessment. Each child's preschool teacher and kindergarten teacher complete checklists about the child's social skills, academic and behavioral adjustment to show the impacts and success of preschool on children's school readiness.

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

New Simpson Hill provides students with multiple areas of instruction besides the core curriculum.

The school offers music classes to all students in grades kindergarten through 5th grade, with beginning band offered to 5th grade students that are interested. The school also provides band and chorus to students in grades 6th-8th that wish to participate. Approximately 25% of students participate in the band/chorus

program. Students in chorus visit the local nursing home each December to sing carols to residents. Students of all grades and ages are encouraged to perform at the talent show held for students, parents, and community members. Art classes are taught within the individual classrooms, and all students participate. Students have an opportunity to show off their artistic talents in the annual art show held for the community. Even classes as young as pre-K are involved in the arts.

The school requires physical education/health education to all students 5 days/week, despite the State guidelines only requiring 3 days/week for PE. We feel it is critical to not only exercise the mind, but also exercise our bodies and health at New Simpson Hill. Our kindergarten through 4th grade receive 20 minutes of P.E. each day, while 5th through 8th grade receive 40 minutes each day. The University of Illinois Extension Office offers a program called "Wise Guys" to K-4 students that focuses on healthy eating habits. This program also introduces many vegetables and fruits to our students to help increase knowledge and tastes for healthy foods. The local 4H club started a "healthy cooking class" for our 3rd-5th graders to learn how to cook/make healthy meals and snacks.

We feel it is essential that all students have access to technology and the knowledge how to use it. All students K-8th at New Simpson Hill use the Computer Lab or Chromebooks at least 3 times a week to work on RTI. Our RTI programs include I-Ready Math, Exact Path for Reading and Language, and Reading Eggs (K only). Kindergarten through 5th grade are provided a time in the lab to work on typing and research once a week for 30 minutes, while 6th-8th grade students receive 35 minutes/4 times a week. All students in grades K-8 utilize a computer web based program that evaluates test data and prescribes lessons based on each student's levels in math, reading, and ELA. Each classroom in our building is equipped with a SMART board or SMART projector to help enhance their curriculum. Additionally, students are taught study skills which include: researching, word processing, internet safety, and presentation techniques on a computer.

This year we have introduced the Reading Room into our school, which provides additional learning that correlates with our Reading curriculum. K-4th grade gets 30 minutes/4 times a week. Each class receives 30 minutes a week in our library. Students learn how to check out books, peruse the collection of books, take tests in the Scholastic Reading program and for the lower grades, have stories read to them.

New Simpson Hill believes it is necessary to offer non-academic programs into our school's culture to provide a more well-rounded education for each child. All students kindergarten through 8th grade receive Character Education once a month from our school's Social Worker. Bi-monthly our kindergarten through 5th grade receive Ag in the Classroom from the Farm Bureau. Cooking with Kids provided by the 4-H club is another program offered to grades 3-5. We also offer the "Good News Club" which meets once a week after school and is open for all to join. This club promotes values, citizenship and kindness to others. The school also offers after-school tutoring to any student, while focusing on students who are struggling in their classes. To encourage participation, we offer a bus ride home to all students after tutoring is finished.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

The school district uses many different means to help struggling students and close grade level learning gaps. New Simpson Hill offers after-school tutoring for students who are under-performing and need additional support from October through January. This allows for teachers to work with small groups for an hour and fifteen minutes after school to focus on specific skills. This school year, New Simpson Hill worked collaboratively with Vienna High School Beta Club. Students in Vienna High School Beta Club worked with teachers during tutoring which allowed an even greater individual approach to tutoring and enhance the level of support the students received.

Exact Path for Reading and Language and I-Ready for Mathematics are online instructional resources used by the district that presents another tool to help assist students and work to close the learning gaps. The student's complete activities, lessons, and assessments at their current level based on the diagnostic tests they take in reading, math and language arts. Their learning paths are adjusted, as needed, based on their achievement. If students are struggling with the material that is presented, teachers use the printable

intervention lessons/activities and can adjust the preset learning path, if necessary. Each classroom has 90-120 minutes of RTI time scheduled each week. During this time, is when students work on their online learning paths. While all the other students are working online, teachers work individually or in small groups with students who are struggling. This allows teachers to provide students with more focused instruction on specific skills they are struggling to understand and/or apply. Our district uses Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test to identify students who are low performing in reading. The students who score the lowest on the test are pulled out of class 4 days a week for additional support. During this time, students work on reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

In classrooms, students that are excelling are challenged through work that requires them to work at the higher Bloom's Taxonomy levels through analyzing, evaluating and creating. Students performing above grade level are also given opportunities in the classroom and in lower grades to help other students by becoming peer teachers. There is a group of 8th grade students who work in the kindergarten classroom multiple days a week to assist during RTI time.

The online RTI programs used in our district challenge students who are working above their current grade level by providing activities that meet their academic needs. Some students are completing work two to three academic levels above their current grade level. The programs do this by using data from the diagnostic tests to set learning paths and goals based on the results and prescribing an individual educational program for each student based on each performance level.

Our school's Reading Room also offers a way to better serve our 1st- 4th grade students on an individual basis by allowing for leveled grouping. Students who are high achieving are grouped together and given material on their reading level to challenge them. The students who work in this group challenge each other since they are all higher achieving students. Our school uses the Scholastic reading program to challenge students who are excelling above their grade level. Each student is given individual point goals and assigned a reading level that fits their reading ability, not their grade level. This allows students who are reading beyond their assigned grade levels to read and be assessed on stories and/or novels that require them to work to their potential. The district also allows for advanced placement for students showing mastery in all or certain subjects.

The New Simpson Hill Beta Club gives qualifying students the opportunity to attend Beta Conferences and complete service learning projects inside and outside the school. This program maintains high academic standards for the students.

### **3c. Special education**

New Simpson Hill provides special education and related services to students that meet eligibility criteria. Each student receiving special education services has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that outlines student strengths and weaknesses. The IEP is tailored to meet each student's academic and social-emotional needs. Small group and individual specialized instruction for core subjects is provided within the resource classroom. For example, some students go to the resource classroom for specialized instruction in reading, while other students may receive specialized instruction in math, reading and language arts. In other cases, the student may remain in the general education classroom for instruction, but then go to the resource room for academic support and/or reteaching of key concepts.

The specialized instruction that is given is based on individual needs of the student. Some students are taught using the general core curriculum, but at a slower pace with smaller amounts of information taught at one time (chunking). In other situations, some students require specialized programs to support reading recognition.

In addition to specialized instruction, behavior intervention plans are created to address student behaviors that interfere with their educational progress. New Simpson Hill has had great success in implementing behavior plans to remediate behavioral problems. For example, there have been multiple students that have

moved into the district that were enrolled in a behavioral school isolated from the general education population in their previous district, but were able to operate successfully in our supportive school setting within the general student population. A lot of this success can be directly contributed to the faculty and staff of New Simpson Hill working as a team to help support and promote student success.

**3d.** ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

**3e.** Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

New Simpson Hill serves a large population of students that fall under the subgroup of a low-income household. Many households struggle to meet some basic needs. The school provides transportation for children that stay after school for tutoring services. Throughout the school year, the school purchases items including school supplies, winter clothing, and food for students that lack these basic necessities. The Blessings in a Backpack initiative provides food to students from low income households each week throughout the school year. The school partners with churches, and volunteer groups (Coats for Kids) to provide ample clothing and toys for children that may otherwise not receive presents during the holiday season.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

New Simpson Hill creates a positive environment and encourages student growth by focusing on a different character trait each month. Each month teachers select a student they have observed portraying the character trait to be student of the month. At a monthly assembly the chosen students are recognized and have their pictures displayed. The positive behavior system promotes the safe learning environment. Our school also motivates 5th-8th grade students twice a year with a no detention celebration. Students that have received no detention for missing assignments or negative behavior are rewarded with a trip out of school to go bowling, hiking, zip-lining, rock climbing, or skating. Our 5th-8th grade students are motivated academically by the Johnson County Top Flight Program which awards 5th-8th grade students that have maintained an A average the first three quarters of the school year. These students are recognized at a countywide assembly with a certificate, name in the local paper, and their names are drawn for various monetary prizes.

New Simpson Hill promotes a positive learning environment not only by discussing character traits but also by providing whole school assemblies that focus on social-emotional health. Various assemblies on promoting positive relationships have included bullying, cyber security, and healthy relationships through the Green Bear Program. All NSH teachers are certified in Mental Health First Aid to help in social-emotional growth. Each teacher is prepared to understand, identify and respond to someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. Our teachers know how to provide initial help until appropriate professional resources are available. Our teachers promote a positive culture by getting to know our students personally by engaging in conversation and letting them know they are there for them. Teachers pick a different student once a week and eat lunch with them in the cafeteria. They try to converse more with that student by getting to know their interests and it allows students to feel safe and loved.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

New Simpson Hill works with students, families, and the community in a multitude of ways. Parents have ownership of their children's educational progress through the district's Parent Advisory Council. The Advisory Council consists of parents, community members, teachers, and administrators. They work collaboratively to share information and ideas of school goals, student progress, school improvement, and vision. It is an opportunity for all voices to be heard. This helps administration and the school board know the concerns and/or problems with how a change will impact our community at large. All parents are encouraged to partner with classroom teachers to provide the best and most successful education for their children. The F.A.C.E. (Families Active in Children's Education) group at our school is led by dedicated parents. They raise money to be given back to the classroom for any needs that teachers might have. School Report Cards are distributed to each family, posted on the district website, and advertised for community members. The school tries to hold events that encourage parents and community members to be actively engaged in the students' education. Parents and teachers take part in a schoolwide Open House event at the beginning of the school year. Staff share education expectations, outcomes and goals. Parents and community members are invited to Family Reading Night and Family Book Fair events. These events give community members a chance to interact with the school and learn aspects of our community-driven initiatives. Students are encouraged to engage with the community in a variety of activities. Each class develops a community service project that is to help the Southern Illinois community. A few examples of these projects have included: helping the VA (Veterans Affairs) Hospital, visiting elderly in nursing homes, cleaning and helping a local pet adoption agency, and a multitude of other examples of community service projects. Our Beta Club does similar community service projects to provide a link between the school and the community.

The district partners with the local community college to plan events that relate to academics. All Saints Read is a program in partnership with the community college that inspires students to read throughout the summer months. Celebrate Youth is a program that develops social emotional learning into the 7th grade curriculum and is done in partnership with the University of Illinois extension office.

Parents are invited each year to our annual Awards Day ceremony, Top Flight program and Mini-Olympics. Mini - Olympics gives parents and community members an opportunity to watch their children as they compete in teams in a day of fun filled activities at the end of each school year. Awards day and Top Flight are ceremonies that offer parents and students the recognition they deserve for maintaining high academic grades. The Top Flight program is countywide and includes all the top academic students in Johnson County in grades 5th-12th.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

The administration and school board at New Simpson Hill do a great job at making teachers and staff feel valued and supported. The teachers always have a “voice” in important decisions such as choosing new curriculum and professional development topics. When a new curriculum is chosen, NSH teachers are trained so that they can feel confident when they begin teaching lessons to the students. For example, teachers were allowed to visit schools who were already implementing our newest reading curriculum to get instructional ideas and ask questions. Within the district, measures are taken to help teachers gain support from each other. Meetings have been held to discuss how the new curricula are being implemented, struggles teachers have encountered, and ways educators have found that work best. These meetings are so important in creating our positive school culture because they allow teachers to work collaboratively and be reminded that everyone is learning together as a team.

NSH makes sure the educators’ classroom needs are met. The school doesn't hesitate to buy office supplies and construction paper teachers need each year. Teachers are also allocated funds to spend on classroom needs or wants. The district tries to assist in getting supplies teachers request. The administration and school board have been actively listening to the technology needs expressed by teachers and have been and are continuing to seek out ways to gain access to additional technology. One of the district’s current goals is to obtain enough Chromebooks to allow each classroom to have their own cart of Chromebooks.

Outside of instructional needs, administration and the school board at NSH hosts a teacher appreciation lunch each year, a dessert bar at Christmas time, and gives a gift to each faculty and staff member every Christmas. Throughout the year, the principal makes treats for everyone and also leaves positive notes in everyone’s mailboxes. With all these things combined, it makes teachers and staff at NSH feel valued and supported. Along with the special acts they extend, the level of care towards faculty and staff as individuals is extremely evident. The administration is very supportive and easy to talk to on a personal level. Administrators maintain an open-door policy and are very approachable. They do not make it feel as if teachers and staff are just employees. There is a family atmosphere within the school that has been fostered by the administration’s interactions with teachers and staff. The level of understanding administration extends, regarding not only school related issues, but also those in the personal lives of faculty and staff members contributes a great deal to the welcoming and positive atmosphere.

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

The leadership at New Simpson Hill starts with our Administration and school board supporting and believing in the strengths not only as employees but as people. School and district leaders foster a positive school culture of care and concern, which in turn creates a positive, caring climate. It is a family environment and spirit in our building and in our community. Leaders use a systems approach that incorporates a shared decision-making model among stakeholders. Viewing the school as a system that incorporates many interlocking pieces as a whole, allows this approach to give students, teachers, parents, community members and various other stakeholders a "voice" in their community school. Administration is always willing to drop what they are doing no matter how busy they are to help any staff member for any problem big or small. School and district administration are always visible. They are at the doors each morning to greet every student as they walk into the building. Administration supports teachers’ ideas and philosophies and will always provide guidance and support when needed. The building principal visits classrooms daily and interacts with teachers and students to ensure all feel valued and important.

Our School Board is built by dedicated individuals. They trust each other's opinions and views on all matters because each one has their own strengths and talents that they bring to our school. They truly believe in

doing what is best for our students, staff, and community.

The administration of New Simpson Hill consists of a superintendent and principal. The principal has inspired change and high expectations for students and staff. Since coming to the district in 2018, the principal uses her prior math teaching skills to analyze useful data to increase student achievement and promote positive behaviors and relationships among all stakeholders. She believes that students can accomplish goals with support from staff members and a commitment to high expectations.

The School Improvement Team meets on a monthly basis to review the impact our monthly goals have had. Based upon each teacher's input, they make new informed decisions on how to improve these goals to be more successful. Each month there is an academic goal and a character trait goal that is implemented into our educational practices. The School Improvement Team consists of teacher leaders throughout the building, the Principal, and the Superintendent. This team collects and analyzes data from multiple sources including students, parent surveys, student surveys, assessment data, parental and community input, teachers and, other stakeholders to provide the very best educational experience feasible.

Our Resilience Team, while still in its infancy, is striving to provide opportunities for all students to connect on a deeper level. They have created an Advisory Period, in which all staff will have a group of students to do an activity with. The goal is to help build a bridge between students on the human level to foster a better school environment.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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One aspect of New Simpson Hill that makes it stand out from most schools is the intensity of the school climate and school culture of nurturing and caring for each other. Administrators treat teachers the same way teachers treat students and other teachers - with care and concern!!! Each individual in the school looks for ways to pick each other up and help out when there is a need. New Simpson Hill is a small school with staff members who go out of their way to care for the whole student, not just their academic needs. The advantage of being a small school gives us the opportunity to really get to learn about each student and their family. When we understand who, what, and where our students are coming from; it helps each teacher make informed decisions about how to help connect the academic information to them, individually, while also being nurturing to behaviors and actions.

Each and every staff member who walks through our doors in the morning does their absolute best to ensure our students have a safe, nurturing learning environment- a safe space they may not have anywhere else. Nurturing staff who focus on the social-emotional well-being of our students is what makes New Simpson Hill so successful. We realize that students are not ready to learn when they are overflowing with personal worry and concern. While we are not able to control much of what happens outside of school, we are able to provide a caring and supportive environment at school. We provide an environment in which teachers and staff really listen to what students have to say, and we do our best to help them with their problems when possible. We show genuine concern for the students and their well-being. In turn, students have better focus and put forth more effort towards academics. Even if the students themselves do not hold academics in the highest esteem, they are willing to work hard for educators who show genuine caring and concern for them.

Teachers and staff have been provided with multiple social emotional training over the last 2 years that foster care and concern. Some teachers in the school have also taken in students who needed someone to foster them. This kinship placement allows the students to remain in the care of a person who they already have a relationship with and trust. During the mandated school closure forced by COVID-19, the district provided meals for all students and staff volunteered to make deliveries and prepare boxes of food for our children. During this closure, we had an 8th grade student pass away due to asthma, the staff pulled together to honor the student and her family. The music teacher wrote a song in memory of the student we lost. This is what sets us apart. We go above and beyond to create our familial environment. As a result, we as a district believe in educating the whole child. We have concluded that nurturing the well-being of every student is our number one concern. If we fail at that, we can't build a bond of trust that mutually benefits the academic growth of our students and district.