

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

Official School Name Milano Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 500 North 5th Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Milano State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 76556-0145

County Milam County

Telephone (512) 455-2062 Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://www.milanoisd.net/> E-mail ctodd@milanoisd.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Elisabeth Avila Luevanos E-mail eluevanos@milanoisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Milano Independent School District Tel. (512) 455-2533

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 Mrs. Lynnette Taylor
(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):
- 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	12
K	31
1	35
2	34
3	17
4	27
5	26
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	182

*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
 - 0.6 % Asian
 - 2.3 % Black or African American
 - 23.9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 72.2 % White
 - 1 % 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	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	182
(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: 7 %
12 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 58 %

Total number students who qualify: 106

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 5 %
Total number of students served 9

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>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>6</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 5 %
Total number of students served: 9

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 6

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.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
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 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	93%	97%	100%	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.

Milano ISD, in partnership with parents and community, will enhance individual strengths of students to be responsible and productive citizens. Inspiring, encouraging, and empowering our children to achieve excellence.

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

https://www.milanoisd.net/586311_3

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1macjtURLL5ufvUgPp4E3rnA3XQZRHZTidJHadWTNHII/edit>

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

Milano Elementary School (MES) is a part of the Milano Independent School District (ISD) which is located in the small rural town of Milano, Texas which has an estimated population of 390. The city of Milano is approximately situated in 2 square miles; however, Milano ISD extends beyond the city limits and covers 215 square miles. Milano ISD is situated centrally and is roughly 45 to 50 minutes from three major cities. The district's tax base does not include any industries however, it does include several small businesses and family ranch/farms. With a limited number of businesses, Milano ISD is the focal point of the community. The school district has a growing population of staff that commute more than 45 minutes to work with our exceptional group of students.

Currently, MES serves 173 students from various backgrounds. The demographic data reflects that MES has a diversified student population of 2.3% African American, 23.9% Hispanic, 72.2% White, 0.6% Asian, and 1.1% Two or More Races, with 50.6% identified as Economically Disadvantaged. Twenty nine percent of students are identified as At-Risk with 6.3% classified as English Language Learners and 4.5% of students receive special education services. MES has a functional academics inclusionary classroom that serves students with severe cognitive and behavioral impairments. A primary focus of creating an inclusionary academic and social environment where each student is successful, is witnessed as all students regardless of designation are participating in a variety of activities in and out of the classroom environment. MES has effectively integrated a result-oriented dyslexia program that is driven by researched based practices and ensures that all students receive equitable support for continued academic success.

As you enter MES, you immediately enter an organization that is grounded in the virtues of family, community, and togetherness. The overall excitement and dedication in ensuring that every child is safe, educated, and loved is a common characteristic of each employee regardless of their role and responsibility. The overflow of excitement each day is felt throughout each classroom, office, and hallway. Together, the MES staff work endlessly to provide each student the social and emotional support along with the knowledge and skills so that each child can reach their highest potential in life. Overall, the community of Milano and MES work in partnership and great collaboration work in supporting our students holistically. Increased partnership and high-level parent involvement has allowed for great ownership of student learning, growth, and progress. Collaboration with parents is a priority so that all students experience success and growth both academically and emotionally. MES has a rich history grounded in school pride and tradition that is evident intrinsically and extrinsically in great cohesion with the secondary campuses.

MES thrives on creating an organization where each student has a sense of belonging and sense of care. Teachers focus on meeting the social-emotional and academic needs with high, rigorous, and purposeful intentionality. The warm, inviting culture at MES is built upon positive student-teacher relationships, establishing fair expectations and fostering a love of learning. At MES, students are provided character development lessons through the district social-emotional hour in conjunction with the classroom teachers and the district counselor. These hour-long sessions are individualized for each classroom and student group to identify areas of growth for character development and provide a foundation of social-emotional support. High expectations are set for all students and all students are expected to try their very best when it comes to academics and behavior. Students are recognized for performing random acts of kindness and taught positive thinking and mindset.

Within a small, rural campus the needs are vast and resources are oftentimes limited; however, at MES, we embrace these perceived challenges and welcome the opportunity to be creative in being innovative solution minded individuals to ensure our students get an exceptional education. The district provides an iPad for every single student in pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) through 12th grade for instructional use and to develop technological literacy. The opportunity to use 1:1 devices gives students access to anywhere, anytime learning.

Specificity of instruction and individualizing student academic growth from highly-qualified teachers is a priority and area of focus that has resulted in closing the achievement gap for each student. Teacher retention from year to year and low turnover rates yields the most return on investment in terms of student

achievement. Retaining the same experienced teachers from year to year who have high expectations and are familiar with the campus culture, climate and student needs directly affects student achievement and closing achievement gaps. The district prioritizes keeping high-quality educators and provides quality mentorship, competitive compensation, and rewarding teaching conditions. Keeping morale high for both students and staff is a priority. The smallest accomplishments are celebrated so that students and staff look forward to coming through the school doors each day.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

The English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curricular focus at MES engages students with 75 minutes of systematic, daily instruction that is driven by research based best practices providing a strong foundation in the five elements of effective reading instruction: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The grade level pedagogical and curricular instruction is guided by the state designed Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. Throughout the campus, the “Into Reading” curriculum in grades kindergarten through 5th grade focuses heavily on phonics with the goal of building confident readers. The comprehensive literacy focused curriculum is designed to improve literacy through self-actualized learning. This curricular focus streamlines core instruction which provides supplemental practice, varied assessments, and professional learning altogether. The goal is to create a vertical alignment of ELAR continuity throughout the grade level progression of each student with demonstrated success and guiding data points. There are embedded assessments and checkpoints throughout the curriculum that assist in increasing student comprehension and knowledge attainment toward reaching literacy goals. Digital assessments provide teachers with snapshot data points that can quickly be assessed to identify learning gaps, differentiate instruction, and track student growth. A variety of formative and summative assessments are utilized throughout the school year to ensure that the curricular and instructional practices align with the rigor of the state’s TEKS. The assessments used for data collection include Beginning of the Year (BOY), Middle of the Year (MOY), and End of the Year (EOY) qualified assessments along with the Circle Test for Pre-K students, the the Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment (Tx-KEA) for Kindergarten (K) students, Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) for 1st and 2nd grade students, and assessments embedded in the Renaissance Reading program.

Hands-on activities and integrated technology are used to create innovative lessons that keep students actively engaged and learning. There is a focus on vertical alignment that starts with the fundamentals of ELAR in Pre-K and continues to the upper grade levels. There are high levels of intentionality in providing teachers access to high-interest texts for whole-class shared reading that is not available in any other core program. Books are available to all students in a variety of formats to meet the varied learning needs. Students also have the opportunity to access online practice resources to reinforce foundational reading skills and vocabulary learned during whole group instruction. A focus in ELAR throughout the last several years has been a concentrated integration of writing across all subject areas to produce stronger reading comprehension and skills along with strengthening student’s writing skills. For struggling readers, multi-tiered differentiated supports provided for each student allow for continued student engagement and success. The exposure to quality literature and incremental pacing for each student allows for simultaneous evaluation of struggling readers whilst increasing the rigor for students who have mastered the grade-level standards. Teachers employ a broad range of instructional techniques to retain student interest and maximize learning. Small group learning and differentiated instruction helps students master concepts and acquire new skills.

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

At MES, embedded in the master schedule are 75 minutes of daily math instruction for all students. The curriculum used is Savvas enVisionmath 2.0 math that is used in conjunction with the highly rigorous state TEKS that builds a strong foundation of analytical and critical thinking skills. This foundation establishes the building blocks of expanded knowledge which is built upon as a student progresses onto the upper grade levels. A plethora of differentiated strategies are implemented to ensure that all learners are engaged with interactive practice embedded with visual learning supplemental aids. There are also built-in responses to intervention activities that address individual curricular needs for greater personalization of instruction. MES teachers use a guided math workshop framework that begins with a lesson opener, into hands-on math experiences, and math centers, and ends with an element of closure for the content shared. Interactive lessons with engaging math manipulatives allows for students to develop the building blocks of

the unit and content for greater overall success throughout their educational experience at MES. Within this framework, the instructional staff allows students to think critically and process with new knowledge that guides for impactful exploration, development of problem-solving skills, and perseverance.

This process is more than delivering a textbook lesson and going through the motions of lower-level rote learning skills. The importance of this sequential curricular practice allows for greater student engagement and understanding rather than just arriving at the correct answer. The overall philosophy of MES staff is to produce critical thinkers and engage students in number talks to assist students in solving problems with time to explain their train of thought. Within this process, students are able to explain which strategies and why they chose to use said strategies. Critical space is provided throughout the math exploration time to allow students to discuss and share with one another reflective observations and insights. These varied representations of math processing and critical thinking allows students to embrace the content to a deeper understanding and greater academic success.

Formative and summative assessments are used consistently and constructively throughout the school year to guide instruction. Baseline assessments are conducted with data evaluated from assessments to show student progress and knowledge attainment. MES uses data from the BOY, MOY, EOY and Renaissance Learning Program assessments for students in 3rd through 5th grades. The data collected from these assessments are analyzed to reflect academic growth or knowledge gaps that need to be addressed by differentiating instruction to meet the needs of struggling students. Teachers also use informal, real time academic checks by using intentional questioning techniques as well as closely monitoring students while in class. For struggling learners, MES has established an embedded response to intervention support system that provides high levels of personalized support for students. Students take an adaptive diagnostic assessment to determine their current level, then work at that level and quickly elevate to more difficult concepts. MES ensures that each student receives individualized support that creates a positive and impactful learning environment for all students.

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

MES teachers use the highly effective state essential skills and knowledge skills curriculum along with research based supplemental resources. MES staff work tirelessly in integrating elements of natural curiosity and discovery in science that are activated with hands-on inquiry and real-world applications. The overarching theme within the science curriculum is to prepare students to become tomorrows' scientists that are finding solutions to real world problems. The curriculum is built on three levels of inquiry: directed instruction, guided instruction, and hands-on activities that create a strong science foundation and develop a full understanding of the inquiry process. The integrative instructional supports and assessments promote higher-order critical thinking skills that result in improved student performance. MES uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to collect student academic progress which is used to adjust curricular and instructional practices.

Within MES science classes, a lab component is embedded in the curriculum for hands-on kinesthetic learning opportunities. As you walk into the science lab, you witness pre-established stations set up with all the pertinent tools that students need to get students' hands busy and their minds actively engaged. The science lessons are designed to intrigue students' interest in science and involve students in the learning process with ample opportunities to practice scientific innovation and ability to collaborate with others in a small group setting. The overarching goal is to develop a passion for science through project-based learning in preparation to be solution-minded global citizens making a global impact. Students are encouraged to discuss their thinking processes and how they came to their solution which creates intrinsic motivation and passion for learning. Safety during the lab section is discussed and taught simultaneously by demonstration with continuous embedded checks to ensure that everyone follows the safety expectations by wearing all necessary safety items.

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

MES students receive 45 minutes of daily social studies curricular and instructional content that assists in the development of core skills necessary for students to become responsible, civic minded global citizens.

Guided by the state curricular framework for each grade level, MES uses Studies Weekly to create a holistic understanding of social studies through compounded alignment that is nurtured as students are promoted each year. A foundational element of the curriculum used is the periodical format where students practice a lost art of reading a newspaper and they themselves discover history instead of having it taught to them. This strategy and perspective allows students to experience a high-quality curricular program to help young learners make sense of local, national, and global perspectives. Meaningful connections both intrinsic and extrinsic are critical for students to understand and process governing systems, historical occurrences, and political inclusiveness of civic responsibility. The goal is for students to fully understand what has happened in the past, the effects from it that is seen today, in order to expand their knowledge and viewpoints. Opportunities are created for students to discuss values, engage in problem solving scenarios and practice making rational decisions. The social studies curriculum includes a variety of visuals to assist the varied student learning styles in understanding the material such as anchor charts, portraits/photographs, maps, artwork, costumes, and films. Along with formative and summative assessments to guide instruction, students engage in hands-on and project based learning that are critical to students embracing the social studies curriculum and include a variety of fun activities. Students also have the opportunity to engage in mock scenarios of the democratic process and learn critical civic responsibility procedures by participating in a variety of project based activities such as developing regulations and policies, involvement in voting initiatives, and governance responsibilities throughout the school year.

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

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

MES serves preschool four-year old students which creates the foundational building blocks of learning to support students throughout their schooling experience. The alignment of the Pre-K curriculum is critical to the overall success of each student and the weight of responsibility of preparing students is understood by all MES staff. MES takes pride in getting students ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond which is evident in the critical, purposeful planning of intentional playful environments where students are constantly learning.

The Pre-K classroom is warm, positive, and uplifting where students feel safe and nurtured. This classroom sets the foundation for understanding norms, systems, and routines that are key to student success as they ascend to the next grade level and beyond. Music is incorporated throughout the day as a powerful teaching tool to provide students with opportunities for movement and for reinforcing academic learning. Guided play is used to enhance cognitive, linguistic, and social emotional development. The Pre-K teacher intentionally plans the learning setting with specific learning goals and experiences that combine free play with pedagogical elements. Play based, hands-on learning with a solid focus on social-emotional development are underlying focus points that guide students with conscious driven interactions where students learn to collaborate with classmates. The Frog Street curriculum is used in the Pre-K classroom that provides comprehensive developmental strategies for overall student academic success. Inclusive of the curriculum are units in language, cognitive, social and emotional, physical and guiding approaches toward knowledge attainment. The curriculum is activity based and uses inquiry driven learning sequences with a concentration on phonics using guided literature practice. The scope and sequence for literacy, math, social studies, and science along with a concentrated emphasis on social-emotional development has provided impactful, continuous growth in each student.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The focus and overall commitment of each staff member at MES is to guide each student into becoming well-rounded individuals that leave the campus soaring on to new heights in knowledge. MES strives to

provide a quality educational experience that gives students a more rounded education by providing multiple forms of expression and integrating additional music, art and dance experiences throughout the day. Through singing, dancing, and listening to music, students improve their communication skills, language, attention and memory. Music-centered strategies help students understand and retain concepts across all content areas. Adapted songs help students learn everything from their letter sounds to their multiplication facts. In addition, MES hosts an annual Christmas program and draws hundreds of spectators where students perform and showcase their musical and dancing talents. Each grade level gets the opportunity to perform a selection of holiday songs for the audience. Art is incorporated into daily instruction as well, as students explain their thoughts and ideas across the content areas through drawing, labeling and painting. Students also create dioramas, sculptures and artifacts in order to better understand concepts. Displays of student artwork can be found in the hallways and in every classroom bringing inspiration, joy and spreading creativity throughout the building.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

As MES places a high focus on the essential core curriculum in developing successful learners, it dually concentrates on other curricular areas such as Physical Education (PE), that is so much more than an elementary elective. Within MES, we believe that an active child has an active mind and put great emphasis on allowing students a physical education experience as well as multiple recess opportunities to allow students to be active in unstructured physical activity on the playground or in team play with other students. As students put emphasis on academic growth, students need to have ample amount of time to be physically active. Physical Education is offered 180 minutes a week to students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, which is 60 minutes over the required minutes for Texas schools. Physical education is a priority at MES and the extra minutes are provided because of the importance of exercise and knowledge gained of how to live and maintain a healthy lifestyle at this age. Just as classroom teachers help grow students' minds, the PE classroom helps grow muscular strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance and body composition. Students learn about nutrition and health education that promotes physical activity and healthy eating choices.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

Today's students are required to have a different set of skills than what was required a decade ago due to the changing world and its technological advances. The district provides an iPad for every single student in Pre-K through 12th grade for instructional use. Having direct access to the same type of personal computing device, student learning is accelerated with consistency and continuity throughout the grade levels. Now that students have all of this technology at their fingertips, it is also our responsibility to teach them how to act responsibly online through digital citizenship. Students are taught about potential dangers to avoid as well as the rules of good online behavior, such as: self-disciplined screen time, finding/citing accurate sources, respectful interactions, safety and privacy in order to produce good, digital citizens. Students also get to visit the campus library to check out books and engage in lessons centered around concepts such as the Dewey Decimal System. Students are able to relax and read their newly checked out books in any of the multiple dynamic seating options that are available for them to use in the library. Both systems prepare students to live and work in an information-based society.

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

Academics is our top priority however so is instilling core values in our students to be kind, empathetic, and caring global citizens which is a theme throughout each school year. MES instills an effective character development program that is wholly developed to fit the needs of the MES community. These character traits work in conjunction with the development of the whole student and their social and emotional maturity to become productive global citizens. Each student needs to know that they matter, are vital to the campus, and have a voice which leads to a sense of ownership of their academic journey. Outside of the academic

setting, students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade receive whole group guidance and counseling lessons from our school counselor. These lessons help build and develop individual values and strong character. The scheduled counseling sessions are individualized to each classroom, grade level, and student needs. Character development is a focus during this time and students are introduced to many varying topics that are age appropriate with guided conversations by the district counselor. Students process through scenarios and are challenged to address areas with identification on growth areas. As a result, the school culture is saturated with respect, responsibility, and honesty.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

At MES, every effort is made to close the achievement and learning gaps at the Tier 1 level if a student is performing below grade level. MES staff make a concerted effort in providing numerous academic supports for struggling learners as early as possible in the school year. The proactive approach to intervention includes screeners that are conducted in the beginning of the school year that identify guidance on the instructional scope and sequence using the data to guide immediate levels of differentiated support. These integral strategies have proven to be effective in differentiating instruction as all students learn differently and so, it is the responsibility of MES staff to acknowledge the variety of learning styles and adapt to meet the needs of all students.

Throughout the last several years, MES has evaluated systems and identified several that were not functioning accordingly in meeting the needs of MES students. One such program that was evaluated and modified was the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The antiquated RTI model was functioning more as a content mastery and not meeting the needs of students. The RTI model was updated to provide more intentional support for struggling learners which included an embedded What I Need (WIN) intervention time in the master schedule. The WIN daily intervention time includes 30 minutes of reading and 30 minutes of math intervention. Each day, every student is receiving academic supports with great intentionality and specificity, closing the gaps without having to miss instructional time in the classroom by being pulled out separately. The intentional intervention time has increased the social and emotional capacity of MES struggling students by not being singled out and removed from the classroom for additional support which was a detriment to students. At MES, failure is celebrated and acknowledged as an opportunity to grow and build resilience.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

MES has created academic support in the master schedule with 30 minutes of intervention and an accelerated model that allows time for students performing above grade level to continue to be challenged making great academic gains. The adjustment to the master schedule permits time for advanced students to continue to be introduced to material above their grade level and introduce them to higher order thinking and cognitive skills. The goal is for all students to reach their individual highest potential, even the ones performing above grade level. If students were running a race, we wouldn't want the student in the lead to stop and slow down to wait for the others to catch up. Subject acceleration is just as important as the intervention model and moves students through our intervention program at a faster rate than students who are performing at or below grade level. The percentage of students' performing above grade level and their progress is monitored just as frequently as students performing below grade level. The adaptive intervention program that MES students use provides targeted academic material that is vertically aligned with the sequential math and ELAR expectations for the higher grade levels. Students are challenged and allowed to struggle with the elevated curricular and pedagogical academic material. Students are given the opportunity to work on upper grade level content without moving completely into the next grade level. This prevents students with a higher ability from becoming bored and disinterested in school. MES has a culture that recognizes and encourages high expectations and individual continuous growth for all students. Recognizing students that are mastering the grade level skills and standards and providing them space throughout the day to be challenged, has created a learning environment where students continue to strive and accept a challenge with great comfort instead of hesitation.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities are provided exceptional support as MES recognizes that each student deserves an opportunity to learn regardless of their disability. A student can be referred for testing by a staff member or by their parent/guardian for academic, emotional, and/or physical or behavioral reasons. The subsequent data collection materials are sent to teachers, staff, parents, and any other individual that can add critical information to the referral process. Once the data is collected, the recommendations for special education (SPED) services are discussed and finalized in an Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting where an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed.

Each student is provided with supports that meet their individual needs and for students in the SPED population, a positive, constructive learning is provided. There is not a minimum number of students that are required to be identified for a subgroup to be identified for the state accountability system with the students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade all formally tested in Science, Math, ELAR, and Social Studies once a year. SPED students receive instructional support in accordance with their IEP with data being collected throughout the year and disaggregated to ensure that students are making academic progress. Consistent, stable academic growth is the expectation for all students and MES special education studies are held to that standard as well. Tiered support is provided within the least restrictive environment with inclusionary supports or in the functional academics SPED classroom. Lessons are created that lead to positive results and their accomplishments are celebrated. MES special education students have a variety of needs with the majority being below grade level than their peers, however, MES staff continue to provide differentiated research-based instruction and support so that SPED students are progressing with great overall success.

3d. English Language Learners:

English Language Learners (ELLs) are supported in the mainstream classroom, with the exception of the daily intervention time built into the campus master schedule. MES has created academic support in the master schedule with 30 minutes intervention in math and 30 minutes in reading. During this time, ELLs receive intervention time to support their academic needs. All classroom teachers are certified with an English as a Second Language (ESL) supplemental certificate in order to be trained and knowledgeable in ways to support ELL students. First and foremost, students are made to feel comfortable in the classroom and teachers work to build relationships with them. Students are encouraged to communicate if they are struggling to understand something or what a word means. Visuals are provided for everything so as to support students that have a hard time processing spoken language. Teachers provide visuals such as vocabulary cards and anchor charts and turn their classroom into a print-rich environment. Student progress is monitored and strengths/weaknesses are identified. Teachers work together to come up with the best educational plan for the student.

Equitable supports are provided for ELLs throughout the classroom and additional resources are available for students to reference. Resources are available in the student's native language and technology is used as a support to accommodate students that need translation services to guide their learning journey. Students can be referred through the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and tested in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The data is collected from the assessments and the campus language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) determines levels of support and accommodations for students. MES teachers attend targeted professional development opportunities throughout the year to learn strategies to assist ELLs and ensure that MES is providing the necessary support for academic success.

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

MES addresses the needs of the special population students each day going above and beyond in ensuring each student has the necessary resources to be academically successful. The campus works alongside district personnel to secure funds, materials, transportation, and equal access to opportunities afforded to all students. Within MES, there is a large percentage of low socioeconomic households as the annual household income is considerably lower than the state and national average by over \$10,000. The lack of social resources and disparity in distance to receive county wide support creates a high need of economically

disadvantaged students at MES. MES families and students come first to the campus when there is a need within their family. Free lunch is provided at school and our community organization “Pack Pals” provides weekend food bags to help support students that are facing homelessness. MES strives to provide stability and help all students feel safe and at home, especially if the student doesn’t have the necessary support at home. School is often considered a safe haven for this population of students and the predictability and reliability are essential to them. Planning ahead for events and assuring these students have an equal opportunity to dress in costume for Halloween or bring Easter eggs are just a few of the things done to assure each student feels included. Christmas gifts are provided by various organizations to these families as well as a Christmas and Thanksgiving meal. Families are afforded the opportunity to use one of the showers on campus and also, use the laundry facilities. In addition, school supplies, clothes, and toiletries are provided to meet their needs. There is a clothes closet provided where students can pick out gently used clothing, jackets and shoes at any time.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Student engagement is a priority at MES. The driving force behind the exemplary culture and climate at MES is that MES has a focus on creating an environment where each student has a strong sense of belonging and a foundational sense of care. These key elements assist in the overall success of each student as they know wholeheartedly that each staff member cares for them and also, within the campus, each student belongs. This sense of awareness allows for effective communication, advocacy for each student, and an inclusionary learning environment.

MES offers a plethora of opportunities for students to be involved in such as athletic competitions, agricultural endeavors, and post-secondary partnerships with higher education institutions. Embedded within the yearly calendar, MES provides enrichment opportunities such as attending county wide agriculture awareness events and field trips. MES also hosts end of the year celebrations such as field day which consists of outdoor competitive activities.

Within MES, a strong core focus is preparing students for future academic success and post secondary readiness. Students are introduced to the many opportunities that are available to them after they graduate from high school by attending field trips at higher education institutions, creating a college friendly conscious campus by having students wear college gear on Wednesdays, and participating in specialized events at neighboring universities. A strong foundation on college, career, military readiness standards are integrated in the math and science classes which promotes future ready students. Students also have the opportunity to participate in Career Day which invites professionals from various industries and areas of employment to speak to MES students which creates strong and positive connections.

MES strives to create students that have a level of ownership in their educational journey. Teachers are communicative with students on their academic journey by documenting academic checkpoints and then sharing these data points with students so they are aware of which area they need to focus on. This process creates transparency with students and allows them to be an integral part of their academic growth which also creates a level of excitement for students when they see the academic gains made by their hard work. Data progress folders are used to assist students in visualizing their academic progress and small or large gains are always celebrated. MES is committed to creating a positive and uplifting academic environment and this process assists in that endeavor.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Family and community engagement is a critical component to the overall success of MES. A strong partnership exists between family, community, local, and county wide entities to ensure that students have the most positive experience and have ample opportunities to nurture their personal and academic journey while at MES. The partnership with families and community, is consistent, continuous, and purposeful. There is a concerted effort by MES staff and administration to engage with the families and community that goes beyond the norms and regular bell schedule. The opportunities for collaborative engagement is enriched by creating a sense of ownership and responsibility that every party plays in assisting MES in educating each student. The educators at MES are committed to keeping parents involved to help all students reach their full potential. Communication is a key factor and MES utilizes many avenues of communication to ensure that every entity is aware of opportunities of collaboration. MES goes above and beyond in providing parents information on online and social media platforms. The forms of communication are folders with student academic progress, newsletters, parent conferences, daily planners, along with internet based communication such as Remind 101, SeeSaw, and ParentSquare.

MES has a strong and supportive Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that supports the overall vision and mission of the campus. The PTO provides meals, resources, and acknowledges MES staff throughout the year. For students, the PTO creates activities and supports for students on several holidays throughout the year along with having a clothes drive that provides much needed jackets/coats for students. On special

recognition days, the PTO honors MES staff by providing staff with flowers, treats, and online recognition to show their appreciation. The PTO also provides athletic equipment for MES students to use during recess time which include jump ropes, basketballs, and hula hoops.

Also, MES invites parents and community members to participate in many decision making committees that guide several necessary initiatives. Within these committees, every individual is invited to participate and every voice counts equitably as the primary focus is the success of each student. Input is gathered through a variety of channels which include online responses, surveys, and face to face meetings to ensure that every person feels included and has ownership in the decision making process at MES. There are many volunteer opportunities for parents and community members such as the health fair which invites several county and local entities along, the fall fair, and end of year activities.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The level of excellence and superior performance by the MES staff is exemplified at every level regardless of role. The drive for excellence is by the teaching staff, custodians, maintenance staff, and school leadership. Every staff member takes great pride in working at Milano Elementary School which speaks to why teacher and staff turnover is low. This leads to strong relationships between students and teachers, not just students and their peers. Former students come back to visit after they transition to the secondary campus which speaks to the impact MES staff has on students. In addition, most teachers continue to teach the same grade level from year to year so they become very knowledgeable and familiar with the grade level content and processes. These seasoned, veteran teachers share ideas and support new teachers or colleagues that need extra support.

Instructional staff are provided with collaborative settings with multi-grade level, same subject planning time in which teachers create vertical alignment supports. Teachers are also provided with same grade level planning time throughout the master schedule so that teachers can share techniques with one another. This team environment allows for teachers in a small rural campus to not feel siloed nor isolated. Leaning on one another to process difficult situations and also, to share best practices assists in creating a positive learning environment for all students. Staff attend professional development at a variety of conferences throughout the year and which allows for greater collaboration with teachers from other school districts. Staff are encouraged to share resources and materials which only enhances the family like environment where everyone feels supported and recognized.

Teachers are acknowledged for their hard work and dedication by being provided many accolades on the various social media platforms along with providing special treats during Teacher Appreciation Week. Campus administration also honors one staff member that goes above and beyond weekly with a special recognition and treat. MES leadership goes the extra mile in ensuring that each staff member regardless of their role feels valued and appreciated by having team building and bonding opportunities throughout the year. Leadership also provides staff appreciation luncheons along with an end of the year celebration that involves a special meal and much time to fellowship with one another. Creating a supportive environment for all staff is a constant focus for the campus administrators as leadership conducts informal and formal observations along with walkthroughs that provide positive feedback to teachers.

4. School Leadership:

MES staff are fortunate to have a dynamic, results driven leader that is passionate about student success and creating a positive learning environment for all students. The school principal is a vibrant, energetic leader that leads by example and is driven by serving her campus in whichever job needs to be done. The school principal is an exemplar of what an empathetic leader should be in which she always seeks to listen first and speak second. She always has a positive attitude and smile on her face which in effect has a ripple effect on her students and staff. She is a data driven guru and creates new systems to address areas of growth which challenges her staff from growing complacent. Her forward thinking style of leadership is bounded by student success, student results, and student progress. At the core, she is the heart and soul of her campus. You will not find another leader that cares more about the social-emotional and academic needs of students. She is constantly looking for ways to challenge herself and is never afraid to ask questions nor seek

guidance from other leaders. When areas of growth are identified with vastly needed improvements, school leadership is risk driven and is innovative in seeking new solutions that will provide new levels of support across her campus. As a seasoned leader, the school principal leads with great empathy and humility. It is with these core values that she challenges, supports, and guides her campus to new levels of success and standards of excellence. She is a lifelong learner at heart, always seeking new knowledge to help continue to be the standard and is the exemplar for school leadership.

The principal's educational philosophy is embedded in the value of teamwork and creating a collaborative setting that is student centered. Campus leadership leads with strong core values that are committed to creating a positive learning environment where every student feels seen, heard and supported. In leading a small rural campus with a student population of 182 students, the school leader is the only administrator on campus and is responsible for all of the administrative decisions which include facilities, budget, and the instructional framework. As a dynamic, forward thinking leader, the principal anticipates the needs of the students, staff, and community, always focused on making impactful decisions that improves the culture and climate of the campus as well as student achievement.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

MES is a campus that is embedded in the sense that every student needs to have a high level of belonging and sense of care. Within these two value systems, MES staff collaborate to meet the needs of all students and seek to understand where the students come from in order for them to have academic success. The small class sizes allows for teachers and staff to get to know each student individually and understand their story. Students are seen and not allowed to fall through the cracks with ample amounts of time and support to process difficult topics and situations. This leads to few discipline issues which limits classroom disruptions. When students make bad choices, they reflect on the behavior that they didn't follow. Although we do not have a plethora of discipline issues, when we do, behaviors are handled quickly and effective consequences follow. With the increasing diversity among our student population and large economically disadvantaged population, our students develop life-long skills and an ability to collaborate with peers from various backgrounds.

Milano Elementary School creates space for students to share their story and teach students to respect one another. Students and staff feel celebrated and not just tolerated. Students are accepting of new students regardless of race, ethnicity and needs. With small class sizes, teachers are able to process difficult subject matter and provide space for students to process as well. Respect, empathy, and high levels of understanding are expected from all staff and students which are highlighted throughout the year in a variety of manners. These traits and virtues are discussed during the year with the district counselor in the specific grade level character development sessions. The development of the whole child is the priority of MES and staff understand that space within the academic setting be permitted to allow for difficult discussions guided by best practices.

Embedded in the school calendar and curriculum are days to celebrate the different cultural holidays throughout the year. Students are encouraged to participate in many different activities to promote the many different student backgrounds. Throughout the curriculum in the different content areas, the instructional staff provide time to discuss the different cultural holidays and introduce students to a diverse perspective that enhances the educational experience. A core trait that is foundational to MES is respecting each other regardless of their background with the staff modeling this trait for students.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Overall, Milano Elementary School utilizes a dynamic multi-perspective strategy for academic success for each student. Development of a strong vertical alignment that provides consistent and sequential support for each student throughout their MES experience is critical for continuous growth. The integrated and embedded intervention time for math and reading in the daily master schedule was the academic strategy that provided the foundation for the overall academic success for all students. Prior to this change in the schedule, students were provided supplemental and varied academic support to close the achievement gaps by being pulled out of the classroom causing students to miss instructional time which caused more learning gaps. The additional intervention time in math and reading provided advanced learners time to work on academic material that was above their grade level. Time is the most precious resource and greatest asset that is not exponentially available and within MES this mindset is cherished in providing ample amount of time to staff and students and was a critical component in the development of the master schedule. By creating a master schedule with an ebb and flow that provides space and time for students to have their academic journey nurtured in a small group setting that is purposeful, positive, and mission driven is what makes MES an exemplary school. During this time, instructional staff are able to work more effectively with struggling learners without sacrificing the normal content specific allocated time. Teachers are able to monitor student progress and readjust academic goals for students on a consistent basis which creates a positive pathway for students to stay on target with yearly, quarterly, and monthly goals. Data reports are analyzed in great detail and in collaboration with grade level teams, teachers are able to identify curricular goals that need to be reassessed or revisited to close the learning gaps in students. Communication and collaboration with vertical same content teams is vital to the overall success of MES students. Teachers understand that learning is sequential and the lower level grade level teams are in constant communication with upper level grade teachers to ensure that there is a vertical alignment and support for teaching the same content area. The intervention time and data collected within assists in improving the curricular and instructional scope and sequence so that students progress through MES with a strong academic foundation.