

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 [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Erin Lambeth

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

Official School Name McLeod Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address PO Box 350

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

City McLeod State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75565-0350

County Cass County

Telephone (903) 796-7181

Fax (903) 796-8443

Web site/URL <https://www.mcleodisd.net/>

E-mail elambeth@mcleodisd.net

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mrs. Jennifer Lance E-mail jlance@mcleodisd.net

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

District Name McLeod Independent School District Tel. (903) 796-7181

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Chad Heldt

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

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

Date _____

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, 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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 3 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 | 18 |
| K | 26 |
| 1 | 30 |
| 2 | 35 |
| 3 | 31 |
| 4 | 30 |
| 5 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 |
| 12 or higher | 0 |
| Total Students | 170 |

*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
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0.7 % Black or African American
 - 4.9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90.2 % White
 - 4.2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 11%

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 | 16 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year | 2 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 18 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 | 164 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.11 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 11 |

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

We have no other languages than English spoken in our school.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 75 %

Total number students who qualify: 127

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 20 %
Total number of students served 34

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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 16 %
Total number of students served: 27

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. | 11 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 3 |
| 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. | 11 |

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 15:1

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 | 92% | 96% | 97% | 96% | 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.

Our vision at McLeod Elementary is to educate all students to the highest levels of academic achievement, to enable them to reach and expand their potential, and to prepare them to become productive, responsible, ethical, creative, and compassionate members of society. This will be accomplished by providing a welcoming, happy, safe, and supportive learning environment in which everyone is equal and all achievements are celebrated.

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

<https://pol.tasb.org/PolicyOnline/PolicyDetails?key=272&code=FB#localTabContent>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

McLeod Elementary proudly serves Pre-Kindergarten 4 through 4th-grade students. It was built in 1936 during the middle of an oil boom and is located in deep East Texas, neighboring the border with Louisiana just a few miles away. Our small rural community comprises about 310 people within its borders and it doesn't have a lot of businesses or things to do, but most community involvement centers around our school. Driving through McLeod, one might not see much more than our old post office and a few churches. However, one doesn't have to look too far to see that what MES has to offer is the really good stuff. Far more than just academics, MES is set apart by our amazing students and staff. Rarely have we been on a field trip or a school function where a business owner or a bystander doesn't comment that our students are so well-mannered or compliment the good character displayed by all.

Our families are composed mostly of hard-working, blue-collar, conservative, and faith-filled parents who want to see their children loved and nurtured. Many alumni here send their own children to McLeod Elementary because they see how their early school experiences shaped them and feel, in turn, that it is so important to instill good values in their own children, as well as to give them the best academic education possible. Since McLeod has that small-town feel and also a small teacher-to-student ratio, we often see many of the same last names continue to populate our school, generation after generation. MES seeks to encourage and challenge all students in all areas of learning. Our students conference routinely with their teachers to set individual goals for themselves, chart their progress and the general trajectory in which they are headed, and celebrate academic achievements as they are reached by the class and individually. MES has embedded a daily recess and physical movement in a separate PE class into our must-dos each day because research has shown that play and movement are paramount to student success, both academically and for health and wellness. Emotional and social education is also a cornerstone initiative at our school. Our character education program is discussed daily during our morning announcements and students are "caught" with good character tickets and "swagger tags" on a daily basis. These students meet each Friday morning with the principal to discuss among a small group what they did to earn their brag and "spread their good character like confetti" to others. A good character word of the month is also discussed each day on the announcements and the student helper of the day gives an example of how they have shown that character lately at school or within the community. Our good character education program has helped to develop our students socially, as one would often find a student using their best manners, opening doors for others, picking up trash from the ground to be helpful, or offering to carry a backpack or a tray for a friend. Administration and teachers model these good character traits and are always recognizing and celebrating them in our students, choosing "MVP Leaders of the Month" for showing good leadership in good character and other areas such as hard work and respect for others. MVPs receive a medal and have their picture posted on the school's social media page as well as on the MVP board in the hallway alongside their MVP form explaining why they were chosen as a stand-out leader among their peers.

Five years ago, our school was borderline C/D rated on Accountability. A new approach was needed and a fresh direction campus-wide. Several programming changes were implemented, but the single most profound change began to sprout once students began to chart their progress and the general direction in which they were headed to reach them. Conferences were held between the teachers and each student to set individual and attainable goals, with celebrations along the way as milestones were met. The culture change was amazing as students began to get competitive with themselves, chart their progress on their graphs, receive "swagger brags" to show their parents, and celebrate with their class as goals were met. Teachers began to be excited about their students' progress and took on the data-driven culture with full force. They are now charting student progress and leading data meetings with the principal. Hallway posters are posted and visible to all to show all students how student progress is important and moving forward. Fresh ideas and exciting new information are passed along among all teachers to help others accomplish more progress. The culture shift within MES has been exciting to watch and a welcome change. Staff, students, and parents are forward thinkers and excited about all areas of school growth.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

McLeod Elementary has shifted instructional practices for English Language arts over the last three years. The school was given a C accountability rating and needed an overhaul. The overwhelming amount of struggling readers required a closer look at the needs of the students. MES was charged with reviewing many new Reading/English language arts curricula and formed a committee of needs and wants. Previously, the basal reader that was in place took on more of a whole language approach to reading acquisition and dyslexia referrals were high. The presentation of reading skills was not necessarily in sequential order and they did not cycle well for review. A more fluid scope and sequence were needed to help teachers better plan lessons instead of jumping around for different skills. As a committee, the most up-to-date research on the positive effects of direct and explicit phonics instruction was important to our committee from PK-3rd grade, as was readability and rigor throughout all of the grade levels. We also wanted to make sure that our choice of the curriculum included good unit tests throughout the year that were up to par with a rigor that would prepare them for the higher-order thinking they would need to display for the STAAR test. Previously, teacher-made tests were used in conjunction with weekly tests. The data disconnect was apparent and was not reflective of cumulative performance throughout the year. The English Language Arts curriculum that was chosen encompassed all of these specifics. The formative data used at the beginning of the year serves as a baseline and is continuously gathered throughout the year, working up to the summative assessment to measure the year's growth. Along the way, all data is analyzed by each teacher and shared with the principal, resulting in rich conversations concerning individualized interventions and overall school performance. In addition to the adopted basal curriculum, each student is also tested with several instruments at the beginning, middle, and end of the year in areas such as phonemic awareness, decoding, blending, fluency, and comprehension. This crucial data drives tailored instruction specific to each child's academic need and shows growth from the beginning of the year to the end. Teachers create spreadsheets of data with a gain and loss column for each administration, coming to the frequent data meetings with specific interventions in mind as well as what strategies have been implemented, the duration of time, and their effectiveness. All students receive 90 minutes of Tier 1 instruction in the classroom. Small group intervention specific to homogenous group needs is built into the daily schedule for all students as well. Students requiring more intense intervention attend our Reading Lab for 30 minutes each day or receive high-quality dyslexia therapy from our dyslexia therapist in addition to the tier 1 and 2 times. Our campus has also begun screening students for dyslexia in different grades twice a year which has helped identify needs earlier for treatment.

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

Stellar mathematics instruction is also a top priority at McLeod Elementary School. Teachers endeavor to teach foundational skills to students such as numeracy, place value, and patterns of measurement with vertically aligned methodology from one grade level to the next. Direct instruction and hands-on activities are both frequently used techniques to help develop conceptual understanding. This involves moving to pictorial representations and then on to written expression, which often requires multiple steps to problem solve. Rigorous questioning to promote higher-order thinking and problem-solving is intentionally embedded within the lesson plan as well as aligned vocabulary across the grade levels. Critical thinking skills are emphasized as students are challenged to think critically as they analyze which strategy to employ to solve problems. Real-life applications are purposely discussed as new lessons are presented so that students can understand how they might use the new math skill in the real world. Collaboration among peers is also encouraged as research has shown that this practice results in a deeper understanding of new concepts. Student engagement "hooks" are intentionally embedded at the beginning of each lesson to boost interest. Since MES is a Title I campus, multiple practice opportunities are embedded throughout the math instruction and help build confidence in students' math abilities. Scaffolding methods are used to help the students be successful before gradually releasing students to the independent practice of new skills. Teachers utilize incentives to help build math fact fluency and the students get very competitive within themselves as

they set and reach their goals. Fact fluency is very important in order to solve complex problems, so it is a priority across grade levels. Strategies to teach students, such as direct metacognition instruction, is also just as important to each math lesson delivery as the new concept. Students' ability to think about their thinking across all areas of problem-solving proves beneficial to math success.

A formative assessment baseline is measured at the beginning of the year, followed by unit tests every six weeks, leading up to a cumulative benchmark at the end of the year. Students' mastery of concepts is also measured with a normed computer assessment three times a year and guides data teams in instructional and intervention planning. Each child's trajectory of progress is closely monitored throughout their school journey for progress and constant data meetings are held to ensure that all needs are met. Students who are not meeting their grade level expectations are matched with a Tier 2 intervention such as small targeted math groups and technology-based math interventions specific to their area of need that also help measure and track progress. All At-Risk students practice math skills in the computer lab twice a week. In the Spring, math tutorials are offered four times a week for an hour after school. Much academic growth occurs during this time as well as relationship building. Students gain confidence in their own abilities during this targeted intervention. McLeod Elementary students are given the tools and interventions that they need to be successful mathematicians.

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

Much of the instruction includes cross-curricular texts within our ELA curriculum and is expanded upon through scientific investigations. Much of the time, students are reading stories and articles of science-related content, and the ELA classroom transforms into a science lab, later writing about the experiments. These writings are often shared aloud among peers and posted in the hallway for viewing. This sends the message that their learning and findings are valued and appreciated. The science curriculum is vertically aligned to reflect each grade level's TEKS. High expectations, differentiated instruction, with a challenging learning environment are in place. A framework of science expectations is utilized as the MES science scope and sequence while using real-world applications from multiple sources to expound upon the concepts. Promoting collaborative, differentiated, active learning and critical thinking to investigate new concepts is the scientific methodology used at MES. On any given day, one would see hands-on learning experiments and small group investigations utilizing inquiry-based learning opportunities. High-interest and engaging short videos often start the lesson to both motivate and leave students wanting to know how and why. Discovery learning is often seen throughout our school grounds as students employ the scientific method to gather information to solve the answers to these questions. A greenhouse for herbs and a flower garden are two settings where our students enjoy science often. Throughout the year, formative assessment data is acquired to measure student growth. Both informal and formal information gathering help to shape how each student's success is quantified. Adjustments are made based on student needs and additional support is provided. Oftentimes, these supports take on the form of small group instruction with the teacher and vocabulary-building activities. Science comes to life with fun experiments and activities at McLeod Elementary.

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

Social Studies is an area where students develop a love for their country, state, and community. McLeod Elementary aims to foster that love through project-based learning, engaging activities, and an investigative approach. Formative assessments and informal teaching questioning gauge students' prior knowledge of social studies topics at the beginning of the year. As students learn map reading skills and social studies content, that knowledge is quantified in unit tests, ending in a cumulative formal assessment at the end of the year to document each year's growth. As with Science, Social Studies content is incorporated into the English Language Arts curriculum in the informational texts and read-alouds. Often, if one were to walk into the ELA classroom, disaggregating one subject from the next would be a difficult task because Social Studies content is embedded within the texts of skills such as cause-and-effect. Often, polling occurs within math lessons to demonstrate the real-life application of statistics in politics that help shape our government and country. Learning about communities that are close to home and far away are also great ways to bring Social Studies to life. Oftentimes, guest speakers are called in to share artifacts or details about world experiences. Students also love to take part in this, bringing show-and-tell items from a trip that they share

with their classmates. This allows others to explore what it's like to visit or live in different areas of the world. Students are all very interested in the world around them and Social Studies is a favorite. Vocabulary is enriched and writing tasks are included in many of the social studies activities, resulting in many great cross-curricular connections. Moreover, students often enjoy learning about the world around them, and their interest level is peaked while using the tools that they have learned along the way such as map skills, grammar skills, and literacy skills.

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

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

At McLeod Elementary, we began our impactful Preschool 4 (PK4) program five years ago after seeing the community's need to establish care and intervention earlier than in kindergarten. Currently, our PK4 program includes 16 students, one teacher, and one paraprofessional. Since adding PK4 to our campus, we have seen enormous growth occur sooner than it did before we offered this important program. The majority of students entering kindergarten already know many of the established school procedures and expectations, and there have been much-demonstrated growth in early concepts that formerly did not take place until kindergarten. Since these things are occurring earlier due to preschool intervention, kindergarten has seen a demonstrated difference with earlier reading acquisition and writing taking place sooner. With school procedures and expectations established, there has been more time for academic learning to occur sooner, and more academic growth has been demonstrated by data such as our state reading inventory as well as on several math data points that are used throughout the year. Consequently, since kindergartners are able to go further and take deeper dives into the curriculum, the other grade levels are also reaping the benefits. Our campus uses the Circle Framework and Owl as our preschool curriculum. Both programs are heavy in the social-emotional construct of development and also take a deep dive into phonemic awareness for early reading prerequisites. Prekindergarten through fourth-grade curriculum meetings have taken place to ensure that all the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are aligned for all of the required academic standards and our team has regular conversations to make sure that learning is aligned and flowing well and efficiently. Starting PK4 at McLeod Elementary has been a positive and impactful service to our community and has certainly paid great dividends in the early intervention of our students' development and academic success.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

McLeod Elementary has many artistic and talented students. Once a week, students in kindergarten through fourth grade attend art class as part of their activity rotation and enjoy making crafts related to holidays or TEKS-related items. In addition, student artwork is displayed around the campus to both beautify the school and also show students that their work is valued. An outdoor art area was added this past year. Primary, secondary, and tertiary colors as well as different mediums are explored in the creation of student art, adhering to the TEKS. Elementary students also work for months within their classrooms to learn Christmas songs and have campus-wide practices leading up to their Christmas musical performance. All students have a part and it is always a community-wide event, resulting in a large gathering. In accordance with the TEKS, students learn about sound, tone, simple musical instruments, and refine their vocal skills specific to their roles. Both visual and performing arts are a favorite for our students and provide a great outlet for students who have a musical interest, a love for art, or it can help to develop an appreciation in others who haven't previously had much exposure.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Kindergarten through fourth grade students enjoy 135 minutes of physical education each week in three 45-minute sessions spread throughout the week. All classes are taught by a certified physical education teacher

that follows the TEKS. PE classes take place in the game gym, the playground, or on the track. For example, coaches often play games with students such as kickball, basketball, soccer, whiffle ball, Capture the Flag, or running the track. These activities are structured in a way that is both fun and students also learn about good sportsmanship, turn-taking, and refining skills. Nutrition and health are also directly taught alongside stretching and exercises. These skills are things that students can carry with them into adulthood to improve and maintain good health habits. In the Spring, as part of the Physical Fitness Initiative required by TEA, coaches assess third and fourth-graders on their individual student performance using the adopted Fitness Gram. The data gathered helps them choose activities to target areas of need in order to benefit fitness. The goal of our physical education classes is to instill in our students a knowledge of maintaining physical, social, and mental health. Positive behavior and student motivation to improve their health is the end result.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

McLeod Elementary is blessed to have a device for all students. This was a crucial way in which teachers were able to reach students during the pandemic. Students use these devices daily with technology interventions within the math and reading classes. Each student has been given their own email account and enjoys skills practice on licensed student accounts. Students also take their reading quizzes, practice reading and math skills through our digital curriculum, and take online benchmarks on their own devices. These programs provide progress data and are used to routinely monitor student growth and make intervention adjustments. Teachers from PK-4th grades use a communication platform to post reminders, text in real-time, and leave messages for parents. This two-way conversation ability has been a game-changer for teachers.

Our library is stocked with a high-interest inventory of books and reading library books is a huge push campus-wide. Students can check out books multiple times throughout each day to gain points toward their teacher-set reading goals. At the end of each nine weeks, they can go shopping at the library's Reading Store. If students meet their goal each grading period, they get to go to a huge surprise celebration day in May.

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

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

McLeod Elementary prides itself on meeting the needs of all learners and maintains that all students can reach their individual goals. Interventions are inclusive of all student populations such as 504, special education, at-risk, highly mobile, homeless, and economically disadvantaged. All students receive whole class instruction and tier 2 small group instruction within their classroom. Within our data-driven culture, all pull-out tier 2 and 3 decisions are based on formal and informal data gathering and shared in routine conversations between the principal and teachers. These formal and informal assessments are given three times a year to gather up to date for teachers to know each student's strengths and weaknesses. Supplemental reading and math instruction is provided to all students who are performing below grade level in small group settings and in some cases, on an individual basis. Our Reading Lab offers small group reading instruction tailored to students' needs and if the student has dyslexia, they are served daily for 45 minutes in a small group with dyslexia therapy. Math extension, beyond in-class small groups, involves added math practice in the computer lab specific to the areas of struggle. Tutorial time for struggling students is offered each morning from 7:30-8:00 and in the Spring after school for reading and math. Tutoring offers students TEKS-specific and rigorous instruction by the classroom teacher and is focused support with scaffolded instruction. Each student receives a prescribed education plan, regardless of if they receive general education, a 504

plan, or special education. Each intervention is monitored routinely and referrals to 504 or special education are made if limited to no progress has occurred over a sufficient time period. The expectation is high at MES. All students are expected to make growth and that growth is monitored closely to ensure all student needs are met.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

It is easy to focus on bringing the struggling students up and to lose sight of the high-achieving students. It is these high achievers who can become unmotivated if not challenged. Therefore, we at McLeod Elementary School strive to meet those learners where they are, find out their interests, and push them to excel. MES offers a Gifted and Talented program that brings challenging activities to learners who need just that. When a new skill is taught, lesson plans require an extension requiring those students to take it a step further and think more critically. Technology is added to also meet the needs of more advanced students. Teachers can use district-purchased data disaggregation software to decipher what has already been mastered from which skills need more work or to move students to a higher level. In addition, high-achieving students meet with teachers to set stretch goals (beyond the minimal one year of growth). Students in 2nd-4th grades can score in “approaches,” “meets,” and “masters” categories in accordance with Texas Accountability standards. Those students who are in meets and not far from masters focus on achieving that goal. Masters students focus on maintaining and refining their scores. Since this practice was implemented two years ago, an increase in scores has certainly been noticed, but the best observation comes from students who are intrinsically motivated and proud of their growth. As students plot their target goals, stretch goals, predictions, and scores, powerful conversations occur as growth climbs.

In addition, our campus annually identifies gifted and talented kindergarten through fourth-grade students using parent and teacher rating scales as well as normed assessments. Identified students are served by a certified GT teacher with motivating enrichment and project-based learning activities once a week. GT field trips to explore areas of high interest are also great fun!

3c. Students with disabilities:

At McLeod Elementary, we seek to employ only the best teachers that do a marvelous job at supporting the diverse needs of our students with special needs. Our teacher utilizes research-based instructional strategies and actively participates in ongoing research-based professional development to ensure the best instructional practices are utilized to meet the diverse needs of our exceptional learners. Students with special needs are always included in all areas and activities possible. Our students in special education are also very much included by general education students in all social areas such as lunchtime, recess, physical education class, library, and art. Our students are very compassionate and wonderful about including and taking care of any student with a need to be met. On any given day, you see this inclusive culture unfold in the hallways, conversations, and activities where non-disabled students are accepting and helpful to their friends with special needs.

Academically, these students are also well provided for, and technology tools are purchased to assist in this process where needed. Each student’s IEP is followed to ensure that he/she receives the accommodations and modifications required for their academic success. MES offers a continuum of services from Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD), life skills, resource, to inclusion/mainstream in the general education setting. As it is the charge of the ARD committee, students are mainstreamed with their nondisabled peers whenever possible. Students are not considered “general education” or “special education.” Rather, they are all considered our students and everyone shares responsibility for their progress. Students with special needs do not receive special education help in lieu of general education help. Rather, response-to-intervention (RtI) occurs in addition to prescribed special education time. General education teachers meet routinely with the special education teacher to discuss student progress and growth toward meeting their present levels and functional performance goals.

3d. English Language Learners:

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

McLeod Elementary is where the firm foundation for secondary success begins and purposeful engagement and positive relationship building are the rock upon which all other areas of education rest. When students know their teachers care, they care about what their teachers know and will want to learn. No minute is wasted. On a daily basis, students are greeted at the front door by their principal with a hug and a smile before walking down the hallway and seeing all teachers at their door greeting each student passing by or walking in. That sets a positive tone for the rest of their day. Students are engaged from the first moment they walk into their classes with routines, procedures, warm-ups, and bell-ringers. All students have a purpose and a sense of belonging within their classroom. For example, PK students take their blank laminated card from the pocket chart on their door as they walk in and write their names on it before returning it and then begin their table activity. Students eating breakfast are greeted by a paraprofessional on cafeteria duty and asked about their mornings. Connections and relationships are cornerstones to building trust and love and all staff members care about and love each one of our students. Incentives, both intrinsic and extrinsic, are used to motivate our students. External rewards such as our "Reader Leader Store" are used to reward students who meet their reading goals every nine weeks as well as our "Reading Celebration Day" in the Spring in which staff celebrates with students on a wet and wild water slide day. Intrinsic motivation is fostered through teacher and student-led conversations to set academic goals and in building a love for learning through rich conversations and excitement about literature and math. Rich writing opportunities are also used with provided topics that engage students in expressing their thoughts, feelings, and emotions and are also used for growth reflections related to personal and school experiences. College opportunities and possible career options are discussed and promoted often through discussions, writing, and research.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

McLeod is a very rural and tiny community with a population of about 300 people. There is little more than a small post office and a school within our town and many people drive into our area for school from surrounding communities as transfer students. Since there is very little business within our rural community, it requires a bit of creativity to bring in surrounding services and business owners in order to educate our students on what the world has to offer. Parents are asked to share their unique crafts with our students on a regular basis. One such example of this was a mother who shared her delicious bakery goodies with our entire staff and students. Another parent plays his guitar at his church and has shared his talents in a small group music lesson. Several professional firemen from a neighboring town brought a simulation trailer and demonstrated the importance of fire safety for our students. Soon, an electrical lineman from our small community will be demonstrating how electricity is conducted with our students and the importance of electrical safety. Our small school also invites parents and many community members to be involved in many aspects of our events. Volunteers are used during events such as our campus book fairs, school festivals, and during receptions such as Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, and Grandparents' Day. Although there are several small farms in and around our area, not all of our students have access to understand the process of where food origins begin. Community members have brought in their cows to milk in order to show our students how consumers get their milk from the farm to the table. Other members within our surrounding organizations have also volunteered to read to and with our students to help instill a love of reading. A local medical clinic gives a presentation on hygiene and germ spread, offering a fabulous opportunity for students to learn more about healthcare and ways to prevent the spread of infection. Field trips to places in our wider regional community such as firehouses, aquariums, public city recreational parks, hospitals, and even fields of cotton and corn have proven to be very valuable and informative for our students. These enriching trips and real-world experiences help to bridge a better understanding of what the larger world has to offer and provide authentic, real-world learning opportunities for all of our students to enjoy.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

McLeod Elementary School values all staff and seeks to create a positive climate in which to work. All staff members feel appreciated and supported, both professionally and personally. Small notes of appreciation and encouragement are left for staff by the principal often along with food in the workroom, and special staff appreciation days with numerous goodies are just some of the ways administration dotes over our wonderful teachers and support staff for the great job they do daily. In addition, our administration team works tirelessly throughout the summer to bring in the best professional development (PD) to our teachers based on the feedback received. Teachers' needs and wants are surveyed in the Spring in the hopes of securing desired professional development opportunities the following Fall. Last school year, we had a student whose heart went into cardiac arrest and stopped beating while playing a game outside with his friends. Only several people campus-wide had the training to use the automated external defibrillators (AED) that were in close proximity, but the device was used and the student's heart began beating again, saving his life. Consequently, all staff wished to be trained this past Fall in the use of AEDs because it became very important to everyone so that, in the event that it was to ever occur again, all are ready and willing to do the same thing. This training was provided along with more devices placed throughout our campus. Beyond academics, the teachers were concerned about advocating for those who cannot do so for themselves. They asked for more training in relation to child abuse, when to call Child Protective Services, and how to provide the required documentation of student concerns. Moreover, writing is now heavily embedded in our third and fourth-grade curriculum, but it has been evident through teacher conversations that writing needed to be happening daily in the lower grades as well. Writing throughout all grade levels was another topic of interest that was relayed in teacher surveys and delivered to our teachers. Constructing our professional development around the things that our teachers most need creates an atmosphere of teamwork and helps them feel valued and supported. In these cases, opportunities are presented and individual or small group professional development is secured and delivered specific to their needs. Teachers visiting other teachers' classrooms have also been a hugely successful practice among our staff. They view this as an opportunity to highlight great practices and share them with others.

4. School Leadership:

The principal at McLeod Elementary maintains high expectations of academics and good character for all students. The principal's core philosophy maintains that "Growth precedes performance" and that "Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated." With these two simple things in mind, there are several very intentional non-negotiables purposely placed throughout each day without fail. Each morning starts with the principal at the door, greeting each student with a hug or a handshake before they walk down the hallway to begin their day. This practice, along with daily announcements that include a student leader, purpose-driven cafeteria conversations with students while they enjoy their lunch, "swag brags" for highlighting great student behavior or effort, and hallway high fives are the ways in which the principal connects with each student and forms relationships. These strong relationships with each individual student are the driving force behind maintaining high academic and behavioral expectations. The principal also works diligently to maintain strong relationships with each paraprofessional and teacher through various methods such as check-ins, encouraging emails or handwritten cards, and incentives to boost morale. These things are the springboard by which forward movement takes place with staff and students, resulting in the buy-in necessary for staff and students to have the common goal of reaching the high goals. Each teacher is given the data and resources needed to know where each child is academically and frequent data conversations are held to monitor and match students to academic interventions when needed. Data and progress monitoring play an immense role in this process and teachers are frequently gathering data and training to match students to interventions. Teachers also have goal-setting conversations with students and celebrations as goals are met. "Practice like you play" is one consistent statement that our staff knows well and forms the basis for our current structure at McLeod Elementary School. Moreover, each day is a dress rehearsal for the high expectations we wish to achieve with accountability. Any purchase requests for moving students in this direction, whether by the principal or the teachers, are justified through the lens of building relationships or maintaining high expectations of student achievement for the recipients. Therefore each and every policy, program, relationship, and resource focus on student achievement as the ultimate goal in mind. Policies on attendance, make-up work, behavior, etc. are also always student-centered with success in mind.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

It is extremely high on the priority list at McLeod Elementary to make certain that all students and staff feel valued and accepted, in all backgrounds and cultures. Most of our population is white, but the majority of them are economically disadvantaged in this very rural and isolated community. There are a few students from two or more races. Our campus has no Limited English Proficient students. With these demographics in mind, it is the mission of McLeod Elementary to incorporate curriculum and activities that bring awareness to our students of other cultures they will encounter within their larger regional area as well as to highlight the backgrounds of others within our school that have different needs than their own. To accomplish this mission, guest speakers are invited to share their experiences with classes and interact, bringing in hands-on activities to our students. One such way this has been accomplished was by bringing in a dairy farmer from Mt. Vernon to explain to our students how milk gets from the farm to the table and that some of our students, as well as many less fortunate cultures within the world, don't get milk from the store. Another such example came in the form of a field trip to a local Christmas tree farm to show students how others make a living using simple means. Canned food drives to help local residents also bring awareness to those who are less fortunate than other students. This yearly activity also breeds empathy and a desire to help others, creating a culture of compassion. Integrating the curriculum of other races into daily instruction shows minorities in many different facets of life and gives each student the opportunity to grow an appreciation of differences that make us all unique. Culturally responsive teaching and learning activities are purposely infused within our curriculum but as opportunities arise, teachable moments are also seized and often make the best lessons. As many schools do, we have a diverse population of different learning needs including several students with autism. To raise awareness of autism, our school sets aside an "Autism Awareness Day" in which the staff and students wear t-shirts and talk openly about autism, how we are much the same, and how we can include and accept those with differences. We discuss the autism puzzle piece and how we each have a different shaped puzzle piece that fits together beautifully to create a magnificent and unique masterpiece.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

"Think Big" are the words in our student data room at McLeod Elementary and it embodies the effort that our team pours into the education we provide. We think big and out of the box, matching students to interventions and trying new strategies to reach all needs. The one practice that has been most instrumental to our academic success is that all staff and students are using data as a roadmap to meet their goals. For example, at the beginning of the year, 3rd and 4th-grade teachers have individual conversations with each student to set STAAR goals. If the students took a STAAR test last year, the goal is based on their previous score. "Hold the line" is the philosophy that we adhere to and no student can go backward. The students understand the importance of making a year's growth as their goal but also set a stretch goal for even more progress. The students graph their predictions and write a written statement of what they are going to pledge to do in order to meet that goal, such as reading 30 minutes each night or learning all of their multiplication facts. As the students take unit tests and benchmarks, they graph their progress after having updated meetings with the teacher. The teacher also graphs the class progress on the hallway charts showing Approaches, Meets, and Masters progression throughout the year. "Swag brags," high fives, and celebrations along the way are key to making this data-driven culture a success. Teachers have explained the Accountability System to students in order to make it more real to them as they progress toward their goals; they get one prize from the Approaches bag, one from Meets, and one from Masters for a total of three. That really made sense to the students as a real-world application. The principal and the teachers routinely update the shared document online and have regular data meetings and discussions to make changes and problem-solve. This data-driven culture helps students to know their target and where they are in relation to their goal each step of the way. Students and teachers get excited throughout the process and know the steps necessary to get there along with a shared commitment. Changing our Accountability rating from a C to an A in just a few years really accentuates how powerful a data-driven culture can be.