
**2003-2004 *No Child Left Behind*—*Blue Ribbon Schools Program*
Cover Sheet**

Name of Principal Mrs. Susan E. Wilson

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

Official School Name Ruth M. Schneider Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 309 North John Street, Farmer City, IL 61842-1299

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

Tel. (309)928-2611 Fax. (309) 928-2195

Website/URL http://www.blueridge18.org E-mail swilson@br18.k12.il.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.

Date January 20, 2004

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Nancy P. Gibson

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

District Name Blue Ridge Community Unit School District No. 18 Tel. (309)928-9141

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.

Date January 20, 2004

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Patrick Ryan

(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.

Date January 20, 2004

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

**Private 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 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.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2003-2004 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1998.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. 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 the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. 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.
8. 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

All data are the most recent year available.

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

1. Number of schools in the district: 2 Elementary schools
 0 Middle schools
 1 Junior high schools
 1 High schools
 0 Other (Briefly explain)
- 4 TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$7,029

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$8,181

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	25	24	49	7			
1	42	31	73	8			
2	37	28	65	9			
3	33	23	56	10			
4				11			
5				12			
6				PreK/ECSE	32	28	60
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							303

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- 96.4% White
 - 03.0% Black or African American
 - 0.6% Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.0% Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 0.0% American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 100% Total**

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

(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.	11
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	11
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	303
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	.0726
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7.26

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

Number of languages represented: 1
Specify languages: English

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 22.8%
69 Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method does not produce 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: 20.8%
63 Total Number of Students Served*

*This number includes speech only and Early Childhood Special Education students

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

<u> </u> Autism	<u> 1 </u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u> </u> Deafness	<u> 4 </u> Other Health Impaired
<u> </u> Deaf-Blindness	<u> 11 </u> Specific Learning Disability
<u> 1 </u> Hearing Impairment	<u> 26 </u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u> 3 </u> Mental Retardation	<u> </u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u> 1 </u> Multiple Disabilities	<u> </u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u> 6 </u> Behavior Disorder	<u> 10 </u> Developmental Delay (ages 3-5 years)

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

Number of Staff*

*Includes staff for Prekindergarten and Early Childhood Special Education programs

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u>
Classroom teachers	<u> 13 </u>	<u> </u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u> 6 </u>	<u> 4 </u>
Paraprofessionals	<u> 4 </u>	<u> 1.5 </u>
Support staff	<u> 7 </u>	<u> </u>
Total number	<u> 31 </u>	<u> 5.5 </u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 23.3:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. 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 rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	95.3	95.2	95.7	95.9	94.8
Daily teacher attendance	97	97	97	97	97
Teacher turnover rate	0*	.05	0	.05	0
Student dropout rate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Student drop-off rate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

*District budget cuts reduced the staff by 3 teachers. The remaining staff members were veteran staff members so no new teachers were hired.

PART III - SUMMARY

Provide a brief, coherent narrative snapshot of the school in one page.

Ruth M. Schneider, a K-Grade 3 elementary school, draws its students from the 212 square miles of our rural consolidated district which encompasses parts of three counties: DeWitt, Piatt and McLean. We house a grant-funded at-risk pre-kindergarten program and Early Childhood Special Education program. Sixty percent of students are from Farmer City and the surrounding area, 30% from Mansfield and 10% from Bellflower. The student body is approximately 95% white with the remainder including African-Americans, Hindu, Macedonian, and Hispanic children. All students are English speaking by the time they enter kindergarten. We have an ever-increasing level of students from single, divorced and/or blended families. The area is rural and basically a farming community. Many parents are employed in either Champaign-Urbana or Bloomington-Normal. The school district is the largest employer. Job opportunities and opportunities for school-work experiences are limited. Since no county seats are within the school district, no local health or mental health services are available to area families. Other supports are limited.

The vision of Schneider School is to lead our students to become independent, responsible, life-long learners who are willing to work cooperatively, live productively, and adapt in our ever-changing world. The mission of Schneider School is to prepare students with the necessary skills to learn successfully. Our school's focus is to be the core of the learning environment for the community. We believe that all children can learn and have the right to a quality education in a safe, healthy, positive and secure environment. Students learn in diverse ways and, therefore, we value a variety of teaching and learning styles. We believe that students will aspire to become goal seekers, problem-solvers and decision-makers. We recognize that education is the key to success and that learning is a life-long process.

Faculty, staff and students at Schneider strive to *Respect Self, Respect Others, Respect Property, and Respect Authority*. Faculty and staff work to maximize instructional time and establish curriculum with a strong foundation in research. All seek continually to improve our program. We have a school-wide behavior and discipline program (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support – PBIS) that has resulted in a significant (2/3) decline in discipline referrals over the past three years. Our faculty values staff development and readily incorporates new knowledge into classroom activities. Data from assessments is regularly reviewed, and school and grade level goals are determined from this information. The school district has extremely limited financial resources and we have worked to find low cost, effective strategies to meet the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of the students.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Describe in one page the meaning of the school's assessment results in reading and mathematics.

The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) measures the degree to which students are achieving the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS). Students in grades three, five, and eight are evaluated on reading, writing, and mathematics standards. Students in grades four and seven are evaluated on science and social studies standards. Following are the performance levels assigned to students based on the results of the ISAT:

- **Exceeds Standards (Level 4)** – Student work demonstrates advanced knowledge and skills in the subject. Students creatively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems and evaluate the results.
- **Meets Standards (Level 3)** – Student work demonstrates proficient knowledge and skills in the subject. Students effectively apply knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- **Below Standards (Level 2)** – Student work demonstrates basic knowledge and skills in the subject. However, because of gaps in learning, students apply knowledge and skills in limited ways.
- **Academic Warning (Level 1)** – Student work demonstrates limited knowledge and skills in the subject. Because of major gaps in learning, students apply knowledge and skills ineffectively.

All third grade students at Schneider School are evaluated by the ISAT. Our students consistently perform well above the state averages on the ISAT in reading and mathematics. Over the past five years the state averages have ranged from 61-63 percent of students meeting or exceeding state standards in reading (Level 3 and 4 combined); Schneider students have ranged from 79-88 percent of students meeting or exceeding state standards. In math, the state average has ranged from 68-76 percent of students meeting or exceeding; Schneider students have ranged from 79-95 percent meeting or exceeding state standards.

For the spring 2003 testing, the state of Illinois does not disaggregate data for subgroups smaller than 40 students. In 2002, data was provided for subgroups of 5 or more. In years previous, data was disaggregated only for males, females, and students with disabilities. As a result, specific information is available only for certain subgroups each year.

2. Show how the school uses assessment data to understand and improve student and school performance.

Assessment data is used to measure individual student progress, strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum, and school improvement goals. School improvement goals determine how funds are allocated.

Following is a description of assessments we use:

- Stanford Achievement Tests and Otis-Lennon Ability Tests are given in the fall to grades 1-3. Results are received by the school in December and used to identify student needs and assist in determining if Title I, gifted, or special education services are warranted.
- Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) for reading, writing and mathematics are given to students in grade 3 during March/April. This information is received during the following August and is used to evaluate curriculum and formulate school and district improvement plans.
- Illinois Snapshot of Early Literacy is administered to kindergarten and first grade students at the beginning and end of the school year to measure growth of individual students in key literacy areas.
- Curriculum-based assessments are conducted in each grade to provide additional information on student progress.
- Performance and fixed choice assessments are given by the classroom teachers. This information is used to evaluate individual student progress, determine re-teaching needs and differentiate instruction.

3. *Describe how the school communicates student performance, including assessment data, to parents, students, and the community.*

Parents and students are regularly informed regarding student performance on daily class work, classroom assessments, and projects or special reports. Individual student assessment results are shared with parents at teacher/parent conferences, through telephone calls and written reports. Parent/teacher conferences are formally held on an annual basis, though additional meetings may be scheduled by either the parent or the teacher. Group results from the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) information are published in local newspapers and, via the School Report Card and School Improvement Plan, on the local district website. Yearly presentations to the Blue Ridge Board of Education by the principal further highlight assessment results and school improvement plans for the Board and the community.

4. *Describe how the school will share its successes with other schools.*

Schneider School welcomes site visits of faculty from other schools and districts. In addition, we frequently share information regarding our programs, procedures and practices with other principals via the Illinois Principals' Association Listserv online community. As requested, information on specific programs would be readily shared via presentations at professional meetings and/or conferences, professional publications and local and area news coverage. We will continue to work closely with Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois and other colleges and universities to provide placements and workshops for student teachers, thus providing pre-service knowledge to these individuals.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. *Describe the school's curriculum.*

Curriculum decisions at Schneider Elementary School are driven by the Illinois Learning Standards. We determine the effectiveness of our curriculum by measuring the degree to which there is growth, progression, depth, and quality in student achievement. Special emphasis has been given to developing performance descriptors for the core areas.

A strong focus of our curriculum is to present instruction which engages students in learning that relates to real-life situations. This has been accomplished through the use of many means. The use of manipulative materials, critical thinking skills, and art appreciation are regular components of our instruction. Various local and county organizations as well as our own district support staff have provided life safety lessons, nutrition instruction, and lessons on peer relationships and coping skills. For years our students have had the privilege of interacting with elderly residents of a local nursing home, fostering intergenerational empathy and providing service learning opportunities. Parent volunteers and high school mentors known as "Knight Buddies" help provide individual attention to students. The success of Schneider students can be attributed to the collaborative efforts of teachers, parents, and the community as a whole.

Following is a specific description of each curricular area:

- **Reading/Language Arts/Spelling:** Our basic text at Grades 1-3 is Macmillan/McGraw-Hill which emphasizes a balanced approach to instruction. Kindergarten teachers use Leap Frog Reading and the Waterford Early Learning Program. Accelerated Reader is used at grades 2 and 3. Grammar, usage, and mechanics are developed with abundant practice, review and evaluation. Instruction is supplemented with daily oral language, modeled writing, shared writing, and journal writing at K-3.

- **Handwriting:** Handwriting Without Tears is used to provide a developmentally appropriate approach to handwriting instruction.
- **Mathematics:** Leap Frog materials are used at Kindergarten and Addison-Wesley at grades 1-3. Hands-on manipulative materials are used to provide basic skills development, practice, and problem solving, in order to make mathematics both understandable and useful for students of all abilities. Math Their Way and Carol Thornton's "A Matter of Facts, Addition through Division" is used at all grade levels.
- **Science:** Scott-Foresman is our basic text. A hands-on approach is used where students read, discuss, conduct experiments, research, and use higher-level thinking skills.
- **Social Studies:** Our basic text is Macmillan/McGraw-Hill. Throughout our program, basic social studies knowledge and skills are stressed using big books, hands-on activities and black-line masters.
- **Art:** Students work with various media as they explore areas of art taught by the classroom teacher. Different artists are highlighted at each grade level.
- **Music:** The Connections text series from Scott-Foresman is used for music in grades 1-3. The music program in the primary grades develops basic singing and listening skills and introduces fundamental music concepts. Music performances are used throughout the year to provide students with a motivation to learn.
- **Physical Education:** Our program includes experiences that develop skills related to: fundamental movements, rhythms, games, object handling, seasonal sports, and tumbling. Vigorous activities are conducted daily and out-of-doors whenever appropriate and possible. The curriculum is mapped for each grade level and coordinated with the district's other elementary school. PE activities are coordinated with classroom instruction where possible.
- **Library Skills:** Our program includes both a weekly checkout time and library skill development by our librarian. In addition, the media center houses a computer lab, which is used by classes, groups, or individuals for discovery and practice of basic skills. Computer-based learning is coordinated with the existing curriculum to support and extend learning.

2. *Describe the school's reading curriculum, including a description of why the school chose this particular approach to reading.*

Because the act of reading has been likened to the workings of a symphonic orchestra, Schneider's reading program contains multifaceted components to capture the enthusiasm of each student. In order to address each child's needs with differing readiness and grade levels, we established a reading instruction committee consisting of teachers from each grade and special resource area. This committee reviewed the Illinois Learning Standards, discussed Blue Ridge School District's curriculum objectives, research from the Report of the National Reading Panel, and criteria from the University of Illinois Center for Reading before inviting leading publishers to present their reading programs to us. We pilot tested two of the programs and, after discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each program, selected Macmillan/McGraw Hill as our basal reading series. This series encourages us to build onto the basal units and gives time for the students to read trade books. Theme books related to seasons, notable people, and concepts are read and discussed. Projects involving the home are encouraged.

In kindergarten, the children use the Waterford Early Learning Reading program to build literacy skills. First, second, and third graders are placed in small, flexible groups and receive guided-reading instruction taught by classroom teachers and special resource teachers. In addition, these students individualize their readings and self-assess by using the computer-based Accelerated Reader as they develop their vocabulary, strengthen their critical thinking skills, and solidify comprehension skills. Phonics and phonemic awareness activities are an essential part of the reading program in the early grades. Students have access to Knight Reading Buddies (high school age volunteers) and a local business extends a pizza-reward system ("Read-It" program) to students who meet reading goals. Children self-assess their independent reading by using the computer-based Accelerated Reader program as they progress through reading levels.

Our children are immersed in print throughout the school day in all subject areas. Third graders present a spring choral-reading program to encourage reading in the arts. Reading notebooks and/or literature logs are kept by individual students to document at-home reading, and monitored by our Title I reading teacher. While holding all students to high goals in reading growth, the staff focuses on the individual learner and commits to the goal of leaving no child behind.

3. Describe one other curriculum area of the school's choice and show how it relates to essential skills and knowledge based on the school's mission.

Schneider School's mathematics curriculum has a strong emphasis on hands-on learning with use of manipulative materials at all levels from Pre-kindergarten through grade 3. Over the past several years we have greatly increased the use of manipulative materials, resulting in dramatically increased student achievement in the classroom and on standardized tests. The following information is covered in the curriculum: number sense, patterns, geometry, algebraic principles, time, money, measurement, estimation, problem solving, probability, and analysis, recording and interpretation of data. Our program is based on a standard text that is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards and is supplemented by a variety of resources to make the curriculum come alive for our students. These resources include computer programs, "Math Their Way", and Carol Thornton's "A Matter of Facts, Addition through Division". Our teachers strive to stay current with research-based best practices such as differentiated instruction, cooperative learning groups, flexible grouping with co-teaching, and independent learning, while keeping in mind the multiple intelligences and varied learning modality preferences of our students. The teachers at Schneider provide children with activities that develop them as well-rounded students and foster a love of learning. Success in mathematics is an important part of our mission to develop life-long learners.

4. Describe the different instructional methods the school uses to improve student learning.

In reading, Schneider School uses flexible grouping in grades 1-3 to provide small group instruction tailored to each child's skill level. Cross-grade tutoring, called "Reading Buddies" provides mentoring across grade levels. In Kindergarten, students use the Waterford Early Learning program for individualized instruction. Accelerated Reader is used at grades 2 and 3 to motivate students to read with understanding. Students engage in dramatic interpretations of print for classroom and school-wide programs throughout the year.

In writing, students are taught using modeled and shared writing activities, journals, daily language practice, and a pen pal program. Each grade level focuses on specified genres of writing and uses rubrics to assess writing. Spelling, punctuation, and other writing mechanics are specifically taught at each grade level.

In mathematics, all grade levels make extensive use of math manipulatives, "Math Their Way" activities, daily problem solving, and computer software to enrich the curriculum. Teachers supplement the basic reading text with materials created by Carol Thornton from Illinois State University.

In all subject areas, teachers work to differentiate the curriculum to tailor instruction to student needs. Adult volunteers and high school students are used to provide tutoring for struggling students. Title I reading instruction or special education is provided to eligible students.

5. Describe the school's professional development program and its impact on improving student achievement.

A hallmark of the Schneider faculty is its desire to continually look for ways to improve student learning. Via the school improvement planning process, the faculty and staff review data and determine the areas

that need improvement and further development. This information coupled with district needs guides our staff development program. In past years, staff members attended out-of-district conferences, but recent financial problems within the district have limited our ability to do this. We have maximized staff development dollars by bringing presentations to the faculty. In order to provide needed time for staff development the district sponsors two curriculum days per school year, two teacher institute days, and two to three half-day school improvement days. Conferences, study teams, mini-workshops, and in-depth in-service trainings provide varied staff development opportunities. Schneider staff members have participated in these sessions in order to expand their knowledge of current best practice. Challenging and innovative ideas and techniques have been utilized by our staff following in-depth study of differentiated learning and assessment. Many in-service updates have been led by in-house technology staff to strengthen our knowledge of software and use of technology to reinforce student learning and support the curriculum. Special education support personnel and specialists have provided presentations on practical applications to be used with special needs students. Teachers visit programs at other schools and glean practical ideas for their own classrooms.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS RESULTS

Grade 3 Reading – Illinois Standards Achievement Test

Edition/publication year: 1999-2003 Publisher: Illinois State Board of Education

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Testing Month – March/April					
SCHOOL SCORES					
Total – Percent of students...					
At or above Academic Warning	100	100	100	100	100
At or above Below Standards	96	100	97	100	96.5
At or above Meeting Standards	79	84	78	85	87
At or above Exceeds Standards	31	31	30	27	37.9
Number of students tested	65	74	69	73	58
Percent of total students tested	97	100	100	99	100
Number of students excluded	2- absent	0	0	1- absent	0
Percent of students excluded	3	0	0	1	0
Subgroup Scores – No subgroups had sufficient numbers to be reported					
STATE SCORES					
Total– Percent of students...					
At or above Academic Warning	100	100	100	100	100
At or above Below Standards	92	94	93	94	91.9
At or above Meeting Standards	61	62	62	63	62
At or above Exceeds Standards	17	21	19	19	21.9

Grade 3 Mathematics – Illinois Standards Achievement Test
Edition/publication year: 1999-2003 Publisher: Illinois State Board of Education

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Testing Month – March/April					
SCHOOL SCORES					
Total – Percent of students...					
At or above Academic Warning	100	100	100	100	100
At or above Below Standards	94	98	94	100	98.2
At or above Meeting Standards	82	83	79	92	94.8
At or above Exceeds Standards	18	19	31	41	63.8
Number of students tested	66	74	69	73	58
Percent of total students tested	99	100	100	99	100
Number of students excluded	1- absent	0	0	1- absent	0
Percent of students excluded	1	0	0	1	0
Subgroup Scores – No subgroups had sufficient numbers to be reported					
STATE SCORES					
Total– Percent of students...					
At or above Academic Warning	100	100	100	100	100
At or above Below Standards	88	90	92	93	93.1
At or above Meeting Standards	68	69	74	74	75.7
At or above Exceeds Standards	21	23	28	30	31.1