

**2002-2003 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program
Cover Sheet**

Name of Principal Mr. Thomas F. Schulte

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

Official School Name Pleasant Valley School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 401 Cedar Road, Mullica Hill, NJ 08062

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address) City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. (856) 223-5120 Fax (856) 223-2692

Website/URL harrisontwp.k12.nj.us Email schultet@harrisontwp.k12.nj.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.

Name of Superintendent Dr. Patricia Hoey

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

District Name Harrison Township School District Tel. (856) 478-2016 ext. 123

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Donald A. DeMore

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

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

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

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct. [Include this page in the application as page 2.]

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12.

2. The school has been in existence for five full years.

3. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 11- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: - 2 Elementary schools
 Middle schools
 Junior high schools
 High schools
 2 TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$7,036.00
 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$8,680.00

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 Urban or large central city
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
 Suburban
 Small city or town in a rural area
 Rural

4. 4 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
 _____ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total		Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
K					7			
1					8			
2					9			
3					10			
4	83	97	180		11			
5	92	86	178		12			
6	92	84	176		Other			
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL:								534

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school: 95.5 % White
3.0 % Black or African American
1.0 % Hispanic or Latino
.5 % Asian/Pacific Islander
0 % American Indian! Alaskan Native
100% Total

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 12.1%

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year	43
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year	19
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students (sum of rows (1) and (2))	62
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	512
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	0.121
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12.1%

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 0 %
0 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: 0
Specify languages: n/a

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5.6 %
29 Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method is not a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 11.5%
59 Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<u>1</u> Autism	<u> </u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u> </u> Deafness	<u> </u> Other Health Impaired
<u> </u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>31</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>9</u> Mental Retardation	<u> </u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u> </u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

Number of Staff

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>
Classroom Teachers	<u>22</u>	<u> </u>
Special Resource teachers/specialists	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>3</u>	<u> </u>
Support Staff	<u>14</u>	<u> </u>
Total number	<u>48</u>	<u>5</u>

12. Student-"classroom teacher" ratio: 24:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate: Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout and drop-off rates.

	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999	1997-1998
Daily student attendance	96.3	98.1	96.2	96.1	95.1
Daily teacher attendance	97.1	94.1	96.7	97.3	92.7
Teacher turnover rate	6%	0	0	0	0
Student dropout rate	-	-	-	-	-
Student drop-off rate	-	-	-	-	-

14. *(High Schools Only)* Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2002 are doing as of September 2002.
Not applicable.

PART III - SUMMARY

Pleasant Valley School is located in Mullica Hill, New Jersey. It is part of a suburban community in southern New Jersey, just outside of Philadelphia, PA. The district has been experiencing enrollment increases of 5-6% per year due to growth in the community. Pleasant Valley is one of two schools serving the students of Harrison Township. The students come to Pleasant Valley School as fourth graders from the Harrison Elementary School just one mile away. All of the districts 534 fourth through sixth graders are in attendance at Pleasant Valley School.

The mission of Pleasant Valley School and the district, in partnership with the home and community, is to provide all children with the opportunity to develop their intellectual, physical, emotional and social potential: to become confident, capable life long learners. Together we are committed to fulfill our mission by providing the resources to foster a safe, caring, supportive environment of mutual respect, communication, teamwork and appreciation of the individual.

Curriculum initiatives provide the strength of our academic effectiveness. Comprehensive professional development provided to the staff enables them to implement standards based programs and enthusiastically work with students on a daily basis. Our Balanced Literacy Program highlights the students' academic day, along with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics-endorsed Everyday Mathematics program, and a "hands on" activity-based approach for Science and Social Studies. World language instruction in Spanish builds on the primary program; it focuses on spoken as well as written language and culture. Additional challenges are offered in technology, library, art, music, and health/physical education. Our students with special needs are included in the general education program and provided the individual support needed through an in class model. A comprehensive bully prevention program is in place. Our Code of Excellence promotes the highest quality of teaching and learning, and creates a safe environment while ensuring that an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation is maintained. Student recognition programs acknowledge those students who meet or exceed our high standards. Our band and choir successes can be measured by the participation of over 200 students.

Most importantly, the atmosphere at Pleasant Valley School is one where the students realize their academic potential, are comfortable and enjoy learning. Our Guidance Counselor addresses the social, emotional and academic needs of all students.

A significant component of the success of the school can be attributed to the extent of positive parental involvement. The Parent Teacher Association collectively supports each student by providing assembly programs, instructional materials, recess equipment, and an overnight

environmental education trip. Parents are welcomed in the school and through their support contribute to the overall effectiveness of the entire educational program.

The entire Pleasant Valley School community – students, parents, township citizens, teachers, administration and Board of Education members – proudly share in the achievements and accomplishments of all students.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

State Assessment Program

The New Jersey Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) consists of three sections- Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics and Science. The ESPA is designed to give an early indication of the progress students are making in mastering the knowledge and skills described in the State's Core Curriculum Content Standards in kindergarten through grade four. The ESPA is administered at the fourth grade level.

The ESPA scores are reported as scale scores in each of the content areas. The scores range from 100-199 (Partially Proficient), 200-249 (Proficient), and 250-300 (Advanced Proficient). The scores of students who are included in the Partially Proficient level are considered to be below the state minimum of proficiency and those students may be most in need of instructional support. At Pleasant Valley School all students have been included in the assessment program except for any student who had an Individualized Educational Plan in place that indicated that a delay of one year in administration or an alternate assessment program was appropriate. In the case of the latter, the state's alternate proficiency program would be followed.

In the year 2000, four special education students were excluded. They were administered the test in the year 2001. In addition, one ESL student who had been in the country for less than three years and in the district for less than one was excluded. She moved from the district the following year. In both 2001 and 2002 a total of six special education students were excluded and scheduled for a delayed administration of the assessment.

Harrison Township School District, and as such Pleasant Valley School has little disparity amongst its students. Less than 5% of the students are from minority groups and only 5.6% of the students district-wide are eligible for free/reduced lunch.

For the school years that the students functioning under special education IEP's was greater than 10, the data has been disaggregated. Some variance is noted across the last four years of data. This is reflective of the varying levels of disabilities of the individual students in the grade group. Throughout the period 36% or more of the special education students achieved within the proficient range in literacy and 43% or more achieved the proficient level in mathematics.

During the past three years, the district has made concerted efforts to implement research-based programs in both literacy and mathematics. The special education department and the

basic skills support programs have been brought into line with these initiatives. The results of the 2002 assessments appeared to be directly related to these curriculum reforms and the extensive professional development program that has been put in place.

In literacy, 98% of the general education students performed at or above the proficient level on the 2002 ESPA. In mathematics, 94.8% achieved at or above the Proficient level with 49% of the students performing in the Advanced Proficient range.

The Role of Assessment in Continuous Student Progress

Assessment plays a critical role in instruction at Pleasant Valley School. Individual student standardized test data and functional assessments are reviewed by teachers and administrators and considered in the development of class lists. The objective is to maintain heterogeneous classes and to be sure students are grouped so that services can be provided effectively. In addition, assessment data is analyzed each September by the staff to meet two important objectives: (1) the development of classroom instructional profiles; (2) to identify the strength and weaknesses of program.

The objective of teachers is to ensure continuous progress of students based on daily performance data. As an on-going part of instruction in literacy, Analytical Reading Inventories are administered. Fluency checks and individual student conferences during readers and writers workshops provide important data for teachers. This data is used to assist in the organization of flexible groups and instructional reading materials. In mathematics, the differentiation of instruction is aided by the administration of a pre-test prior to each unit of study. The results are utilized to shape the instructional implementation of the unit providing additional support when needed and challenging students who demonstrate strong prior knowledge.

Communicating Student Progress

Successful schools maintain strong communication with parents and the community at large. Pleasant Valley School maintains close communication with parents concerning individual student performance in a variety of ways some formal and some informal. On an informal basis, teachers maintain contact with parents through phone calls and informal conferences. Formal parent conferences are held twice a year. Progress reports are sent home mid-marking period to every parent. Formal report cards are provided quarterly. Parents are provided specific learning expectations for the core content areas each quarter. Math profiles are sent home at the end of each quarter so that parents can keep track of their child's performance. The results of state assessment data are mailed home to parents when received.

The data concerning school and district performance is communicated to parents and the community at large through the district's community newsletter. On a yearly basis performance is reported at a Public Board of Education meeting. In addition, information is shared at the Superintendent's Advisory Council meetings and meetings of the Parent Teacher Association. Pleasant Valley School also has a Local Planning Committee made up of teachers and parents that work with the Principal to review data (including performance data) to set goals for the school. These are reported to the County Office of Education as part of the district's Quality Assurance Annual Report each October.

Dissemination Plan

Pleasant Valley School, if selected for the award, would communicate its successes through a multi-pronged approach. The news media would be contacted for an informational news release. An article would be written and published in the District's Community Newsletter. A link would be placed on the district's web site to explain the honor of being selected as a Blue Ribbon School. Our district's mission which is consistent with the national goal of ensuring that every child finds a fitting place and achieves academically would be highlighted. Information would be provided on how the district created a culture for change in teaching literacy and mathematics that resulted in improving student achievement. The district would open its door for visitations from teachers and administrators from other district seeking knowledge and understanding of the research-based strategies implemented that created success. A Power Point presentation highlighting the critical elements of our success would be created and made available to other schools. A team of district staff members would be available for presentations at pertinent workshops or panel discussions.

PART V –CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Comprehensive Curriculum

Our curriculum is developed using the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards as its framework. Each curriculum area is written, after thorough study and research, by a committee of teachers facilitated by our Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction. The committee analyzes each Cumulative Progress Indicator from the state standards and determines how this indicator would best be met at specific grade levels. After this analysis, units of study are drafted. The committee then reviews research-based resources that would facilitate the delivery of these standards-based units of study. The best resource that meets the needs of students from our community is selected. Assessments for each unit are written, ensuring that each learning expectation is assessed in a manner that provides relevant feedback to our students. The written curriculum is presented first to an advisory group of parents and then is presented to the Board of Education for their review and approval. Once this approval is received, professional development opportunities are designed to lead the teachers in understanding the goals of the newly-developed curriculum. Training in the methodology that is employed through the newly-purchased resource is planned.

Throughout the first year of implementation, grade groups of teachers meet on a regular basis with the Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction to suggest revisions based on feedback that they are receiving from the students. The curriculum committee reconvenes yearly to analyze these suggested changes, in light of the Core Content Standards, and revise accordingly.

Our Language Arts Literacy Curriculum is delivered using a balanced-literacy approach, in which all of our students are engaged in reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing guided by our teachers who challenge them to grow into independent readers, writers and thinkers. The Mathematics Curriculum places emphasis on students acquiring knowledge, skills and an understanding of mathematics which is rooted in real life context. In Science, the emphasis is on

learning the process skills students need to inquire about the scientific concepts in their world. The main resources used to delivery the Science Curriculum are science kits endorsed by the National Science Foundation. Our Social Studies curriculum places a heavy emphasis on students interacting in cooperative groups using their multiple intelligences to lead them to think and discover knowledge for themselves. Our Spanish Curriculum provides students with the opportunity to actively use the Spanish language and learn about the Spanish culture in an effort to heighten their linguistic and cultural awareness. Our Health and Physical Education Curricula focus on learning healthy behaviors that will persist into adulthood. Our Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum recognizes that music and art are essential for the human and social growth of our students. Finally, our Technology Literacy curriculum ensures that our students have the skills needed to succeed in a highly technological environment.

Reading Curriculum

A Balanced Literacy Approach is the basis of our reading curriculum. This balance of instructional approaches includes modeled, shared, guided and independent reading. Skills instruction is explicit and direct and is delivered within the context of authentic literacy experiences. Teachers are trained to match children to the proper book, and to tailor instruction to meet children's instructional levels. All teachers administer running records or Analytical Reading Inventories to determine each student's appropriate instructional reading level. Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade use Rigby Literacy as the primary resource to deliver the reading curriculum. Teachers in Grades 4 to 6 use a readers' workshop format that is based on the work of Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (Guiding Readers and Writers, 2001).

The methodology employed supports not only the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, but also the standards adopted by the National Reading Panel (NRP). The NRP determined, in their report, that a rigorous reading program includes instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, guided oral reading, independent silent reading, comprehension strategy and vocabulary. Both the Rigby Literacy resource and the readers' workshop format, along with our own Phonemic Awareness and Phonics instruction, which we refer to as P.A.S.S. (Phonemic Awareness, Spelling and Speech) incorporate all of the necessary components recommended by the National Reading Panel. It was for this reason that these resources and methods were chosen as our delivery method for reading instruction in our K to 6 school district.

Mathematics Curriculum

Our mathematics curriculum is delivered to our students in Kindergarten through sixth grade using the Everyday Mathematics (EDM) resource that was developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project in the early 1980's. The U.S. Department of Education's Mathematics and Science Expert Panel designated it as one of their five Promising Programs. The strength of the EDM program is its scientific research base and innovative teaching strategies that support national and state standards.

Our philosophy states that our district "...believes that all children need to acquire the mathematical skills, understandings, and attitudes that they will need to be successful in their careers and daily lives." The EDM program supports these high expectations for all students and

provides consistent high quality lessons that carefully builds upon and extends the knowledge and skills that students learned in previous years. This program provides a balance among the mathematical strands. It presents students with multiple methods and strategies for problem solving. This approach is based on everyday situations that develop critical thinking and provides a structure where students collaboratively learn in partners and small group settings. Through this program all students see themselves as mathematicians.

Instructional Methods To Improve Student Learning

Differentiated instruction is employed to form flexible groups in reading, writing and math to improve student learning. This methodology is based on the work by Carol Ann Tomlinson (The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners, 1999). In reading, we use leveled texts that are matched to the student's individual instructional reading level. These levels are determined through the administration of an Analytical Reading Inventory. Guided reading groups are based on the data attained from these inventories. In writing, our teachers in first through sixth grade use a Writer's Workshop format based on the works of Ralph Fletcher (The Writing Workshop, the Essential Guide, 2001) and Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. The workshop format allows teachers to either individually or in small groups confer with students about their writing. Students also confer with their peers. In mathematics, students are administered a pre-assessment at the beginning of each unit of study. Math instructional groups are then formed based on an item analysis of this pre-assessment. Technology is utilized as a tool supporting the instructional methodology. Every instructional area at Pleasant Valley School is connected to the Internet. The student to computer ratio is 3:1.

Professional Development Program

Over the past few years, our district's professional development program has focused on improving reading and math achievement with an emphasis on using assessment to differentiate instruction and improving writing skills. To accomplish this goal, a unique approach to professional development was needed due to the dramatic shift in instructional approaches in reading and math.

A gradual implementation plan for the new Mathematics curriculum, that spanned over four years, was designed. Each year staff members of different clusters of grades were targeted for professional development. This allowed for cross grade-level visitations and cross grade-level articulation meetings. Support was multi-faceted, and included: workshops led by outside consultants, turn-key teacher trainers and intensive grade-group committee work. Support provided by the Supervisor of Curriculum was on-going throughout this process. Parent training proved to be equally important.

The successful components of the math professional development plans were incorporated into the plan for literacy. In addition to similar initiatives mentioned above, support was provided with the purchase of research books for all Literacy teachers which were used at in-district workshops and as on-going reference books. Study groups focusing on comprehension strategies and differentiated instruction were conducted during the summers. Administrative staff training was also given high importance. This ensured accountability for the implementation of these new instructional strategies through direct observation in classrooms by administrators. Our plan has given us the ability to raise the bar for our teachers and as a result has had a positive impact on student achievement.

New Jersey Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA)

Literacy Sub-Test Results

	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
April Testing				
<i>Pleasant Valley School Scores</i>				
TOTAL				
Partially Proficient	6.6	9.1	45.0	20.9
Proficient	84.3	75.0	51.6	75.5
Advanced Proficient	9.0	15.9	3.4	3.6
Number of students tested	166	164	140	139
Percent of total students tested	98.8	97.6	96.6	
Number of students excluded	2	4	5	
Percent of students excluded	1.2	2.4	3.4	
SUBGROUP SCORES				
1. General Education				
Partially Proficient	2.0	5.4	38.9	17.2
Proficient	88.2	77.9	57.2	78.9
Advanced Proficient	9.8	16.8	3.9	3.9
2. Special Education				
Partially Proficient	61.5	46.7	*	63.6
Proficient	38.5	46.7	*	36.4
Advanced Proficient	0	6.7	*	0
SCHOOL MEAN SCORE	229.4	232.4	217.1	216.7
STATE SCORES				
TOTAL				
Partially Proficient	20.9	21.0	44.9	43.3
Proficient	73.1	69.9	51.7	54.1
Advanced Proficient	6.0	9.1	3.4	2.6
STATE MEAN SCORE	216.8	218.1	197.4	199.7

- Sample size was not sufficient

New Jersey Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA)

Mathematics Sub Tests Results

	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
April Testing				
<i>Pleasant Valley School Scores</i>				
<i>TOTAL</i>				
Partially Proficient	7.2	26.1	11.4	15.1
Proficient	47.0	47.9	59.3	66.9
Advanced Proficient	45.8	26.1	29.3	18.0
Number of students tested	166	165	140	139
Percent of total students tested	98.8	98.1	96.6	
Number of students excluded	2	3	5	
Percent of students excluded	1.2	1.8	3.4	
<i>SUBGROUP SCORES</i>				
1. General Education				
Partially Proficient	5.2	22.8	11.4	14.8
Proficient	45.8	27.5	29.3	19.5
Advanced Proficient	49.0	27.5	29.3	19.5
2. Special Education				
Partially Proficient	30.8	56.3	*	18.2
Proficient	61.5	31.3	*	81.8
Advanced Proficient	7.7	12.5	*	0
SCHOOL MEAN SCORE	241.6	225.5	233.3	226.3
STATE SCORES				
TOTAL				
Partially Proficient	31.5	34.1	34.2	39.4
Proficient	41.3	44.2	46.5	44.3
Advanced Proficient	27.2	21.7	19.3	16.2
STATE MEAN SCORE	218.1	214.6	214.2	209.5

- Sample size was not sufficient