U.S. Department of Education
2016 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. Joseph E. Fernandes
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Pickering Valley Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 121 Byers Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Chester Springs   State PA   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 19425-9505

County   Chester

Telephone (610) 458-5324   Fax (610) 458-8356

Web site/URL   http://www.dasd.org/PV   E-mail jfernandes@dasd.org

Twitter Handle   Facebook Page
https://twitter.com/dasd_pv   http://www.facebook.com/dasdpv   Google+

YouTube/URL   Blog   Other Social Media Link

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

_____Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Lawrence Mussoline   E-mail lmussoline@dasd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Downingtown Area School District   Tel.   (610) 269-8460
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. Colleen Cranney
(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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.

5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.

7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.

8. The nominated school 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 (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district
   (per district designation):

   10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   3 Middle/Junior high schools
   3 High schools
   0 K-12 schools

   16 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 with characteristics typical of an urban area
   [X] Suburban
   [ ] Small city or town in a rural area
   [ ] Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	25	16	41
1	36	37	73
2	41	33	74
3	55	46	101
4	54	41	95
5	49	46	95
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	260	219	479

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school: 38 % Asian
                                          1 % Black or African American
                                          3 % Hispanic or Latino
                                          0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                         56 % White
                                          2 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 5%

    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 *to* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	23
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	491
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.047
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

    Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
    Arabic, Chinese, Telugu, Hindi, German, Tamil

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %
            Total number students who qualify: 14

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
                                                        63 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.

6 Autism	2 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deafness	16 Other Health Impaired
0 Deaf-Blindness	34 Specific Learning Disability
2 Emotional Disturbance	26 Speech or Language Impairment
1 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
1 Mental Retardation	0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
1 Multiple Disabilities	0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>11</u>

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	19
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals	16
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	8

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   <u>25:1</u>

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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 <u> </u>   No <u>X</u>

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.

Pickering Valley strives to educate all students to meet ongoing challenges in a global society by supporting the individual child within a caring, collaborative environment.

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

Pickering Valley Elementary School is located on 22 acres in the town of Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, 25 miles west of Philadelphia. The original school building opened in 1964, replacing several of the one-room school houses that had been used to educate the children of our community. Because of population growth and parent interest in Pickering's educational programs, this once rural town quickly became a fast growing suburban community. A new building was designed and dedicated in 2007 to accommodate the growing student population, to incorporate new technologies, and to expand program offerings. We currently have a culturally diverse student body of 477 students served by 62 staff members.

Pickering Valley, home of the Panthers, takes pride in developing the values of respect, responsibility, and kindness. Our friendly Panther mascot can be found welcoming students to special events or roaming the halls encouraging children to demonstrate their Panther Pride. These values are the pillars that define our school's expectations for student behavior and lead to our pro-social philosophy toward establishing a positive school community.

The educational philosophy at Pickering Valley, rooted in our mission statement, underscores the belief that educating children is a complex responsibility requiring a dedicated staff and a supportive community. Whether it is in the core curricular areas of Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies, or the specialty areas of Physical Education/Health, Art, Music, Library, and World Language, our students are provided an educational experience characterized by outstanding academic and personal achievements. Our staff joins together to create a comprehensive and cohesive learning environment.

Collaboration is a key practice that enables Pickering Valley to successfully deliver the rigorous Downingtown Area School District (DASD) curriculum. Through grade level meetings, sharing of ideas, and time to analyze data within groups, we create stronger and more knowledgeable teachers who then deliver instruction with deeper and more motivating lessons. All staff members are committed to the success of students. This includes an instructional coach, literacy specialists, special education teachers, encore area professionals, technology innovators, and school counselor. This team approach allows for differentiated instruction and greater success for all students regardless of skill levels. It encompasses a whole child perspective, ensuring we meet social, emotional, physical, cultural, academic, and creative needs. Furthermore, parent and community volunteers add to the collective effort with curriculum-related assembly planning, participating in our wellness committee, and volunteering in our classrooms.

Pickering Valley has cultivated a strong sense of community across all stakeholders. Our dedicated teachers eagerly assume leadership roles to offer extended opportunities for our students, whether hosting math intervention clubs in the morning or offering STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) after-school programs. Likewise, the community sponsors a multitude of events that enrich our children. Our parent association (Pickering Valley School Association, PVSA) collaborates with teachers to deliver activities which support our students. Local agencies also contribute to our efforts to provide a safe environment for our staff and students. In addition, Pickering Valley opens its doors to the community by offering our resources to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; leadership programs such as Girls on the Run and STRIDE, which are YMCA fitness and character-building programs; and local sports associations.

We at Pickering Valley realize that our students are part of a larger community which requires their understanding of globalization and the 21st century challenges our society faces. With our child centered approach to teaching, we strive to create students who will embrace high expectations and become productive members of their society. To support this goal, there are a number of service projects throughout the year such as fundraisers, food drives, clothing collections, and growing a community garden.

Collaboration is fostered at Pickering Valley through open lines of communication. We strive to support parents through biweekly principal email newsletters to parents, teacher-generated weekly or monthly newsletters, and a routinely updated website. Furthermore, teachers share ideas and resources across the district through Schoology, the district management communication tool, as well as in weekly grade level and building level meetings. Students have access to Moodle which provides them with individual class

information and updates and online curriculum resources for at home skill practice and review. Conferencing opportunities keep parents informed; and our parent nights introduce new curriculum initiatives, enabling parents to better support their children at home.

Clearly, the cornerstone of Pickering Valley's success is in our collaborative approach focused on developing students in all aspects of their lives. Evidence of the success of Pickering Valley's educational programs is found in former students who have returned to their hometown as adults, eager to provide the same educational experiences for their own children. Pickering Valley is a dedicated family, focused on the growth, well-being, respect, and cooperation of each member.

1. Core Curriculum:

English Language Arts (ELA)
Pickering Valley offers a rigorous, comprehensive English Language Arts (ELA) program emphasizing foundational skills and aligning with the Downingtown Area School District curriculum and the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Thoughtful consideration of the master schedule allows teachers to maximize their resources with a focus on instructional time. Our ELA program offers students whole group instruction, guided reading, and writing instruction. Students also have an additional Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) block referred to as Panther Time. This year we adopted a new resource, McGraw-Hill Reading Wonders, which encourages close reading of complex text and promotes higher level thinking. Students maintain the reading-writing connection through text-dependent analysis.

We utilize benchmark assessment tools such as AIMSweb and Fountas & Pinnell in order to pinpoint needs and flexibly group students for guided reading instruction in their classrooms. Wonders materials are of high interest, and teachers initiate stimulating discussions while practicing skills taught earlier in the lesson. Instructional aides and special area teachers assist with small group instruction and one-to-one guidance as needed. With this extra support, our classroom teachers can focus on targeting instruction to deliver specific skills for struggling learners as well as to provide enrichment for children working above grade level.

Pickering Valley offers additional opportunities for students with diverse needs. All students in grades 2-5 participate in Study Island, a progress-monitoring software program that allows teacher insight into skill mastery. Similarly, Raz-Kids is used with students K-3. The data from these programs allows for differentiated instruction and individualized practice both at home and at school.

Mathematics
Our district's rigorous Math curriculum supports the foundational skills required by the core standards. Our main resource, Math in Focus Singapore Math (MIF), guides instruction with a problem solving approach, focused on conceptual understanding. During our math periods, instructional aides are utilized every other day in grades 1-5 and daily in kindergarten. Students attain mastery through the progressive model of concrete, pictorial, and abstract concepts. Real world, hands-on experiences focus on application of skills. For example, students in the primary grades, through instruction of number bonds, develop a deeper number sense. Older students solve multistep problems with the assistance of bar modeling to gain algebra readiness.

Fall and Winter district benchmarks provide data to identify areas of weakness and to guide differentiated instruction. Two resources, Study Island and Think Central (MIF core resource website), also provide data for blended classroom learning, fact fluency, skill practice, and enrichment. While students access technology-based resources, teachers have the opportunity to work with individuals and small groups.

Learning support and gifted support teachers utilize co-teaching, push-in, or pull-out models for both struggling and advanced learners. The advanced math students are offered challenging activities with the gifted support teacher and given the opportunity to participate in the Continental Math League. Struggling students benefit from a structured review in small groups with the gifted support teacher. Supplemental materials and before-school math clubs are also available to meet individual student needs.

Science
Pickering Valley students develop inquiry skills and cultivate science literacy with hands-on labs and investigations. Innovative programs captivate the scientific learner through classroom activities, assemblies, and field trips which are aligned with the curriculum. For example, our third grade study, "Trout in the Classroom", allows students to observe brook trout's growth from eggs to fingerlings and provides them with a better understanding of indicator species, streams, and ecosystems. Other science activities include making bluebird boxes, monarch butterfly hatching, an egg drop, and the fourth grade trip to the Da Vinci Science Center. One consistent resource used at each grade level is the Full Option Science System (FOSS).

Students investigate concepts such as the water cycle and manipulating variables. We offer after-school clubs such as Robotics, Programming, Engineering, and Cooking Up Science, all facilitated by our teachers.

Social Studies
Pickering Valley teachers seek to help students better understand our world and their place in it. Our students examine local, state, national, and world history and geography, as well as explore the family, community, country, and world. In the primary grades, students learn about the various community members and their roles and responsibilities. Third and fourth graders explore the regions of the United States with a focus on our state. Finally, our fifth grade students tackle U.S. History through the Age of Exploration and Colonization. This study culminates in a three-day field trip to Jamestown and Williamsburg where our fifth grade students live history firsthand with this being our 36th consecutive year. The goal of Pickering Valley's Social Studies program is to create 21st Century learners who think ethically, critically, and rationally by increasing their awareness of political, social, economic, geographic, and cultural issues.

2.   Other Curriculum Areas:

All Pickering Valley students K-5 participate in the four encore curricular areas: Physical Education/Health, Art, Music, Library, and World Language. Students in grades 1-5 are provided a daily 45 minute block on a rotating six-day cycle. Students enrolled in the half-day kindergarten program are provided a daily 25 minute special area block. Students in Grades 1 through 5 are provided an opportunity for a World Language class. These areas are designed to provide physical and creative outlets while additionally supporting the foundational skills of the core curriculum. After-school activities are offered throughout the year in areas such as Drama, Intramurals, and STEM clubs.

Physical Education/Health
Physical Education (PE) and Health at Pickering Valley promote the practice of lifelong health and wellness through instruction in physical fitness, nutritional practices and drug safety. Additionally, there is a unit on human growth and development for intermediate grades.

In PE, primary grades learn personal space and safety. These students also learn the proper way to perform basic manipulative and locomotor movements and proper techniques to increase fitness levels and prevent injury. Intermediate level students apply skills that focus on fitness, cooperative activities, and sport-based skills. Fourth and fifth grade students are measured by the fitness tracking software, FitnessGram, which uses criterion-based standards established for each age and gender.

Supplemental opportunities, such as Jump Rope for Heart, promote health awareness and support a variety of causes through donations. Our annual Field Day, organized by our PE department, embodies the skill progression for each grade level in a celebration that brings together students, staff, and the community.

Art
The Pickering Valley Art curriculum challenges students to learn about art while making a connection to culture and history. Ample opportunity is given to differentiate and customize each unit for the students based on their strengths and interests. Local artists visit our classes to foster meaningful art appreciation. Parent volunteers regularly assist in a variety of ways. Each year a theme is selected for the Spring Art Show, with all grades learning about the art, mediums, and techniques associated with the theme. Every student participates as an exhibitor in a special "Art in the Dark" evening where the community is invited to enjoy the students' artwork.

Music
Kindergarten through 5th grade students experience music through singing songs, learning how to read and write music, and playing instruments. Various aspects of rhythm are explored and related to each grade level. Students are exposed to the Orff Schulwerk, Kodaly, and Dalcroze methodologies through the use of barred instruments, hand signals, and kinesthetic movement. All grades play a variety of percussion instruments from glockenspiels to drums. Children are also exposed to music history and the music of various cultures.

Orchestra, Band, and Chorus
According to grade level, students may choose to participate in Orchestra, Band, and Chorus to advance their musical knowledge and abilities. Band and Orchestra students work collaboratively in small groups for 30 minutes per cycle to improve their skills. All three groups rehearse before school and prepare for performances while learning about responsibility, time management, and the importance of a cohesive group effort. Winter and Spring concerts showcase and celebrate our Orchestra, Band, and Chorus, both during school and in the evening.

Library
The library curriculum at Pickering Valley teaches the skills necessary for students to become 21st Century learners. The instruction provided is geared to promote a love of reading along with Information Literacy and Digital Citizenship skills. The development of these skills includes the opportunity to discuss literature; to utilize iPads, laptops, and desktops for online research; and to create presentations. The district provides access to multiple databases and online tools, such as Google Drive, to support students in research and digital learning. The Library Media Specialist maintains a library webpage which is specifically designed to develop Information Literacy skills at each grade level. Parents receive monthly newsletters highlighting the connections made between library and classroom learning. Students learn how to become effective and safe online researchers, critical thinkers, problem solvers, evaluative Internet users, and analytical consumers of literature.

World Language
The world language initiative at Pickering Valley provides all students in grades 1-5 with exposure to one of eight different languages via the computer. Students access Rosetta Stone once a six-day cycle with unlimited access at home. Language skills and vocabulary are developed through Rosetta Stone's online interactive, multimodal software. Additionally, this program helps children increase their global awareness.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Pickering Valley uses a variety of instructional methods and interventions in order to develop the whole child and to meet individual needs. Our instructional methods begin with a dedicated, uninterrupted time for delivery of core instruction. ELA and Math instruction are initially delivered to heterogeneous classroom groups. Teachers then transition to instruction with flexible leveled groups based on ongoing data assessments. This assists students in scaffolding previously taught skills and provides practice to reach mastery.

Students are provided with a variety of instructional methods to assist them in meeting the standards. Technology integration using Raz-Kids, Study Island, and core resource websites strengthens students' reading comprehension, problem solving, and fluency skills. Multi-sensory techniques such as hands-on activities with manipulatives and collaborative project-based learning enhance the educational experience. Classrooms are equipped with SMARTBoards, laptops, and iPads, creating a highly interactive learning environment.

Teachers use data from formative, school-wide diagnostic, and benchmark assessments to guide them in differentiated instruction for small groups, RtII ability groups, and individualized programming. From this review of data, interventions are implemented to close the achievement gap and to provide targeted enrichment. Pickering Valley dedicates thirty minutes daily for RtII skill-based intervention. During this time, teachers are able to further differentiate with the assistance of instructional aides. Teachers have access to a Scholastic Book Room (leveled by Fountas & Pinnell criteria) for Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction to target areas for improvement and to develop higher level thinking skills. Literacy Specialists instruct Tier 2 and Tier 3 students using the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) and Read Live.

Instruction is provided for students needing enrichment or remediation following a GIEP (Gifted Individualized Education Plan) or IEP (Individualized Education Program). Co-teaching, pull-out, or push-in instruction promotes high levels of achievement for all learners. Supplemental programs align with the resources and instruction utilized within regular education settings. Teachers use System 44, Read 180 (Scholastic), Wonderworks (McGraw-Hill), and Wilson Fundations. They provide explicit, systematic, and

direct instruction offering an array of interactive learning modes, including technology, to promote student engagement. Math programs for children with specific learning needs include Connecting Math, Mod Math, and Touch Math. Before school math clubs for students in 2nd-5th grade provide additional support.

At Pickering Valley, there is direct relationship between these methods and interventions and the steady growth of all learners. Our collegial approach encourages our highly qualified teachers to design their instruction based on data, to incorporate all learning styles and needs, and to develop our students into effective problem solvers.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Data from a comprehensive and systematic approach to assessment drives our instruction and interventions. Three key benchmark assessments are administered throughout the year. AIMSweb examines early literacy, fluency, and comprehension; the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) assesses overall reading ability; and Study Island identifies math and reading readiness for our statewide assessment.

Benchmark data (shared via Google Drive) combined with classroom performance, teacher observation, and formative/summative assessment, equips teachers to work in grade level data teams to analyze data and plan meaningful instruction. Special area teachers are also involved by working to incorporate targeted strategies into their classrooms to further support core curricular areas. Lastly, the administrator and building specialists rotate through the grade levels weekly to facilitate meetings about data and provide cohesive building communication.

Data analysis continually drives our instruction. It allows teachers to examine data to develop action plans to increase student achievement. Additionally, if a student does not meet the AIMSweb benchmark or the Fountas & Pinnell grade level goals, our data team may recommend participation in a supplemental program like Read Live. Progress monitoring occurs weekly or biweekly. When the expected benchmark is met three consecutive times, the student may exit this intervention. If the benchmark is not met, continued monitoring and support will occur. The Study Island reports are used to provide individual and small group instruction as well. Progress monitoring and data collection allow teachers to adjust instruction accordingly.

With regard to individual needs, based on data analysis, strategic decisions are made to close the gap for students within our IEP subgroup. Implementation of Read 180 resulted in significant growth for our students. During the 2014-2015 school year, one hundred percent of participating students earned an average annual growth of 200 points in their Lexile level and an annual growth rate of 1.8 years for reading.

Parent communication about their children's progress is important at Pickering Valley. At the end of each trimester, parents receive the Elementary Standards Achievement Report (ESAR) to communicate their children's progress towards reaching the core standards. Letters are included explaining each child's current benchmark data. Students with IEPs receive progress reports related to their specific goals as well. At any time, parents are able to access the online parent portal that gives feedback on their children's assessments in all areas of curriculum. This system emails parents on a weekly basis with individual updates. With nearly 100% parent participation in Trimester 1 conferences, these face-to-face meetings enable parents and teachers to establish a positive tone for the school year and to develop mutual goals for their children's educational progress.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Pickering Valley enjoys a climate where the principles of collaboration, mutual respect, and high behavioral and academic standards take precedence. The cooperation between grade level partners, the support of non-classroom teachers and paraprofessionals, and the expectation of academic excellence and ethical behavior in each classroom all provide an atmosphere in which our children are motivated to set high goals for themselves and to value others.

This culture of support, collaboration, and high expectations is evidenced by the wealth of activities and the level of participation by all stakeholders. Our Panther Pride really shines through with the variety of activities we are able to provide. These diverse activities include March Madness Hot Shot contest, Reading Olympics, and Spelling and Geography bees. Our students learn to reach out to the larger community through events such as the Socktober sock collection, Souper Bowl can drive, support of the local Veteran Administration hospital, and donations from the school garden for families in need and the Chester County food bank. These cooperative efforts help the students develop empathy for and awareness of the needs of others in the larger community.

Our school counseling program contributes to the overall well-being of our students through one-on-one and small group instruction, friends groups, lunch bunches, and classroom lessons. Additionally, the counselor supports the school community through consultation with teachers and parents, particularly when addressing the needs of students experiencing behavioral or emotional challenges. The program reflects our mission statement in working to create a caring and collaborative environment.

Pickering Valley's principal promotes a nurturing atmosphere for his staff in a number of ways. He values and supports our teachers in their annual goals and individual interests to develop better instructional practices. He establishes realistic expectations for district initiatives and values teacher input regarding implementation. His open, communicative style makes staff members feel valued both personally and professionally.

Through all of our endeavors, we emphasize the need for looking beyond oneself and recognizing the needs of others as well as teaching our students the value of cooperation. Our children are encouraged to think of themselves as part of a larger world. This philosophy of collaboration and caring is the basis for the success of our students - academically, socially, and emotionally.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Recognizing that it takes a community to educate the whole child, Pickering Valley values the support of parents and all community members and welcomes their involvement. From the very beginning, families have the opportunity to become familiar with our school. Two events, Back to School Night and Mayfest, allow parents to hear about school programs and meet staff, while children meet their teachers and spend time in the classrooms. In addition, our PVSA hosts a reception for new families and invites parents to get involved.

At the heart of our school community are our parents. Our outstanding parent volunteer organization is comprised of 25 subcommittees, supporting our school with funds and delivering programs that enrich the lives of students and staff. For example, PVSA sponsors the Scholastic Book Fair, Invention Convention, our annual talent show, turkey drive, holiday events, and our major fundraiser, the Spring Fair. As the ethnic and cultural diversity of Pickering Valley has increased, the PVSA hosts a biannual International Night where families from different countries can share information, native dress, dancing, and food to broaden our students' view of their world. PVSA works together with teachers to offer student assemblies closely aligned with the curriculum. They create the student yearbook, support field trips, and provide annual stipends for teacher classroom supplies.

Parent and community members are welcomed into Pickering Valley's classrooms as guest readers, art room helpers, and writing mentors. One tradition that highlights this community collaboration is our "Read Across America Day". A committee led by dedicated teachers coordinates activities for Dr. Seuss' birthday to encourage reading across grade levels. Assemblies, like TEDx, allow local individuals to share their expertise and knowledge with the children. We also have informal visits from our local emergency responders which help students feel comfortable communicating with them. Furthermore, the Crime Victims Center of Chester County addresses bullying and teaches our children about Internet safety. We share a close relationship with West Chester University and welcome student teachers and practicum students.

A school-wide event that typifies the community spirit of Pickering Valley took place last year when one of our staff members was diagnosed with ALS. We organized "Sunshine for Celia" and, as a community, raised more than $43,000 to help with her medical care. This involved making our own "Ice Bucket Challenge" video and receiving donations from families and local businesses. Since our community is collectively engaged, students gain a broader perspective of the world that results in their own personal growth, confidence, and achievement.

3. Professional Development:

At Pickering Valley, effective teachers not only motivate students to learn, but are themselves committed to being lifelong learners. Each teacher strives to grow personally, as well as assist colleagues in their academic endeavors. To that end, professional development is offered at both the district and building level to encourage effective, differentiated instruction based on the curriculum and core standards.

At the district level, an annual in-depth plan is established to provide comprehensive, systematic, and research-based professional training. This training occurs on designated days throughout the school year. In preparation for the new core standards, two years were dedicated to developing strategies to teach a new mathematical methodology aimed at building critical thinking, perseverance, and mastery of concepts and skills. Our professional development training is two-fold. First, we are enriching our ELA instruction in guided reading and text dependent analysis. Second, we are exploring the creative integration of technology in all aspects of curriculum delivery in anticipation of our one-to-one iPad initiative. This comprehensive training gives our professional staff the knowledge, skills, and confidence to inform their instruction to best meet the needs of all students.

Our district delivers varied professional development opportunities. Experts are invited to provide full day workshops on standards, programs, and resources. Using the "Train the Trainer" model, teachers are sent to conferences and workshops that highlight specific areas of expertise. Attendees bring back and share this new knowledge with district and building personnel. A third approach is a one-day series of workshops, such as our recent Elementary Technology Conference, that allow teachers to share their instructional techniques. Staff is able to self-select workshops based on personal interests and needs.

Based on feedback from district surveys, we realized teachers, like students, need a tiered approach to professional learning. As a result, new positions were created - Literacy Specialists, Instructional Coaches, and Technology Innovators. These professionals are available to work with individual teachers to plan, model, and co-teach lessons, as well as to provide coverage for a teacher to observe a colleague. This has been extremely effective as it delivers specific insight and training for a teacher, a grade level, or a building to improve instruction and foster students' success.

Professional development also occurs at our building level in numerous ways. Principal-directed Tuesday morning meetings promote the evaluation of data and its use to maximize student potential. Weekly Wednesday afternoon staff meetings allow for building discussions, further training, and suggestions for improvement. Book clubs allow participants to learn and share with each other on targeted topics of interest. Through the collaboration of individuals, building professionals, and district personnel, valuable professional development creates a safe, healthy, and successful educational community.

4. School Leadership:

The principal at Pickering Valley provides strong leadership to the entire school community while welcoming the active participation of teachers. This leadership model empowers staff and students to achieve optimal growth and cultivates lifelong learners. It establishes an environment where everyone is comfortable taking risks where the goal is academic success with a strong emphasis on physical, social, and emotional growth. The principal provides the opportunity for shared responsibility among all stakeholders and encourages a collaborative, nurturing environment which leads to increased student achievement.

High expectations are established through clear policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are communicated by the Words of Wisdom (Project Wisdom) morning message, staff/student handbook, Back-to-School Nights, bimonthly PV Blast (electronic newsletter), and prosocial skill development. Targeted expectations are communicated to parents, staff, and students. Using a shared leadership approach to create a positive climate for student attendance, discipline, and achievements, we are fostering a place where students feel valued and exude our Panther Pride.

Pickering Valley benefits from this distributive leadership model where teacher leaders (building and district grade level leaders and Technology Innovators), in conjunction with the principal, provide support for academic and technological initiatives. In addition, many staff members take a proactive role by presenting and sharing professional learning which strengthens the cohesion between district and building goals. Student success can be directly linked to weekly data review and Core Team/Elementary Student Assistance Program (ESAP) meetings which analyze student academic, social, and emotional needs.

The principal encourages teachers to participate in professional development opportunities both within and outside of the district by providing substitutes and funding. Some intermediate teachers have attended state level PSSA assessment committee meetings through Data Recognition Corp. This professional development has provided us with successful building and district training resulting in documented statistical success on state assessments.

Our principal and staff encourage students to demonstrate their leadership skills by serving as role models throughout the building. All students have the opportunity to become involved with daily announcements and community service projects. Our fifth grade students have the additional opportunities to join the AAA Safety Patrol, lead the TEDx assemblies, and perform as PE engineers.

Pickering Valley's principal and personnel set the tone for an enthusiastic, accessible, and supportive environment. Students and parents feel that the staff is approachable because they are committed to the needs of all learners. District leadership (superintendent, curriculum directors, and curriculum leaders) all support and encourage our leadership philosophy.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has had the single greatest impact on Pickering Valley's success over the last five years is the collaborative analysis and use of data to inform instruction. Data is gathered from Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), and district benchmark data. In 2010, our principal, working with grade level leaders, began to implement the Data Wise Improvement Process, an eight-step cycle for using data to improve teaching and learning, created by Harvard instructors. There are three main phases in this process: prepare, inquire, and act. Each year we followed the eight specific steps within those phases to give staff a framework that allowed us to delve into the data, examine current instruction, share strategies, assess student progress, and reflect on and revise our teaching practices.

As we purposefully applied the Data Wise process, our data analysis system has evolved from using student data to drive building-centered goals, to grade level specific goals, to small group and individual goals. Each year, our movement through the Data Wise cycle revealed areas we needed to modify in order to maximize the impact on student learning. Through the analysis of data gathered from our learning support students, a need for alternative reading programs was identified. As a result, System 44 was added to meet the needs of students with encoding and decoding difficulties. The following year, 2013, we implemented Read 180 to address reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency for our special education students.

In addition, the benchmarking program was changed that year from 4Sight to Study Island, which offered our students opportunities to practice challenging skills and our teachers additional data to analyze. As our knowledge and comfort with utilizing data analysis to drive instruction grew, we transitioned to having weekly data meetings at grade levels to identify grade level trends in addition to identifying individual student needs.

Through this collegial process, our staff has developed the skills to systematically analyze data to inform instruction. As we worked to close the achievement gap, scores for our students with IEPs, as well as for all students, have continued to show growth. Despite our past successes, the Pickering Valley staff continually looks for ways to improve our student performance and enhance our instructional practices through collaborative use of data while being mindful of the whole child and the larger school community.