

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

Type of School: (Check all that apply)  Elementary  Middle  High  K-12  Other  
 Charter  Title I  Magnet  Choice

Name of Principal: Ms. Joanne Saniewski

Official School Name: Big Tree Elementary School

School Mailing Address:  
South 4460 Bay View Road  
Hamburg, NY 14075-1335

County: Erie State School Code Number\*: 141604060003

Telephone: (716) 926-1740 Fax: (716) 646-2111

Web site/URL: www.frontier.wnyric.org E-mail: jsaniewski@frontier.wnyric.org

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*: Mr. Ronald DeCarli

District Name: Frontier CSD Tel: (716) 926-1710

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Gerald Baldelli

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

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

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

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

## 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 for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals 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 and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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:
- |          |                     |
|----------|---------------------|
| 4        | Elementary schools  |
| 1        | Middle schools      |
|          | Junior high schools |
| 1        | High schools        |
|          | Other               |
| <b>6</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>        |
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 6056

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: 9168

**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. 10 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 as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0	7			0
K	41	50	91	8			0
1	45	48	93	9			0
2	50	55	105	10			0
3	62	52	114	11			0
4	50	48	98	12			0
5	48	61	109	Other	16	9	25
6			0				
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL</b>							635

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
1 % Asian  
1 % Black or African American  
1 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
92 % White  
4 % Two or more races  
**100 % Total**

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 2 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	10
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	3
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	13
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	627
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.021
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	2.073

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 0 %

Total number limited English proficient 0

Number of languages represented: 0

Specify languages:

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24 %

Total number students who qualify: 153

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals 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: 14 %

Total Number of Students Served: 89

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>6</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>27</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>20</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>11</u> Mental Retardation	<u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>15</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

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>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>34</u>	<u>1</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>26</u>	<u>3</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>19</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>80</u>	<u>4</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Daily teacher attendance	96%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Teacher turnover rate	4%	4%	20%	22%	11%

Please provide all explanations below.

Teacher turnover rates for 2005-06 and 2004-05 are due to retirements.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in a community college	<u>0</u>	%
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>0</u>	%
Found employment	<u>0</u>	%
Military service	<u>0</u>	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	<u>0</u>	%
Unknown	<u>0</u>	%
<b>Total</b>	<u><b>100</b></u>	<b>%</b>

## PART III - SUMMARY

---

Big Tree Elementary is located in Hamburg, NY and is ranked in the top ten percent of Western New York Elementary Schools. It is the school where “Smiles Go For Miles”. Your mood is immediately lifted and students are ready to learn in this warm and accepting atmosphere. The message of caring for each student as special and unique is also reinforced over the public address system when the principal emphasizes the importance of possessing good character traits through her daily morning readings from the “Project Wisdom” curriculum.

Paralleling the Big Tree professional learning community philosophy is the school’s Mission Statement, whose goal is to “inspire each student to exhibit integrity as a self-directed and life-long learner, and to achieve personal goals while responsibly contributing to an ever-changing world.” Academics are important at Big Tree, as is educating the whole child via exceptional music, art, and physical education programs. To ensure that no child is left behind, Character Education Clubs and a variety of other activities that nurture respectful and responsible behavior are sponsored in addition to academic programs. Asset building is encouraged and families have access to the Frontier District’s Family Support Center which provides free Mental Health services.

Each student at Big Tree Elementary has the opportunity to participate in the many traditions that have been established. Each fall, a food drive is coordinated to help the underprivileged families of the community. The school’s Student Council orchestrates several charity events including a “Hat and Mitten Tree”, Letters to Veterans, “Koins for Kids”, and many other humanitarian activities. One longstanding tradition at Big Tree School is a partnership with a neighboring nursing home. Through this partnership students have the opportunity to interact and learn from their senior role models. The annual theme based PARP (Parents As Reading Partners) custom encourages parents to read with their children. Last year the students read 94,000 books; this year’s projected goal is 100,000 books! When the goal is accomplished, the principal will arrive at the school in a spaceship on the annual Field Day celebration, wearing a space suit to compliment this year’s space theme.

One of Big Tree Elementary’s many strengths is the Student Assistance Team, a group of school personnel who collaboratively work together to address academic and behavioral issues. The team utilizes the Response to Intervention Model and offers suggestions for effective strategies, which benefit each student in need. Big Tree also embraces a strong home-school connection as research has shown that children who feel connected with their family and others in their community are successful.

In conclusion, from the Peer Mediation Program to the Character Café, Big Tree School is providing building blocks for life so that every child can find success in his or her own way.

## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

---

### 1. Assessment Results:

All the students at Big Tree Elementary School in grades 3-5 participate in the New York State Testing Program. As required by the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, students in grades 3-5 are evaluated for their proficiency in Language Arts and Mathematics. Assessments are administered annually and students are scored on a rubric with Level 4 being the highest and Level 1 the lowest.

A Level 4 student exceeds the standards and is referred to as a student of distinction. A Level 3 student meets the standards and is often coupled with a Level 4 student to designate academic success. Level 2 indicates that the student needs extra help and support to meet the standards, and Level 1 indicates that the student performance does not demonstrate an understanding of the skills expected at their grade level. As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, there is an expectation that all schools in New York State have all students meeting the standards (i.e. obtain a Level 3 or 4) by the year 2012.

Big Tree Elementary strives for student success in all curricular areas. Continual assessment and review of the assessment data is necessary to determine what students have learned and what areas need to be addressed to move a struggling student to a competent level. Based on the trends shown in the attached data tables, Big Tree has seen significant gains in proficiency levels in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. In the last 3 years, ELA results have shown an 8.45% overall gain in the level of proficiency for the total population of grades 3-5. Likewise, Mathematics results have indicated a gain of 7.31%. When disaggregating the data, it becomes evident that even students in this school's subgroups record significant gains. The special education population tested demonstrated an increase in overall proficiency of 1.97% in ELA and 32.4% in Mathematics. More than 24% of Big Tree's students in grades 3-5 qualify for free and reduced lunch. This subgroup follows the same increasing trend reporting gains of 14.9% in ELA and 11.3% in Mathematics. Big Tree Elementary School does not have substantial numbers in the race/ethnicity subgroup including Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American enrollment (n=<10). Although the numbers of students are significantly insignificant as issued by New York State, these numbers (however small) are analyzed and tracked by staff so that ample growth and progress is ensured. What's notable about Big Tree's assessment results is there are no significant school-wide losses in student performance.

Although mandated New York State testing begins in grades 3-5, Big Tree evaluates students prior to this. A thorough Kindergarten screening process provides a substantial head start to respond to instructional needs and provides early intervention before the mandated testing begins in Grade 3. Screening components include Marie Clay's Observation Survey, Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), as well as a parent inventory. The Websites where information on the NYS Assessment System may be found is: [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

#### Assessment Results – Data Tables:

##### Big Tree Elementary English Language Arts Proficiency Rates:

###### 8.45% Gain over 3 years:

	<u>2005-2006</u>	<u>2006-2007</u>	<u>2007-2008</u>
Grade 3	82.57%	81.19%	86.87%
Grade 4	84.3%	86.72%	87.96%
Grade 5	79.79%	84.43%	97.2%
Total	82.22%	84.11%	90.67%

Big Tree Elementary Mathematics Proficiency Rates:

7.31% Gain over 3 years:

	<u>2005-2006</u>	<u>2006-2007</u>	<u>2007-2008</u>
Grade 3	94.49%	97.03%	100%
Grade 4	91.74%	94.59%	97.25%
Grade 5	87.23%	94.17%	98.13%
Total	91.15%	95.26%	98.46%

Big Tree Elementary Total ELA Proficiency Rates by Subgroup:

	<u>2005-2006</u>	<u>2006-2007</u>	<u>2007-2008</u>	<u>Total % Gain</u>
*Special Education Grades 3-5	43.33%	36.5%	52.13%	1.97%
*Socioeconomic Disadvantaged Students Grades 3-5	68.61%	79.35%	83.56%	14.95%
*Racial Ethnic Grades 3-5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Big Tree Elementary Math Proficiency Rates by Subgroup:

	<u>2005-2006</u>	<u>2006-2007</u>	<u>2007-2008</u>	<u>Total % Gain</u>
*Special Education Grades 3-5	58.9%	65.8%	91.3%	32.4%
*Socioeconomic Disadvantaged Students Grades 3-5	87.76%	95.3%	99%	11.3%
*Racial Ethnic Grades 3-5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**2. Using Assessment Results:**

Big Tree utilizes the assessment data in a variety of ways to improve performance levels and increase students' potential to becoming lifelong learners. The data received is used systematically in order to address all areas of concern. Curriculum supplements provide additional support for students to expand and solidify their knowledge base. The professional learning teams analyze test scores; students achieving a score of 2 or below are offered the opportunity to attend Academic Intervention Services (AIS). During the school year, as well as, in the summer, supplemental Academic Intervention Services (SAIS) are provided to students who are at risk. Continual communication between the teachers, AIS staff and parents is key to maximizing students' success rates.

The Student Assistance Team meets regularly to address concerns (academic and behavioral) regarding individual students. The objective is to eliminate barriers that are impeding a student's ability to learn successfully at his or her own pace.

Teachers meet regularly to perform an item analysis of the data generated from the New York State Assessment results. Action plans are developed and implemented to address areas in need of intervention. Such plans include parallel tasks aligned with the state standards and content strands. The team is careful to develop action plans that will ensure vertical articulation of the curriculum from one grade level to the next.

### **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

There are many avenues utilized to communicate student performance, including assessment data sent to parents, students, and the community. Big Tree PTA (the Parent Teacher Association) plays an integral role for linking home and school. Parents are advised of student performance through annual Information Nights and Open House. Furthermore, they receive important indicators of their child's success through teacher conferences, emails, telephone calls, progress reports, and newsletters written by both the Principal and classroom teachers. Teachers clearly communicate student goals and expectations for each grade level. Parents are encouraged to monitor daily progress through work samples sent home regularly. Report cards are utilized as a formal document displaying student achievement. Pertinent information is disseminated at various events throughout the year, such as PTA meetings, Band and Chorus concerts, and "Grandfriends" Day. Wall of Fame, Terrific Kid Awards, Accelerated Reader Club, and PARP Awards feature students who have reached significant milestones. The community has access to the District's web site, which provides information regarding test dates, test tips and test results. The Board of Education meeting agendas and meeting minutes also include important decisions and information that apply to state tests. The District Newsletter outlines all New York State testing results and their impact on District goals.

### **4. Sharing Success:**

Big Tree Elementary has a reputation of having an inviting and successful community climate. This reputation has aided, and will continue to aid, in the ongoing sharing of the successes with other schools, both locally and nationwide. The atmosphere of the school and its successes are professed first and foremost by the Principal, Big Tree's biggest cheerleader. The Principal communicates with other administrators and schools within the district, as well as with administrators from neighboring districts. The Big Tree community is kept informed through school newsletters, PTA involvement, and addressing audiences at school-sponsored events.

The Frontier Newsletter informs District residents and The Hamburg Sun reaches surrounding areas. The Buffalo News, as well as television broadcasts of local news aid in educating the Western New York region. The greater community also receives test results via a very thorough annual analysis of all the regional schools, provided by Business First. The New York State Teacher publications build awareness in areas around the state. The award-winning Frontier website ([www.frontier.wnyric.org](http://www.frontier.wnyric.org)) enables viewers to access this information worldwide.

The Frontier Central School District also has a very supportive Superintendent and Board of Education who highlight successes within the District and promote the sharing of positive achievement within the community. Teachers at Big Tree are very proud to belong to this successful learning community.

In the event Big Tree Elementary is awarded the Blue Ribbon School status, we will continue to use the resources that have proven to be beneficial in helping us to create and maintain our reputation of having an inviting and successful community climate. Furthermore, student-designed school gear will be available to parents and students; letters would be purchased to spell out "National Blue Ribbon Recipient". School letterhead will be replaced with letterhead that reflects the new Blue Ribbon status. An invitation will be extended to local media and the entire school community to commemorate the success of Big Tree School. The Big Tree Elementary community will celebrate!

## PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

---

### 1. Curriculum:

The curriculum at Big Tree Elementary, in following NYS standards and core curriculum, is designed for each student to achieve to his/her fullest potential and become life-long learners. The curriculum includes English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. The Arts and Physical Education are also integral parts of the curriculum. Foreign Language is offered as an enrichment activity to students and is provided by High School students proficient in such languages as French or Spanish.

Big Tree's ELA program is based on a balanced literacy approach, as explained in Section 2a. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are all integrated into the content areas. Students are immersed in literature. A variety of genre is taught, read, analyzed, and evaluated. Students read for knowledge, as well as to develop a love of reading. Guided groups are used to instruct students at individual reading levels, a significant block of time devoted to literacy.

Reading Buddies is another Big Tree program that teaches and encourages reading in both primary and intermediate grades. Once a week, primary and intermediate children meet and read together. Books are shared and explored. Older students act as tutors to help develop skills in young readers. Big Tree embraces a Parents As Reading Partners (PARP) program run by the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The students read at home with a guardian, and in turn, are rewarded with a book, and an end of the year surprise!

An integral part of the Big Tree's Balanced Literacy Program is Writer's Workshop. Big Tree has adopted Lucy Calkins Units of Study as a model for the effective teaching of writing. Organized within a carefully crafted spiraling curriculum, six sequential units promote the teaching of narrative and expository writing with increasing power and intimacy. This Writers' Workshop format is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to teaching elementary students writing skills. It is designed to build students' fluency in writing through continuous, repeated exposure to the writing process. The teacher utilizes a combination of whole group, small group, and individual instruction along with teacher and peer conferencing to develop all areas of writing. Students become successful writers because the teacher is able to differentiate instruction to meet their individual needs. Students work at their own pace, following the steps of the writing process, to create an authentic piece of writing. This process allows them to internalize effective writing strategies.

Writer's Workshop is designed to facilitate a workshop setting in the classroom. Word walls, primary dictionaries, thesauruses, revising and editing rubrics, and publishing supplies are readily available to assist students in their writing. The teacher actively circulates around the room answering questions, providing mini-lessons, and conferencing with students. The students may be seated at tables or desks, writing on the floor, conferencing with a peer, using the computer for research or typing their final draft.

Big Tree teachers, Grades K-5, provide their students with Mathematics instruction following the NYS core curriculum and the guidelines of Everyday Mathematics. This research based math program is designed to spiral the acquisition of skills. Students are instructed in the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Concept Strands. Mathematics instruction at this school embraces many of the traditional goals of school mathematics while also striving to substantially raise expectations regarding the amount and range of mathematics that students can learn.

The Mathematics program is rigorous, balanced, and differentiated. Math tools and manipulatives are essential aids, fostering proficiency of core standards for all learners. Additional learning experiences include exploration centers and independent or cooperative group activities for the enrichment of student learning through hands-on tasks. High interest games are incorporated into the math program to further promote learning based on student readiness. Students are encouraged to share problem-solving strategies orally and

in writing. It is clear that Big Tree School provides Mathematics instruction that will prepare students for real-world problems and situations by nurturing higher-order critical thinking skills.

NYS Core Curriculum based Science units, rented from Erie 2 Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), provide hands-on learning experiences for the students at Big Tree and encourage the application of analysis, inquiry, and design. Learners engage in scientific skills including classification, observation, measurement, inferring and predicting, communication, and experimentation. Students practice these skills while enhancing their understanding and application of scientific concepts pertaining to the physical setting and living environment. Science students take part in a wide variety of field trips that help solidify their understanding of science and see the connection to the real world.

Big Tree teachers work collaboratively to provide a vertically articulated K-5 Social Studies Curriculum that will guarantee student success on the 5th Grade New York State Social Studies Assessment. All members of this school's community are dedicated to fostering independent, responsible, and productive citizens. Learners use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the history of the local community, New York State, the United States, and the world. Community programs and field trip experiences allow students to see the real world connections. Coupled with this, students engage in activities specifically designed to increase awareness and understanding of geography and economics. Hilbert, a neighboring college, and local banks and grocery establishments provide Big Tree with volunteers who provide enrichment to the economics curriculum. Throughout their elementary experience, students develop an understanding of the need for governments and their rights, roles, and responsibilities as citizens of the United States. Students witness the manifestation of their learning through their own Student Government, which holds fundraisers and provides funding for a variety of programs and assemblies that promote cultural diversity, citizenship, and self-awareness. Independent and group projects are shared and displayed. Literature is also integrated into this curriculum, helping students create connections.

The Arts support the curriculum at Big Tree by extending and refining knowledge in grades K through 5. Students develop an appreciation for cultural diversity through the study of music and art as part of their weekly schedule. Opportunities also exist for participation in Chorus, Band, Orchestra, Show Choir, Jazz Ensemble, and instrumental lessons. Music lessons are offered to students beginning in fourth grade. Our talented apprentices compete in County and State Wide competitions. Further, art instruction provides the opportunity for students to display artwork throughout Big Tree Elementary, the District's boardroom, and in the community.

Physical Education (P.E.) provides students with knowledge and participation of individual and team sports. Students are scheduled for two P.E. classes weekly. Our program challenges students to excel physically. The Physical Education program strives to help learners build on their coordination and physical fitness as well as their social skills in a non-competitive atmosphere. These classes prepare students through both team sports and challenges to compete individually. A strong focus on health and wellness is an integral part of the curriculum. The Physical Education Department at Big Tree is aware that all students, regardless of ability level are to be included in the learning and implementing of a healthy life. Adaptive Physical Education is a strong component of the curriculum where students with physical impairments participate with their peers with the assistance of Occupational and Physical Therapists. In addition to programs offered during the school day, the Physical Education staff provides students the opportunity to participate in intramural sports programming. Students participate in a wide variety of sports from track meets to swimming and school wide initiatives that include Fitness for Kids, Jump Rope for Heart, Student Athlete of the Week, and PTA's Walk-a-Thon. Technology supports the curriculum through the use of computer programs and interactive Smart Boards. Computer programs are used as resources to expand learning through research, practice of basic skills, and assess student knowledge, as further addressed under the subheading Additional Curriculum Area.

The core curriculum is not a separate entity. These subjects are integrated to provide the highest level of education for our students.

## 2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:

The Big Tree Elementary School K-5 balanced literacy approach provides students with daily opportunities to engage in reading, writing, speaking and listening activities. Students participate in read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, phonic/word study and literature studies. These components, coupled with guided writing, shared writing, independent writing, and interactive writing comprise the balanced literacy instructional framework.

Teachers carefully select text which represent our diverse society and for special features. While creating a community of readers, the teacher provides students' opportunities to hear and discuss phrased and fluent reading, develop complex language structures, and support inter-textual ties. Teachers help children experience rich literacy work they cannot yet read independently.

Through shared reading, teachers and students engage in a reading task using an enlarged text or a small text of which each child has a copy. The teacher involves the students in reading together, provides a high level of support, demonstrates strategies, and leads the students in group problem solving. Students support one another, engage in reader behavior, converse about the meaning of the text, and are involved in group problem solving. Children learn critical concepts about how print works and actively participate in the reading process.

Guided reading is the heart of balanced literacy. This is the teaching approach that is designed to help individual students learn how to process a variety of increasingly challenging texts with understanding and fluency. Using nonfiction and fiction texts, the teacher provides direct instruction before, during, and after reading, based on the current needs of a homogeneous group of students. Students solve problems while reading for meaning and applying strategies. Running records and anecdotal note-taking occur here.

Finally, language and word study consists of instructional time in which students learn language and word skills related to reading, writing, listening and speaking. Experiences include interactive editing, handwriting, reader's theatre, poetry, vocabulary development, etc.

The described program is "evidence based," an instructional program/collection of practices having been tested and shown to have a record of success. That is, reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence indicates that when the Balance Literacy Approach is implemented, children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement. The descriptors of Big Tree's Reading Program are aligned with the Standards for the English Language Arts published by The International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Teachers and the administrator at Big Tree Elementary evaluate methods and programs through the lens of this particular school and its classrooms. This school continuously re-examines its craft to determine if the instructional strategies and routines are central to the materials and are an effective match for the children being taught.

Ultimately, the goal of the literacy program is to help students develop a self-extending reading system, one that fuels its own learning and enables the reader to continue to learn, through the act of reading. It teaches students to actively read for meaning and to become independent, fluent, and strategic readers.

The Balanced Literacy Program utilizes assessment materials to conduct running records. These running records allow the teachers to differentiate reading instruction and monitor the progress of students as they acquire the skills necessary to become competent readers. These running records are done at least three times a year. In addition to running records, students are assessed using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment (DORA) depending on their grade level. These assessment tools, in conjunction with one another and careful teacher observation, help to provide a clear picture as to what the learner's strengths and weaknesses are, particularly in the area of comprehension.

Big Tree has three Reading Specialists who provide small group instruction to address areas of weakness as identified in assessment results. In addition to being a resource to children, the Reading Teachers provide support to the Classroom Teachers as well. This support is offered in the way of “pushing in” to classrooms to create a co-teaching model for increased student success. The Reading Specialists offer insights regarding the best practices and have been involved in staff development opportunities to share them with colleagues.

## **2b. (Secondary Schools) English:**

This question is for secondary schools only

## **3. Additional Curriculum Area:**

Based on the Big Tree School’s mission statement of inspiring student independence while contributing to an ever-changing world, implementation of current technology has enhanced the teaching and learning process in all curriculum areas. It exemplifies how technology maximizes instructional effectiveness through the integration of the content and subject areas. The focus of Big Tree's technology curriculum is to provide the best possible experience for all students in the use and manipulation of information technology. Technology at Big Tree is not a curriculum that stands alone, but is integrated into all other curriculum areas to enhance, extend, and support student learning.

PDA’s (Professional Data Assistants) referred to as Palm Pilots are used when assessing students with DIBELS. Teachers download an electronic copy of this assessment tool to record student performance as the testing is taking place. The data is then uploaded to the District network where it is examined and evaluated to determine student performance, achievement, and placement.

Teachers use various websites that are aligned to NYS standards and core curriculum guidelines. The Computer Lab at Big Tree is a resource taken advantage of by students on a weekly basis. Students gain practice in skills such as keyboarding, word processing, Power Point, and access to computer-based curriculum review materials. Teachers take advantage of the wireless network to gain internet access throughout the entire school by using the available portable laptop labs. These tools open countless avenues for learning and expanding knowledge in the classroom from taking advantage of District site licenses for Accelerated Reader, Brain Pop, and Kidspiration to participating in various webquests that not only support student learning but also differentiate learning to reach all students where they currently perform. Classroom Performance Systems (CPS) are available, and have proven to be a highly motivating tool in the classroom with students of all enthusiasm levels. CPS “clickers” are used to record data instantly from students throughout lessons being taught. This particular piece of technology, with its ease in use for the students is equally useful to teachers in tracking student performance electronically.

Smart Boards have recently been added to the plethora of technological advances available to students and teachers at Big Tree. The implementation of this particular piece of technology has greatly impacted the way teachers deliver instruction on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Smart Boards allow for such advances as using teacher-created interactive power point presentations and accessing online websites to display pertinent information, graphics, data, and videos to the curriculum. The students have been given the opportunity to display their work, interact with material, and become active participants in the learning process.

As technological advances expand at a global level, the faculty and staff at Big Tree Elementary recognize the importance of incorporating these skills into the classroom as they pertain to the technology curriculum area by identifying its use in every aspect of learning. Teachers take advantage of the ongoing professional development in informational technology as well as curricular disciplines.

#### **4. Instructional Methods:**

Teachers utilize many instructional methods to deliver lessons that support and enrich the diverse student population at Big Tree. Professional Learning Communities work collaboratively through team teaching models in both inclusive and regular classrooms to identify the key components of planning and preparation necessary to maximize learning for all students.

Instructors align lessons to the New York State Core Curriculum in all units of study. Curriculum maps, based on the core curriculum, are constantly reviewed and updated based on the results of assessment data. Student Academic Intervention Services are provided before and after school to students who fall below state and local standards and provides test-taking and comprehension strategy instruction. Repetition and reinforcement of skills and concepts are all forms of instructional methods used to improve student achievement. During SAIS, teachers provide interventions and monitor progress to respond to learners not achieving success. Since the Frontier Central School District's adoption of the full inclusion model of Special Education in 2001, the administrative and instructional staff at this school aggressively sought training and staff development in Differentiated Instruction.

Instructors recognize that there is "No One Size Fits All" curriculum that can be used to meet the needs of every child in the classroom. Lessons focus on what students need to know, understand, and do. Provisions are made for students based on readiness, interest and/or learning profile.

Scaffolding is provided for students who are struggling to meet the standards and enrichment and/or acceleration is offered to students who excel in a given area of study. In a differentiated classroom setting, classroom organization, positive student behavior and a variety of instructional materials maximize instructional time on task and actively involve the students in the instruction process.

To stay current with recent developments in Brain Compatible Instruction and Differentiated Instruction, monthly Dimensions Facilitator trainings are provided to a team of instructors during the workday. These facilitators share their learning with the rest of the faculty

Finally, all teachers have been trained and regularly utilize Robert Marzano's instructional planning models, Dimensions of Learning and Classroom Instruction That Works. Teachers have the tools necessary for maintaining a focus on learning through the study of the learning process.

#### **5. Professional Development:**

No strategy is more powerful than investing in the staff that interact with students on a daily basis. Recognizing this link between staff development and successful educational change, the Big Tree Elementary School students, teachers, administrators and support staff engage in a wide array of learning opportunities. There is a presence of adults who are passionately committed to lifelong learning and continual renewal.

The instructional model at Big Tree Elementary is based on the work of renowned educators Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering. Dimensions of Learning workshops have been sponsored and supported for many years. All new hires, and the majority of veteran teachers, attend classes that offer cutting edge opportunities for teachers to increase professional knowledge and to implement essential practices in their daily teaching. These classes apply to all areas of the NYS standards. Several Big Tree teachers have become facilitators and trainers of such methods, offering on-site courses before school, after school and on school time, as well as for other districts, the teacher center and local colleges. Strategy sessions that are offered regularly are very well attended.

Big Tree functions as a professional learning community characterized by a collaborative culture. Teams have common planning time and additional release time to meet to establish intended outcomes at each grade

level. Teachers develop common assessments, analyze student achievement data and draw conclusions. They support one another and share strategies and materials as they work together to accomplish goals they could not accomplish alone. Big Tree faculty members serving in leadership roles (department chairs and aides, curriculum coordinators, staff developers, etc.) offer guidance and support.

In addition to building specific activities, staff members participate in district-wide staff development programs as well as professional development opportunities through organizations. Individuals complete up to three 15-hour professional growth projects annually and meet with the principal to discuss staff development needs in accordance with the teacher's annual professional performance review.

Ultimately, the focus remains on research-based strategies to improve student achievement. Members of the Big Tree Staff work together in an ongoing effort to discover best practices, expand professional expertise, and improve student learning.

## **6. School Leadership:**

“Strength” is synonymous with “Principal”, and is the heart of our educational community at Big Tree Elementary School...a school wherein “a smile goes for miles and miles” is more than just words. It is a philosophy that is promoted and evident in the school on a daily basis, a philosophy rooted and realized in an overt commitment to facilitate the “quality” education of each student as well as a deep respect and concern for the staff, students and parents of Big Tree Elementary. This translates into an ever present and vibrant learning community encompassed in a “welcoming spirit” that generates from the Principal to the instructional and support staff as well as students and parents. This spirit in turn permeates throughout our building...teacher to teacher, teacher to student, teacher to support staff, and teacher to parent.

The Principal's approachable, supportive and intuitive communication style lends itself to a complimentary blending of personalities. This contributes to effective shared-decision making and problem solving wherein individual differences (teaching styles, abilities, talents and differing viewpoints) are openly accepted without criticism.

Once a month, the students in each grade level at Big Tree Elementary “experience” TLC (Tender Loving Care) in which our Principal spends time helping the students expand the vision of themselves as capable, loveable, caring individuals through storytelling, books, songs, poetry and goal setting.

Volunteerism is actively encouraged by our Principal through programs such as High School Helpers, High School Internships, High School Language Mentoring, Parent-Teacher Association programs and activities that weave parental involvement into the fabric of our learning community at Big Tree Elementary School.

A “Professional Learning Community” has evolved as a result of the guidance and support of our Principal as an effective instructional supervisor and evaluator. Supervision and evaluation is truly an interactive process in our building. Mutual goal setting is encouraged and has inspired each classroom teacher to maintain focus on effective teaching and learning strategies.

Our Principal provides for specific common grade level planning wherein the classroom teachers in our building spend time collaborating on ways to enhance classroom instruction as a means of focusing on student achievement and short and long term grade level goals thereby creating a school community that is leading, learning, growing and changing together.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3 Test: NYS Mathematics

Edition/Publication Year: 2006-2008

Publisher: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar		
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	100	97	94		
Percent at Level 4	36	50	46		
Number of students tested	97	101	109		
Percent of total students tested	99	100	97		
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4		
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4		
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	100	93	97		
Percent at Level 4	26	27	33		
Number of students tested	23	30	30		
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Asian, Black; Asian, Black, Hispanic; Hispanic</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4					
Percent at Level 4					
Number of students tested	3	7	1		
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4		77	60		
Percent at Level 4		8	7		
Number of students tested	8	13	15		
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

New York State did not institute state tests for Grades 3 and 5 until the 2005-2006 school year.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 3

Test: NYS ELA

Edition/Publication Year: 2006-2008

Publisher: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Jan	Jan	Jan		
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	87	81	83		
Percent at Level 4	20	14	12		
Number of students tested	99	101	109		
Percent of total students tested	99	100	97		
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4		
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	0	4		
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	83	60	66		
Percent at Level 4	22	10	10		
Number of students tested	23	30	30		
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Asian, Black; Asian, Black, Hispanic; Hispanic</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4					
Percent at Level 4					
Number of students tested	3	7	1		
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4		23	50		
Percent at Level 4		0	0		
Number of students tested	8	13	14		
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

New York State did not institute state testing in Grades 3 and 5 until the 2005-06 school year.

Subject: Mathematics  
Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Grade: 4 Test: NYS Mathematics  
Publisher: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar	Jan	Jan
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	97	95	92	97	94
Percent at Level 4	40	43	37	58	53
Number of students tested	109	111	121	98	128
Percent of total students tested	100	97	96	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	3	5	1	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	3	4	1	2
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	97	93	83	96	93
Percent at Level 4	24	44	30	54	36
Number of students tested	33	27	30	26	28
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Asisan, Black, Hispanic; Black and Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian and Hispanic and Asisan and Black</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4					
Percent at Level 4					
Number of students tested	7	2	7	2	5
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	92	75	67	90	82
Percent at Level 4	15	13	7	10	9
Number of students tested	13	16	15	10	11
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

New York State made substantial changes to the format of the test and the scoring model beginning with the 2005-2006 school year.

Subject: Reading  
Edition/Publication Year: 2004-2008

Grade: 4 Test: NYS ELA  
Publisher: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Jan	Jan	Jan	Jan	Jan
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	88	87	84	87	84
Percent at Level 4	5	10	12	21	18
Number of students tested	108	113	121	98	128
Percent of total students tested	100	97	96	99	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	3	5	1	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	3	4	1	2
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	76	86	60	75	79
Percent at Level 4	3	11	7	15	7
Number of students tested	33	28	30	26	28
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Asian, Black, Hispanic; Black, Hispanic; Amer. Ind., Asian, Black, Hispanic; Asian, Hispanic; Asian, Black</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4					
Percent at Level 4					
Number of students tested	7	2	7	2	5
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	46	50	50	40	27
Percent at Level 4	0	0	0	0	0
Number of students tested	13	16	14	10	11
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

New York State made substantial changes to the format of the test and the scoring model beginning with the 2005-2006 school year.

Subject: Mathematics  
Edition/Publication Year: 2006-2008

Grade: 5 Test: NYS Mathematics  
Publisher: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Mar	Mar	Mar		
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	98	94	87		
Percent at Level 4	47	44	36		
Number of students tested	107	120	94		
Percent of total students tested	98	96	97		
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	5	3		
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	4	3		
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	100	100	83		
Percent at Level 4	42	31	38		
Number of students tested	26	32	24		
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black, Hispanic; Amer. Ind., Asian, Black, Hispanic; Hispanic</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4					
Percent at Level 4					
Number of students tested	2	6	1		
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	82	46	50		
Percent at Level 4	9	0	10		
Number of students tested	11	11	10		
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

New York State did not institute state tests for Grades 3 and 5 until the 2005-2006 school year.

Subject: Reading  
Edition/Publication Year: 2006-2008

Grade: 5 Test: NYS ELA  
Publisher: CTB/McGraw-Hill LLC

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Jan	Jan	Jan		
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	97	84	80		
Percent at Level 4	12	10	21		
Number of students tested	107	122	94		
Percent of total students tested	98	96	97		
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	5	3		
Percent of students alternatively assessed	2	4	3		
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	92	92	79		
Percent at Level 4	8	9	25		
Number of students tested	26	34	24		
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): Black, Hispanic; Amer. Ind., Asian, Black, Hispanic; Hispanic</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4					
Percent at Level 4					
Number of students tested	2	6	1		
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
Percent at Level 3 and 4	73	36	30		
Percent at Level 4	0	0	0		
Number of students tested	11	11	10		
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

New York State did not institute state tests for Grades 3 and 5 until the 2006-2006 school year.