

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Laurel Magnet School of the Arts
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1125 North 5th Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Laurel State MS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 39440-2704

County Jones

Telephone (601) 428-7782

Fax (601) 649-6398

Web site/URL <https://www.laurelschools.org/laurel-magnet-school-of-the-arts/index>

E-mail kpendleton@laurelschools.org

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Toy Watts E-mail tlwatts@laurelschools.org

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

District Name Laurel School District Tel. (601) 649-6391

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Dr. James Johnson-Hill
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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

☒ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	38
K	37
1	40
2	45
3	38
4	51
5	39
6	40
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	328

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 85 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 10 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	306
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 55 %

Total number students who qualify: 182

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 7 %
Total number of students served 24

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>7</u> Autism	<u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>12</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>1</u> Developmental Delay	<u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %
Total number of students served: 7

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 5

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	97%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

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

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

Yes ☐ No ☒

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

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

A place where children want to go, where teachers want to teach, and where parents are proud to send their children.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.laurelschools.org/about/title-ix>

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

Magnet schools are so named because they are designed to attract students with their unique programs. Magnet schools have special programs - computers in every classroom, outstanding arts programs, and extra-curricular activities. Accepted students may attend at no cost. Any student who lives within the city of Laurel may apply to attend Laurel Magnet School of the Arts. The deadline to apply is typically in the summer. In order to be eligible to attend Laurel Magnet School of the Arts, a student must not have failed a year or had any disciplinary actions taken during the previous school year. Student data must be provided upon request. Those attending must meet academic and behavior requirements. Parents and students sign a contract agreeing to these conditions. The magnet school provides an accelerated, highly enriched curriculum for students in grades pre- Kindergarten-6th. All classes are taught on or above grade level. If the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number of vacancies, a waiting list will be compiled to determine acceptance. Before being accepted, the following must be turned in to the school office: birth certificate, current immunization, social security card, most recent report card, and two proofs of residence. In-person interviews are conducted for all applicants.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

A school like no other, Laurel Magnet School of the Arts (LMSA) thrives on its vision of being the Disney World of Education- a place where students want to go, teachers want to teach, and parents are proud to send their children. LMSA is a jewel in the Laurel, Mississippi community and representative of the rich history of our state.

Nestled in the heart of Mississippi's Pine Belt Region, Laurel has close proximity to the state's capital city and the Mississippi Gulf Coast; the perfect place to live, work, and play. Known as the City Beautiful, Laurel is home to picturesque oak-lined streets, stunning architecture, a nationally recognized art museum, and an energetic downtown.

The Laurel School District is home to LMSA, a Mississippi Arts Commission Whole Schools and an Exemplar Model School of the Arts, the highest designation given by the Mississippi Arts Commission. This initiative expands regular classroom instruction to include visual and performing arts as a creative and engaging learning tool across the entire curriculum.

Utilizing the Mississippi Arts Commission's Whole Schools' approach to teaching and learning, the school has seen great gains and success with implementing the arts. Through Whole Schools, the school has exposed nearly 400 children annually to the wonders of art. Every child is given the freedom to create, think, and imagine all while learning the state's academic standards. Children learn through standards-based, hands-on activities that are fun, engaging, and insightful.

In addition to the arts, LMSA implements several other innovative programs. One that they are most proud of is their Professional Learning Community (PLC) model. Prior to the current principal assuming leadership, the school did not have a PLC model. A PLC model was necessary to build teacher capacity and improve student achievement. Topics are determined based on data, teacher input, and observations. As teachers begin to understand PLCs, they are empowered to lead their own. Teachers become experts and share information with their peers. Significant gains are achieved from the same teachers who were at the school for years before the current principal arrived. They credit the model as a catalyst for improving their teaching.

Another program that has shown equal success is Differentiated Instruction (DI) Blocks. Staff identify this program as the reason the school earned its first 'A' rating. The school is shut down each Tuesday and Thursday for 105 minutes. Each teacher is assigned a helping hand that consists of utilizing non-traditional staff, such as activity teachers; the principal also leads a small group. Students are grouped according to their most substantial deficit, as indicated by data.

Another school favorite is W.O.W. Wednesday, short for "Working on Writing." The purpose of W.O.W. Wednesday is to have a schoolwide focus on developing proficient writers who can respond to a text on demand. Each Wednesday, the entire school shuts down for 15 minutes and students write. As the school's instructional leader, the principal develops the writing prompts. All writing prompts are tied to a grade-level text that meet quantitative guidelines such as lexile, word count, text complexity, and vocabulary. The primary focus of this program is the development of ideas and writing organization, which the state test writing rubric outlines as the two most heavily weighted components.

The school's goal is to create equitable conditions where all students can thrive and have their potential developed. Through the work of dedicated students, teachers, staff, and parents, the school moved from a B rating to an A on the 2019 state testing results, thus achieving the highest rating the school has earned on the state's accountability model in over a decade. LMSA has maintained that rating since. On the most recent state assessments, LMSA ranked high in proficiency in several areas: #1 in the state for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade math, #10 in the state for 6th grade math, #2 in the state for 4th grade ELA, #2 in the state for 6th grade ELA, and #6 in the state for 3rd grade ELA.

However, the school is more than awards and accolades. It produces confident, creative children. Through

dance, musicals, theater productions and visual arts, the students build confidence that is unprecedented. To see children fearlessly take the stage and showcase their work is inspiring. The school's approach to art is subjective and is a great equalizer, as everyone's creativity is honored and showcased as if they are world-class artists opening a showing at The Met.

It would take a volume of books, filled with thousands of words, to adequately describe and explain what happens at this special school. The principal and teachers go above and beyond to motivate, educate, and inspire the children of Laurel. It is truly a magical dreamland that brings out the best in all who enter its doors.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At LMSA, we teach reading, writing, language, and social studies under the umbrella of English Language Arts or ELA. ELA content is taught first by using the academic standards set forth by the state department of education. Teachers utilize the provided scaffolding document to break down the prerequisite skills, essential questions, I-can statements, and vocabulary to address during instruction in order for students to gain mastery of the standard(s). Teachers create instructional materials such as anchor charts, PowerPoints, etc. using the breakdown of these standards from the scaffolding document.

Teachers' instruction of the ELA standards begins in a whole group setting where the teacher breaks down the essential questions, I-can statements, vocabulary, and strategies associated with the standard. Students participate in discussions and are guided through the learning process, as the teacher models. Students then transition to small group instruction where, we believe, the magic happens. Teachers are able to work with students in a more intimate setting nurturing each student's individual academic needs. While students are working with the homeroom teacher, other students are engaged in small group discussion and guided practice led by an assistant teacher (in pre-kindergarten through 1st grade) or by the students themselves (2nd through 6th grade). We utilize schoolwide small group routines to ensure students are engaged and learning in these small groups. Our small group routines include clear written directions at each group, group leaders, early finishers, and modeling of what good discourse looks like while in a group discussion. Our students enjoy working in small groups and thrive there.

Another major instructional approach we use to enhance ELA instruction is arts integration. Through arts integration, students are able to construct their own understanding of the standards through an art form and demonstrate their understanding while engaging in the creative process of the art form. Arts integration allows the students to connect the subject area standards to an art form and meet evolving objectives in both areas. Arts integration is used in both whole group and small group settings to help introduce, reinforce, and/or assess student understanding of the standards. Students also have an opportunity to write a reflection at the end of the arts integration lesson in which the teacher reads to make future improvements and/or adjustments.

Assessments, both formative and summative, are used at LMSA and are necessary to (a) determine if children are performing at grade level, (b) monitor progress, and (c) plan for instruction. In the area of ELA specifically, all students are assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to determine their growth and performance. Students not performing at grade level are reassessed regularly to monitor their progress. Assessments to monitor progress are brief and take little time away from instruction. These assessments are used to plan the instruction necessary to increase student achievement. At the end of the year, all students are assessed to determine if they are performing at grade level.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards guide teaching and learning at Laurel Magnet School of the Arts. This rigorous set of academic standards reveal what students should know, conceptually understand, and be able to do at the end of each grade. The mathematics curriculum at LMSA is directly aligned to our state standards. Students are instructed and assessed in four domains: Numbers and Base Ten, Operations of Algebraic Thinking, Measurement and Data, and Geometry.

Our school teaches the academic learning standards for mathematics through many creative approaches, in order to reach each child. We embrace the fact that children learn differently and our teachers thrive when finding creative ways to grow all children. As a result, the approaches at LMSA cater to various learning styles. Our instruction is designed to reach visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Engaging whole group instruction is used to introduce the standard, along with attaching strategies that help students know how to

process the information. These strategies help break down the learning standard, so students can actively engage in the process of math. Concepts are introduced through explicit instruction, vocabulary, anchor charts, real-world examples, and much more.

Teachers also use small group instruction to further teach the content. In our opinion, this is where the real magic happens. In small groups, teachers can truly hone in on specific deficits and address common misconceptions. All teachers at LMSA are expected to facilitate small group instruction in their classrooms five days a week. Teacher-led groups, individualized computer based learning paths, collaborative groups, and independent practices, that are standards-based, are used daily in each classroom. Differentiated instruction small groups are also used two days a week, in addition to regular instruction. During these groups, teachers are able to focus on the individual mathematical needs of each student. All small groups are driven by data.

In addition, Arts Integrated lessons with visual arts, dance and music play a major role in students connecting their learning style to the learning standard. Students don't necessarily remember worksheets, but they do remember when they dance, sing or make something to learn math. Students connect their learning to the outside mathematical world through videos, arts integration, and hands-on experience where math is applied, not just memorized or learned.

Formative assessments are key at LMSA. Teachers monitoring the learning, and providing constant feedback gives ample opportunities for improvement and building confidence in math. Standards Mastery assessments, diagnostics, lesson quizzes, comprehension checks, and end of unit assessments are also used to monitor student understanding and make adjustments to instruction.

The process of doing math is important at LMSA and we constantly find unique ways to make math fun, engaging, and cool. We do various activities throughout the year to promote a love for math: multiplication bowl, room transformations, and breakout rooms to name a few. We were proud when we learned that 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade ranked #1 in the state of Mississippi for math proficiency on last year's state math assessment.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At LMSA, science is a large part of our curriculum. We take pride in our science instruction and ensure that the primary focus is helping students learn through investigation and experimentation. The Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards provide teachers with a blueprint of what students are expected to master by the end of each school year. In the state of Mississippi, Kindergarten through 6th grade focuses on Life Science, Physical Science and Earth/ Space Science. Every school year the standards scaffold and build laterally to enhance each child's scientific knowledge.

We believe that science is one of the most essential subjects for children to learn because of its relation to all areas of life. What makes LMSA special is that we use various art disciplines to enhance our lessons. By using multiple art disciplines we are able to reach all types of learners and meet them where they are. Being able to investigate and experiment with a hands-on approach has helped our students not only continually progress, but also grasp the concepts with a full understanding, making our science instruction stand out above the rest. Each lesson coincides with the multiple steps of the Scientific Method. When students use the Scientific Method, it serves as a checklist to ensure the full understanding of each objective.

We use STEMscopes as our primary curriculum, which allows us to integrate content standards in engaging ways to assist with real-world connections. STEMscopes ensures that we teach through a STEM interdisciplinary approach, which means that we integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. These subjects are not taught in isolation which leads to a deeper understanding and makes the subjects interconnected. We assess students' knowledge through formative assessments, informative assessments, performance based projects, and standard mastery. Our science proficiency on state assessments increased from 57.4% to 89%.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Exposure to civic and government duties is important in learning how to become responsible and active members of a global society. With newly revised state standards as a framework for teaching social studies from kindergarten through sixth grade, Laurel Magnet School of the Arts best practices introduce, build, and develop conceptual understanding of all social studies strands. Our teachers utilize an integrated approach to teaching citizenship rights and responsibilities at home, school, and community as well as state history and regions, American history, civics and geography standards.

Social studies standards are mainly addressed through reading and writing content areas. Our rigorous, complex, and diverse supplemental reading curriculum provides opportunities for students to experience and learn social studies standards through grade appropriate passages, illustrations, maps, and primary resources. Using the 21st Century model for lessons, students receive social studies instruction addressing all learning modalities, particularly through arts integration, project-based/real-world learning, and inclusive technology.

An example of instructing social studies standards through the arts is second grade ELA students created social and emotional original art regarding safe and responsible citizenship in digital communities. Both examples demonstrate high engagement, conceptual understanding, and retention of historical and current events. Social studies standards are assessed through grade level tests, projects, and writing, and presentation rubrics. Social studies standards are also assessed for mastery through visual, theater, and media arts, dance, music, and physical education. Teachers and students reflect on the art process, its connection to the content standard, and how well the art integration addressed the standard or what components of the lesson could be revised for future use. As an Exemplar Model School for the arts, our data support the integration of the arts as an integral part of our academic success. This is evident in top-tier state scores for three consecutive years.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

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

At Laurel Magnet School of the Arts, we understand the importance of students' primary years and the teaching of necessary foundational skills. We take great pride in nurturing our classrooms serving four-year old students and preparing these students to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. At LMSA, we are proud to be able to offer two pre-K classes. Each class can hold up to 20 students with a pre-K endorsed certified teacher and teacher assistant in each class.

The Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms serving four-year old children guide our instruction. These standards consider not only students' cognitive development in literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies, but also addresses developmental domains, such as: social interaction, emotional needs, physical development, and creative expression.

Our pre-K program is designed to educate the whole child and we embrace our students' growth and development through their primary years. Pre-K students at LMSA are able to access a developmentally appropriate rigorous curriculum directly aligned to the Mississippi College-and Career-Readiness Anchor Standards for grades K-Grade 3. Our curriculum supports students' understanding of literature, informational text, foundational skills, vocabulary, language, math, and writing.

As a result of our students having pre-K experience, we have seen a dramatic increase in their performance in upper grades, specifically 3rd. Each year our 3rd grade students participate in state assessments. It is a Mississippi law that they must be able to take and pass a summative reading assessment in order to be promoted to 4th grade. Our students perform exceptionally well on this assessment. Each year we produce a 98% or higher pass rate. The impact of early education and school readiness and success is evident from our results. Because of the foundational work done on the front end, our scholars are positioned for success in kindergarten and beyond.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

At LMSA, visual arts, music, and dance classes are offered to students in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Students attend class one day per week for 40 minutes, plus an additional 40 minute class once a month. During these classes, students are immersed in hands-on experiences that focus on the elements and principles of each art discipline, as outlined by our state standards.

Students in fourth through sixth grade audition for special classes in each of these arts disciplines and participate in specialized classes. These specialized classes include Abstract Visual Arts, Dynamics Show Choir, MVMT Dance Company, 6th Grade Band, and Musical. The students showcase their talents from these classes during events held throughout the year including Fall Flashlight Art Festival, Heritage Art Festival, Christmas with the Arts, Cultural Arts, Arts Explosion, Performing Arts Showcase, etc.

In addition to these special arts classes, all students participate in arts integrated lessons in academic classes. During these lessons, teachers integrate academic standards, along with arts discipline standards, to enhance learning and critical thinking skills.

These unique approaches to teaching and learning have shown a direct correlation to student success. Students are able to transfer knowledge that supports their understanding of academic concepts.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Physical Education is valued at LMSA and is offered to students in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Students attend physical education class one day per week for 40 minutes, plus an additional 40 minute class once a month. During these classes, students follow the Mississippi Physical Education Framework.

Students in fourth through sixth grade try out for Select PE, a class where students have the opportunity to have more in depth training in sports like volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball. Throughout the year, several student vs. teacher sports games and field days are used to promote physical activity. Students also gain physical education knowledge through the dance class offered at LMSA in which physical education and health standards are integrated.

Health instruction is integrated into physical education, reading, and science curriculums. Students learn the standards of health for each grade level set forth by the Mississippi Department of Education through videos, reading comprehension texts, and real-world experiences.

Students enjoy participating in physical education and learn other essential life skills while doing so such as, sportsmanship, confidence, and self esteem. Physical education is also incorporated during recess, as well as Move-to-Learn activities that all teachers are required to incorporate into their instruction.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

2d. Technology/library/media

Technology is integrated in all classrooms and curriculums, pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. All students have access to a personal computer that is checked out through the district and can be used at home for assignments. Teachers and students also have access to Promethean boards, projectors, a desktop computer lab, an iPad computer lab, and six Chrome carts on the school campus. All devices are used to enhance both whole group and small group instruction daily. Teachers and students use a variety of websites to differentiate learning for all students. Teachers also use the state media arts standards to create arts integrated lessons focusing on graphic design, photography, and other technology based art forms.

The school library houses a variety of books that range from pre-kindergarten through high school levels to accommodate the varied reading levels throughout the school. Books are categorized by literature and informational texts and accommodate a multitude of interests. Teachers track student reading using a licensed program. Our library has an open door policy allowing students and teachers access to materials at any time. The school librarian manages inventory and aids teachers with instructional materials.

Teachers are properly trained on how to use technology to enhance instruction.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

LMSA is the only Exemplar model school for the Mississippi Whole Schools program that is funded through the Mississippi Arts Commission. This program focuses on high quality, research based teaching methods that integrate the core academic subjects with each of the arts disciplines, in order to engage students in the learning process through their individual learning styles. Higher order critical thinking skills are developed that in turn improve student achievement.

This is a core part of our teaching methodology where student learning and assessment are differentiated to meet the needs of the whole child. The school has been a model school for the Whole Schools program for over twenty years and received the distinction of an Exemplar model school in 2018. As an Exemplar model school, the school hosts several tours throughout the year to showcase this methodology to other teachers, schools, and districts, throughout the state and beyond, looking to improve student engagement and achievement in their own schools.

We proudly exemplify our school motto, “We are the A.R.T.S.: We ACQUIRE new ways of understanding, We REFLECT on our choices, We TREAT others with respect, and We SHARE our Creativity.”

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

At LMSA, a large amount of time is spent preparing teachers to meet the individual academic needs of students. Through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), modeling, and feedback, teachers learn how to analyze student assessment data and make adjustments to their instruction accordingly. They also learn how to scaffold to meet the diverse needs of students, as well as how to provide engaging lessons.

Students performing below grade level are identified at the beginning of the year using previous assessment data. Each student is assessed individually using a universal screener to determine specific deficits and areas of growth. The results of this assessment, given at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year are used to tailor instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet each student’s individual needs.

Students performing substantially below grade level are placed in the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) on either Tier II or Tier III. Progress is monitored by the Teacher Support Team to ensure that the student is making progress. All teachers provide individualized support and instruction in small groups. This data-driven instruction is based on formative and/or summative assessments.

LMSA follows state guidelines when implementing MTSS. Tier I includes quality, best practices within the classroom for all students. Tier II is supplemental instruction that targets specific learning needs in both reading and mathematics and is provided by the general education teacher. Tier III involves intensive interventions specifically designed to meet the individual needs of students and is provided by an interventionist.

One of the most significant responses to closing academic achievement gaps has been Differentiated Instruction Blocks. All full-time employees on campus at LMSA teach students for at least one hour and

forty five minutes, twice per week. This instruction targets the students' lowest skill deficit to close achievement gaps.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Not only is a strong emphasis placed on growing the bottom quartile of the LMSA student population, but also providing enrichment to students who are performing above grade level. According to the most recent diagnostic data, 73% of LMSA students are performing above grade level in reading and 56% in math. This implication suggests that enrichment is not only necessary, but vital to sustaining the success of our school for years to come.

All students are assessed regularly throughout the year using a rigorous diagnostic to identify strengths and areas of growth. The results of these assessments are used to tailor instruction based on the needs of the individual student. Students performing above grade level are enriched in the regular education classroom through engaging, individualized, small group instruction and are allowed to participate in frequent collaborative learning activities with their peers. The teachers are trained to go deeper and wider with their grade level standards and increase opportunities for students to choose how they want to demonstrate understanding of various concepts. For example, these students might be presented with a choice center and have an opportunity to demonstrate understanding through media arts.

In addition, students who consistently perform above grade level are often referred to the gifted program, GOAL, at LMSA. Students who meet the criteria for GOAL are “pulled” from their general education classroom one day per week. During this time, Mississippi Gifted Outcomes are introduced, discussed, and developed. This develops higher-level thinking strategies in areas such as communication, creativity, informational literacy, and critical thinking skills. Students have the opportunity to work individually and collaboratively within groups to accomplish the objectives set forth.

Over the years, data has shown that LMSA has maintained students who perform above grade level, while also moving a large percentage of students into this category.

3c. Students with disabilities:

It is the mission of LMSA to educate all students. It is important that the school systematically designs and implements effective inclusive practices. In most instances, however, effective inclusive practices are not implemented without a conscious effort. It takes strong leadership to guide the process and a staff willing to establish a structured, but flexible framework in which inclusive practices may be seamlessly integrated into the school's culture. It is the goal of the school to ensure that the support needs of students with disabilities are appropriately addressed.

Twenty-four students at LMSA have exceptional needs that require an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This number increases to thirty-one with the addition of 504 eligibility. At LMSA, the special education department is dedicated to taking a team approach in assisting students with exceptional needs. This team approach can be noted from the initial request for services, through the eligibility testing and determination, to the daily implementation of needed services. Both general education teachers and the special education teacher are in constant communication to determine, address, and progress monitor students' individual needs.

Exceptional education students are “pulled” from their general education classrooms for a specified length of time, based on their individual needs and what is noted on the IEP; however, all exceptional education students remain in their least restrictive learning environment, to the greatest degree possible, to ensure they are exposed to high-quality instruction, grade-level standards, content, and are able to participate in discussions and activities. Assessments, instruction, and interventions are tailored to specific needs of students by accommodating and/or modifying through chunking, small group testing, and allowing for extended time, to name a few. At LMSA we also implement a strong co-teaching model that promotes inclusive practices.

Not only is the focus on the academic success of students but on the social/emotional well-being of each student as well. Once a specified concerning behavior is identified, the general education teacher, parent, and principal work together to develop a behavior plan with goals, incentives, and strategies.

3d. English Language Learners:

Educating the whole child is one of the most important goals of Laurel Magnet School of the Arts. Every educator at Laurel Magnet School of the Arts is committed to building and sustaining a culture in which high-quality instruction for all students is the most important priority. Our primary goal is to implement research and evidence-based instructional programs, best practices, and strategies to help every child perform at/above grade level by the end of each grade. However, this goal alone is insufficient and requires students to accomplish several smaller, formative goals along the way in order to reach our primary goal. This is especially true for English Language Learners.

Upon enrollment at LMSA, each student's family completes a home language survey. This survey helps identify those students who should be identified as an English Language Learner (ELL). Once identified, the general education teacher collaborates with the ELL teacher to plan lessons and create assessments to differentiate the learning of ELL students. ELL students utilize a pull-out method to help them acclimate to the rigor of the classroom.

The ELL program also fosters relationships with families through meetings and by sharing information with families in the language of each household. Meetings are conducted to share information with parents to make them feel included and valued in the school environment.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Motivation is key to the successful performance of students. Our highly-creative teachers and administrative staff utilize a plethora of strategies to engage and motivate students during instruction in and out of the classroom.

Cultivating a positive environment begins before the school bell rings. At the beginning of every morning, the principal and staff are on duty outside greeting scholars and parents. We open car doors with a smile, greet students by name, and encourage them to have a good day. It is important that students recognize that they are known and valued. We want everyone to feel safe and cared for in order to reach their maximum potential because we truly believe that they can in a proper learning environment with high expectations.

In addition, our school's approach to the arts is one of the hallmarks to our success. Because we embrace learning diversities among our student body, instructing through the arts opens ways for students to engage in and connect to content while constructing their own understanding. Scholars are engaged in weekly arts integration and infusion lessons, planned by teachers, that keep them interested and motivated while learning through visual arts, dance, music, and physical education.

Our scholars stay motivated academically by knowing and understanding their data results throughout the year, as well as being rewarded for their successes. Students are celebrated for their accomplishments often and in a myriad of ways. For example, at the end of each nine weeks, students are rewarded with an academic awards ceremony where they receive trophies, medals, and/or certificates for their accomplishments or they participate in Pancakes and/or Pizza with the Principal. In addition, students are rewarded for demonstrating proficiency or showing growth on their benchmark assessments with activities such as student vs. teacher athletic competitions, parades, and go green happies. Scholars also have an opportunity to be recognized as Scholar of the Month. For these reasons, scholars work vigorously to reach the goals that their teacher communicates to them during data chats. Students understand the criteria to receive these rewards and know how hard they must work to meet their goals.

We also allow our scholars and staff to participate in unique, innovative, and engaging activities that make for a fun educational experience: an annual vocabulary day parade where students dress up as words to make them come to life, a dead words funeral to eulogize overused words in students' writing and vocabulary, multiplication bowls, College & Career Readiness Day, pep rallies, and much more.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Community partnerships are very important and much needed in schools today. At Laurel Magnet School of the Arts (LMSA), we have made several connections between students and the community that contribute to the success of our school. There are frequent parent nights, curriculum nights, visits from local community members, and many other community events.

LMSA has assisted women, children, and families who are less fortunate or facing temporary hardships in several projects. We participated in Make a Difference Day and partnered with the Christian Food Mission and the Domestic Abuse Shelter to collect canned foods, blankets, clothing, and toys. Similarly, we have partnered with other local organizations to provide clothes, school supplies, and food to families who are in need. Our Jr. Beta Club partnered with the Salvation Army for Christmas bell-ringing to help raise money for families and also provided food boxes for the Mississippi Department of Child Services during a Christmas Break. Furthermore, LMSA participated in the Pennies for Patients program to raise money for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

During Read Across America week, community workers are invited into classrooms to read to students. Readers have included the superintendent, a local news anchor, a Laurel native surgeon, firefighters, the mayor, a local author and artist, members of the military, and many other community members. We believe

allowing these community stakeholders into the classrooms gives students an opportunity to make connections with people in their community.

Every month we host Coffee and Conversation where we invite community members, local businesses, and parents to the school to learn what's "brewing". Participants enjoy coffee and snacks while we discuss pertinent issues facing our school/community and collaborate on ways to improve.

We have also partnered with local businesses, community leaders, and local churches to donate bikes as a reward for 3rd-6th grade students taking state assessments. With the help of our community, we were able to collect over 100 bikes. Additionally, we compiled video messages from familiar community members (i.e. barbers and pastors) wishing students good luck on state assessments.

The overall well-being of students at LMSA is integral to our success. Community organizations provide support with servitude by supplementing their diets with "secret meals". These meals are distributed to low socioeconomic students, their siblings, and families every Friday.

We believe that in order to improve a community, you must first improve the schools within the community; this is the ultimate demonstration of community service that will yield long term results. Due to this belief, we are committed to providing our students with a quality education so they become productive members of society and make positive contributions to their community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

School climate and culture is multi-faceted and must be intentionally cultivated according to the overall mission and vision of the school. The principal of Laurel Magnet School of the Arts has put purposeful systems into place that ensure the professional and general well-being of her staff. These systems allow teachers the opportunity to engage positively and productively with one another while using the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning to guide their work.

The principal of LMSA's philosophy is that teachers are the nucleus of a school and great attention to detail, from the leader, should be applied to building their capacity in a positive and nurturing environment. She believes in the power of quality teaching to impact a larger population of students who respond to Tier 1 instruction and is deliberate in improving teacher capacity through an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) model that was implemented during her first year of leadership.

By taking this deliberate systematic approach, the principal was able to shape and mold the culture of LMSA into one that supports learning, collaboration, and success of both teachers and students. Upon her arrival, the principal took the school by storm and immediately began to make the necessary changes that aligned to the academic goals. She revised the master schedule to maximize instructional time and allow for an uninterrupted 90-minute reading block. A PLC model was implemented where teachers meet every Tuesday and Thursday to share expertise, work collaboratively, and improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. A data-driven culture was created where we openly discuss student achievement data while simultaneously cultivating a culture of transparency. She worked with teachers to provide rigorous standards-based instruction to students and implemented our adopted curriculum with fidelity. The teacher leadership team was developed to increase teacher buy-in and get teacher input.

It is equally important that teachers feel known and valued just as much as students. As a result, the principal takes the time to visit each classroom in the morning to greet teachers as well. She partnered with the school PTO to provide staff with breakfast, lunch, gift cards, gift baskets, teacher appreciation week, and other kind gestures to show appreciation. In addition, Teachers and staff have an opportunity to be named the Teacher or Staff Member of the Month. Another way the principal makes her staff feel valued is by empowering them to have a voice and being a part of the decision making.

4. School Leadership:

Effective leadership is essential to the success of our school. LMSA is committed to making sure that effective leadership begins with the visible involvement of the building principal. To the greatest degree possible, leadership support also involves selected grade level teachers. We value the role of teachers to ensure high quality instruction for our students. Our school operates as one cohesive system to best meet the needs of all of our students rather than as a group of isolated programs. Together, identified leaders help ensure that the components for the successful implementation of the adopted curriculum are in place and that the implementation of these components is aligned with scientifically-based reading research.

Our leadership philosophy has been focused around three phrases: Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing, Make it Happen, and become the Disney World of education. These core philosophies from the principal have been embedded in our school. Student achievement is the main focus and leadership is a key factor.

The principal, our instructional leader, developed a leadership team to help convey information and support faculty with LMSA's philosophy. The leadership team meets weekly and is composed of classroom teachers. Those teachers are the department chair for Reading Foundations, 3rd-6th ELA, Math Foundations, 3rd-6th Math, Technology, Arts Specialist, and Mentor Support. The leadership team assists with school decision making, analyzing student data, goal setting, support for grade levels, student celebrations, and facilitating weekly professional learning communities.

The school structure helps build a cohesiveness among all grades, working as one towards our philosophies, so students experience a Disney World type of education. While it may look like it is just "fun", all programs, awards, and incentives are tied to student achievement. Leadership at the school fully supports each grade level, subject, role, and needs of faculty in order to keep student achievement and contagious positive energy a high priority within the building. LMSA's school planning schedule was developed by the principal to allow vertical alignment of subject grade bands, so that two days a week can be devoted to communicating within subject areas. Much of this time is spent supporting our goal of student achievement through analyzing data.

It is evident that leadership has made all the difference at LMSA. Our fearless leader has worked tirelessly to build the capacity of our staff while encouraging us along the way. She values relationships, input, and leads with love and grace.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Laurel Magnet School of the Arts (LMSA) is geographically positioned between diverse communities ranging from low socioeconomic to upper middle class. Our school serves students from across the district, as well as surrounding communities, from which employees commute. To address instructional equity and diversity of learning, we have implemented an explicit, strategic, and systematic approach of teaching through differentiated instruction (DI). During our DI blocks, teachers deliver individualized instruction based on current data to address learning gaps, provide enrichment, utilize technology, and create independent learning opportunities. This approach to teaching and learning equity meets the academic needs of all culturally diverse learners.

Other academic support provided for our inclusion students include both in-class support and pull-outs. These services allow students who fall under the special education umbrella an opportunity to have the support they need to succeed academically and socially. Additionally, these students are respected and celebrated within the school student body with events such as Autism Awareness Day and Dyslexia Awareness Day. Teachers and staff show respect and celebrate all students utilizing our PBIS incentives as well. This includes any adult in the building having the ability to reward a student with a star on the school's PBIS wall for demonstrating one of the "Seven Effective Traits of a Scholar" which include: critical thinking, problem solving, self-management, being responsible, offering leadership, empathy, and being inquisitive.

Our students, along with their families, celebrate various cultures throughout the school year with events such as our Cultural Arts Festival, annual musical, and Black history program. The Cultural Arts Festival is a school day spent with the entire student body, four-year-old kindergarten through sixth grade, learning

about one country and culture. Students learn about various topics such as food, sports, theater, music, dance, ways of life, and more. Countries in the past have included the Netherlands, Mexico, Morocco, and Norway. The school musical makes connections to other cultures such as Aladdin in the Middle East, The Lion King in Africa, and Frozen in Norway. Along with cultures around the world, LMSA connects to its largest population of students during the annual Black history program, where African Americans are celebrated for their culture and pivotal roles in our nation's history.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

While many practices contribute to our school's success, the one that stands out is Differentiated Instruction Blocks, or as we affectionately call it "DI Blocks." We believe this single practice is the most influential and the reason our school earned its first A rating.

DI Blocks were developed in 2018 at Laurel Magnet School of the Arts (LMSA). This practice is organized, succinct, and systemic. The shift in our school culture was something the school never experienced before and it took ambition, consistency, and determination to make it happen. The leadership team developed a three-day training model for the entire staff that included the following: a general overview of differentiated instruction; a written, detailed plan to explain the procedures and expectations; and a live model of a DI Block in action.

The school is shut down each Tuesday and Thursday for a dedicated and intentional block of 105 minutes. All scholars, pre-K through sixth grade, participate in DI Blocks for reading and math. Science, social studies, and writing are integrated. Scholars are grouped according to their most substantial deficit, as indicated by data. Each teacher is assigned a helping hand that consists of utilizing non-traditional staff such as activity teachers; the principal leads a small group as well. The goal is for everyone to have a small group of students to close achievement gaps, hone in on specific deficits, and provide enrichment for scholars who are performing above grade level.

Parents are also a critical component of this plan. A letter is sent to parents at the beginning of the year to communicate expectations.

Results from DI Blocks were record-breaking! Proficiency in ELA increased from 47.2% to 84% and in math from 47.2% to 91%; proficiency in science increased from 60.8% to 89%; growth in ELA increased from 55% to 83% and in math from 47.3% to 90%; bottom 25% growth in ELA increased from 45.5% to 68% and in math from 35.3% to 85%.

DI Blocks have become a way of life at LMSA. Teachers and scholars look forward to participating each week and share in the enthusiasm from the results achieved over the years. Schools from near and far have come to observe DI Blocks in action and have been inspired to adopt it as a part of their system. There is no denying this practice works and serves as a catalyst for student achievement.