

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Jessica Appleyard

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

Official School Name Mount Bethel Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1210 Johnson Ferry Road

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

City Marietta State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 30068-2719

County Cobb County

Telephone (770) 578-7248 Fax (770) 578-7250

Web site/URL http://www.mtbetheles.com E-mail Jessica.Appleyard@cobbk12.org

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/
Mt-Bethel-Elementary-PTA-

Twitter Handle https://twitter.com/MtBethleES 801126739913060/?fref=ts Google+ _____

Other Social Media

YouTube/URL

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQwX8wZD
Hsr5PSchIBJk8g

Blog

http://www.cobblearning.net
/appleyard/

Link

https://vimeo.com/user
20526229

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*Mr. Chris Ragsdale E-mail Chris.Ragsdale@cobbk12.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Cobb County School District Tel. (770) 426-3300

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 Mrs. Susan Thayer
(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, write N/A in the space.

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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
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. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	80	87	167
1	94	90	184
2	97	79	176
3	98	85	183
4	89	109	198
5	90	88	178
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	548	538	1086

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 12 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 78 % White
 - 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 5%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	34
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	53
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	1025
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.052
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %
69 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Other Asian, Other European, Other Indian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %
Total number students who qualify: 35

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
151 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 8 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 15 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 26 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 29 Other Health Impaired
- 53 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 18 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers	47
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	25
Paraprofessionals	20
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

11. 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 20:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	97%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **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 2015.

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%

14. 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.

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

EXCELLENCE IN ACTION: Mt. Bethel strives to ensure all teams are working on behalf of student success while preparing students for life beyond elementary school.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Mt. Bethel is a public elementary school serving Kindergarten through Fifth Grade students in Eastern Cobb County, Georgia. Our community is nestled in a suburban area a short commute from downtown Atlanta. We feel fortunate to teach students who we believe are the best raw material on the planet: high-achieving kids, with over one-third of our students qualifying for gifted services. Parents set high expectations for students, teachers, and the community and are actively involved – donating the resources of time, energy, and financial support in abundance. Our community is stable with a low transiency rate. Teachers continually seek opportunities for professional learning and engage in ongoing school-based professional learning, attend district-level trainings, and regularly attend national seminars.

Mt. Bethel Elementary strives to continually provide opportunities for students to develop a variety of skills. Not only are academic skills continually assessed and analyzed for ways to improve, but opportunities to develop skills in fine arts, physical education, and citizenship are also provided. We believe that a well-balanced education allows students to truly become the leaders of tomorrow.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

We have a unique challenge at Mt. Bethel and our essential question is: How do we provide rigorous education to high-achieving students and ensure that students performing above grade level are progressing?

Our school improvement efforts led us to return to focus on the most fundamental skill required for school success: literacy. Our teachers have adopted a common language and framework through instruction with the Workshop model for Balanced Literacy – built on best practices, effective frameworks, and research-based strategies. The Workshop Model begins daily with a mini-lesson where direct instruction to the entire class occurs. Then the students read independently and practice the skill learned in the mini-lesson while teachers pull strategy groups or conference individually with students. The data taken during small group instruction drives the pacing of the lessons to come. Writing is also taught through the workshop model, with direct instruction, guided practice, clear modeling, adequate time to write, conferences and strategy groups, and sharing/authors' celebrations.

Math instruction is provided through a balanced framework that includes application and problem solving where students solve problems with the use of models and explanations, solve and analyze performance tasks for understanding, and apply solutions toward problem based learning. Additionally, mathematics foundational skills are explicitly taught and students regularly use manipulatives, software and technology, they understand concepts through models, simulations, and real-world examples. Students represent concepts in multiple ways – visually with pictures, graphics, tables, numbers, and symbols. A major shift that has occurred in mathematics instruction over the past several years is the increase in the amount of writing required in math and students becoming more accountable and challenged by having to explain their thinking.

Science and science literacy are taught through hands-on methods and experiments in conjunction with nonfiction text. Because science is critical to careers and the critical thinking is so necessary for student skill-sets, our Foundation funds materials and personnel to man a science lab. Students receive a double-dip of science instruction and are provided with additional opportunities to utilize the scientific method and problem-solve. We host an annual Science Fair with participation of approximately 350 students in grades Kindergarten through Five where students create projects that demonstrate deep thinking.

Social Studies is used as an opportunity to ensure all students exposure and engagement with history, geography, politics, and economics. The foundational level of social studies instruction begins in Kindergarten with exploration of our country's patriotic symbols and progresses to deep instruction in civics and history. Students have frequent opportunities to be immersed in social studies content through simulations such as Immigration Day where each fifth grader becomes a character from history (often from their own family lineage) and must navigate through each of the stations without being deported. Students engage in debate and state opinions.

Standards are extended beyond the core curriculum classroom into specials areas and even beyond the school day where students engage in curricular opportunities through Odyssey of the Mind, Science Olympiad, STEM-based after school clubs, and as peer tutors during our After School Program.

In order to address the needs of students performing below grade level, we provide support through the Early Intervention Program in Math and English Language Arts. Additionally, we have strong special education support available through co-teaching at every grade level and small group instruction for students who are two or more academic levels behind.

Our professional school counselors facilitate a structured Response to Intervention Program and work in tandem with our special education department, school psychologist, and social worker to remove barriers to learning and identify specific learning disabilities. In order to better equip our teachers with methodology and research-based practices we will train all of our primary grade teachers in the Orton-Gillingham multi-

sensory approach to reading and phonics instruction. This year-long professional learning and coaching will become Mt. Bethel's phonics and spelling program and teachers will learn how to use this methodology for remediation and extend learning.

Students performing above grade level may be served through our Target Advanced Learning Program. In intermediate grades, an ALP teacher facilitated intense collaboration in literacy. For the 2016-17 school year, over 20 of our staff will undergo training to become Gifted Endorsed – so that we increase opportunity to engage in higher order thinking skills.

Our goal is to provide our students with a strong foundation to ensure our vision of EXCELLENCE IN ACTION.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Mt. Bethel is committed to educating the whole child and has an exemplary Fine Arts, Technology, and PE curriculum.

Fine Arts during the school day include visual arts and music. Every student at Mt. Bethel is involved in Art and Music class in the specials rotation.

During Art, Kindergarten through fifth graders participate in multiple mediums, from clay to drawing/painting, to creating multi-media projects. Our art teacher believes that creativity is most effective within a format or boundary, so she guides students to approach most art projects as problem solving experiences. Technology is an integral part of the art room where many lessons are presented with a “flipped” approach allowing the art teacher to focus more class time on hands-on guidance. Academic subjects are constantly being reinforced during art. Creation is the highest level of learning, and art is the thread that links all academic subjects into personal lives. Students receive art instruction once every eight days.

During Music, Kindergarten through fifth graders receive engaging curriculum with a high level of connectivity between music and core academic subjects. Music learning is related back to classroom studies through text and lyrics. Students have time to engage with a variety of instruments: Orff, Dalcroze, drumming, Kodaly, and the recorder. They learn how to read and compose music, frequently pair music with kinesthetic movement, and receive instruction in music theory and history. In addition to participation during music class, our music teacher offers guitar club, the IMPACT Performance Group, Composer Society, and in two annual plays through a drama musical performance group. Students receive music instruction once every eight days.

Additional performances from community performers are scheduled four to six times per year and include topics of great student interest that also integrate with our arts or PE curriculum.

Mt. Bethel PE is unique for many reasons. One advantage we have is that we employ three PE specialists who work together to achieve the same goal of students learning to enjoy movement through multi-faceted activities. The PE program is designed and implemented to impart knowledge regarding the benefits of physical activity. The goal is that Mt. Bethel students will value physical activity and its contribution to a healthy lifestyle. Students receive PE instruction every-other day. Over a decade ago, the PE staff saw the need to extend opportunities for physical activity beyond the allotted 45 minutes during specials. They created morning clubs, and students can choose daily to attend one or all of the clubs offered before the bell rings to start the school day. Clubs include: Beginning Unicycling; Advanced Unicycling; Jump Rope; and Juggling. Staff also offers “Spark,” a monitored running time before the bell to get cardio exercise before the academic day begins.

Technology and computer training is viewed to be so important at our school that it has been funded by parent donations through our Foundation within the specials rotation so every child receives formalized computer training. Our parents also fund a person to provide tech support all day every day on campus. Mt. Bethel has a 3-prong approach to technology. First, basic skill sets in specific software are taught along

with keyboard proficiency. Second, advanced skills and specialized applications are taught by the Media Specialist. Third, extension opportunities are provided by our Technology Specialist through participation in the Hour of Code, digital assessments, and classroom performance based project support.

During the 2016-17 school year, we will add a position to our specialist lineup. We will add a STEM Lab with a certified teacher to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. In the primary grades, she will implement Rokenbok's Engineering curriculum. In the intermediate grades, the focus will be on problem solving through engineering and real-world application of math.

We will revamp our schedule to adopt a more "block scheduling" methodology in the coming school year to ensure less time between students attending Art, Music, Technology, and STEM. We hope to see increased engagement and time to master and explore content.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Each of these interventions below is based on needs assessment data or academic data. These are supports above-and-beyond the differentiation that takes place in every classroom every day – particularly in the areas of English Language Arts and Math.

Students who score below grade level in Reading, Writing, or Math may be served by our Early Intervention Program (EIP). EIP may take place in a small-group setting where the students work with a highly-trained teacher who implements a multi-sensory approach to instruction. EIP students may also be served in a reduced class size model where they have more time designated for direct or small group instruction. Our goal is to identify areas of required support early and provide maximum support and scaffolding for student success. Typically, 50 students qualify for EIP services in Kindergarten and about 5 qualify in fifth grade. We believe that this support at the beginning of a student's academic career is effective.

We have a team of three professional school counselors who provide bi-weekly lessons to all K-5 students that support the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for student success. This includes direct instruction in strategies, self-management skills, and social skills. In addition, they provide small group instruction focused on study skills, impulse control, family changes, social skills, and self-regulation. Our counselors work closely with teachers as they move students through the RTI/Response to Intervention process and determine interventions to increase success.

Mt. Bethel has a large special education population and is home to five low-incidence special education units along with nine additional special education teachers who serve Kindergarten through Fifth Grade students. Students who qualify for special education receive services and specialized instruction to meet specific needs, whether it is a specific learning disability, an emotional behavioral disorder, or mild/moderate intellectual deficiency. Our Support and Service Administrator works closely with these teachers and coordinates time with trainers, support personnel, and district coaches to assist in providing the best support through specialized programs, assistive technology, or increasing visuals.

Students at-risk of failing state-mandated gateway tests are tutored by veteran and retired teachers during the school day so they receive a double-dip of instruction in their area of weakness. This intensive tutoring takes place prior to testing. This is a new method we began this year and we are anxious to monitor its success.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Our school has a unique challenge. High achieving students often have difficulty demonstrating growth on standardized tests. With the increased emphasis on growth over achievement, our school has had to take a much closer look at multiple data points to ensure our students continue on a path of continued improvement. We analyze, disaggregate, and utilize multiple forms of data. This data analysis has been the catalyst to implement a more comprehensive reading program for our students and to seek opportunities for teachers to extend student proficiency so they can continue to show growth.

Norm Referenced Tests:

In First and Third Grades, we administer the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), and in Third and Fifth Grades, we administer the Iowa Test. These tests are used as a component to gifted eligibility as well as to predict who may not pass the End of Grade Test. We provide tutoring for third and fifth graders who may fail, and notify parents. We compare individual third grade to fifth grade scores to predict the Student Growth Percentiles and if there is regression or no growth shown, we write a plan to address the need for that student. This is particularly helpful with our high achieving students.

Criterion Referenced Tests:

Annually, third through fifth graders take the Georgia Milestones End of Grade Test. This criterion referenced test measures how well students have comprehended the curriculum that was taught. This test is used as a “gateway” test for automatic promotion to the next grade level. Teachers use these results to determine student grouping, to create action plans for student growth, and to identify personal strengths and weaknesses in their instruction and then amend the following year.

Formative Assessments:

Routinely, teachers administer a variety of computer-based, paper-pencil based, and face-to-face academic formative assessments. These assessments are used to group students for differentiation purposes, to plan next steps in instruction, to pace curriculum, and to gauge student growth.

Summative Assessments:

In order to track growth and proficiency, staff routinely administer common summative assessments. These scores are reported to parents via an electronic grade book and quarterly report cards. Parents receive weekly feedback through graded work – often including summative assessments. They receive formal progress reports at the 4 ½ week mark and report cards every 9 weeks.

We have a district-wide conference week once annually, but parents often request conferences more frequently. We communicate school-wide scores through monthly newsletters, articles posted on the website, and parent meetings.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The Mt. Bethel climate has been described by faculty and staff as supportive, professional, energetic, family friendly and celebratory. Students arrive at school happy and ready to learn knowing they are in a good place because they see leaders, teachers and staff smiling, engaged with each other and with their students.

Student needs always come first and our kids know that everything we do is based on our belief that we always do what is right for our students. Students are engaged through high energy lessons, technology, field trips and special events. Our focus on literacy and Read Across America provided the basis for several teachers to perform their favorite story books, in character, for all students to broaden their love of reading.

Academic needs are met through special education, Early Intervention Program and in school tutoring provided by retired Mt. Bethel teachers. Our counselors hold class meetings and classroom lessons. They also provide groups for study skills, students of divorced families and Lunch Bunch among others. Lunch Bunch helps our socially struggling students to feel good about themselves. They invite another student or two to join them for lunch with an adult facilitator who helps guide the student through the social encounter. Self-worth, self-respect and personal responsibility are stressed as well as the need to be understanding, thoughtful and supportive to others. Students are reminded they are in a safe place where they can always ask for help of any kind.

Our teachers are committed to our vision, “Excellence in Action;” seeking excellence from themselves and their students. Professional development, team building activities and celebratory events bring our teachers and support staff together both professionally and personally. Each grade level has monthly planning sessions for professional development and collaboration while volunteers take students to lunch and specials. We celebrate engagements, weddings and new babies through showers. Meals, gifts, cards and letters provide support for those who are bereaved or experiencing personal illness. We value the whole person and know that a supported, happy teacher helps us help students reach their maximum potential.

The supportive, caring environment encourages innovation from our teachers and allows our students to take academic risks knowing they are in a positive, safe school. Students and teachers push themselves to be the best they can because of the trust that exists. Mt. Bethel is a large school but, within our walls we are a family.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Mount Bethel Elementary PTA and administration support all six of the national standards for PTA Family and School Partnerships with excitement and commitment. Creating a well-rounded environment for our parents, our community, and our students and teachers is a substantial aspect of what makes Mt. Bethel special. The PTA continually works with the administration with the purpose and intention to provide the best environment for our students and supporting their educational success.

Examples of successful engagement at Mt. Bethel within the context of reach of the national PTA Standards:

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community:

Class list posting with PTA on hand with popsicles and answers to questions takes place the night before Meet and Greet. Students and parents arrive to Meet and Greet to meet new friends and greet their teachers. We hold Welcome Coffees, Principal Chats, an Art Show, host performances, facilitate a Cultural Celebrations of the World night, and ensure opportunities at different times in the day for parents to engage in the community.

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively:

Our population has expressed that they prefer digital communication, and we try to leverage multiple forms of digital communication. The school maintains a multi-media regularly updated website and the principal and staff maintain individual blogs. The school also utilizes Blackboard Connect and Twitter when communication needs to be distributed quickly. Our PTA maintains a blog, Facebook, room parent direct communication, and the Membership Toolkit – a one-stop shop for all things PTA. In addition, a Sunday night eMinder is distributed weekly and monthly and the school publishes a comprehensive newsletter called The Bugle. A school directory is published annually and has recently expanded entries to include business members.

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success:

Our main fund-raiser for PTA is the Sail Into Reading Read-a-thon which funds a large portion of the PTA's Student Enrichment portion of the budget. Students participate in Challenger Publishing – becoming published authors and working through the entire writing process. Arts enrichment and an innovative arts enrichment website were created this year, providing parents and students opportunities to engage in the arts.

Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child

Our school has hosted and participated in multiple education forums in order to ensure that our community is aware of legislative priorities that may impact public education.

Standard 5: Sharing Power

This year, we have increased partnerships with businesses through a mutually-beneficial Treasured Partners Program. Businesses donate goods, services, and financial backing and the school provides advertising. Teams have input in all critical decision-making at the school, and parents have input through our PTA, Foundation, and School Council.

Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community

Mt. Bethel has many opportunities to partner with neighboring sister schools. This partnership has provided others with assistance in multiple forms. We also have an active Community Outreach program and an active Partners in Education Program.

Through strong and genuine collaboration, we continue to strive for family engagement and student success to enrich our school.

3. Professional Development:

As budgets grow continually tighter, our school strives to ensure that our teachers have all the tools needed to ensure EXCELLENCE IN ACTION. We work with our PTA, Foundation, and write grants on a regular basis to provide training opportunities for our teachers. Our focus will continue to be to strengthen the foundations of learning to prepare for innovation through purposeful implementation of Readers' Workshop.

During the 2015-16 school year, we began a school wide implementation of the Reader's Workshop Model. Through partnership with a neighboring school, we were able to bring Columbia Teachers' College Readers' Workshop experts to our school for a week-long in-depth training. Following that training, all teachers have received two hours of monthly focused instruction and coaching from an academic coach employed half-time by our school. Release time is made possible through Trained Parent Volunteer Substitutes. In order to closely monitor the implementation of Readers' Workshop, staff received four ten minute walkthrough evaluations and two thirty minute formative observation assessments. We have found that our teachers are implementing Readers' Workshop with consistency and fidelity, that the opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking skills has increased, and our teachers are feeling empowered with their instructional practices.

The focus for the 2016-17 school year will be implementation of Orton-Gillingham methodology in

primary grades. This will be a year-long course with coaching. The expectation will be that our school adopts a multi-sensory approach to teaching phonics.

Additionally, we will offer a year-long graduate-level course for 20 or more staff members to become Gifted-Endorsed. This graduate-level course is based in the theory and practice of teaching students who are high-achievers. We expect the training to benefit all students in enhancing their depth of knowledge.

We also have a strong emphasis on professional development in the field of instructional technology and have a technology expert on campus frequently to provide drop-in scaffolding to staff as they practice using new pieces of hardware and new software programs.

The District and Mt. Bethel's vision for professional learning are directly aligned. Cobb County School District recently published the balanced frameworks for literacy and math, and our practices at the local school are directly aligned to the District's goals.

4. School Leadership:

Mt. Bethel is a large school, and in turn, is fortunate to have a large and experienced leadership team. We strive to promote an atmosphere of purpose, intention, fun, and family. The administrative leadership team consists of a principal, two assistant principals, a support and service administrator, and a half-time school leadership intern.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The largest indicator to academic success at Mt. Bethel is continuing to focus on rigorous instruction and a focus on simplifying the foundation to prepare for innovation. Teachers are committed to teaching the standards comprehensively, to seeking methods to provide extension, and constantly seeking ways to fine tune the craft of teaching with research-based methodology. Literacy will be used as the primary example here – as it impacts all subject areas – but the commitment to rigor is pervasive across all subject/content areas.

As a school, we are committed to increasing literacy proficiency and we are taking a comprehensive approach to make this vision a reality. A need was recently discovered that our school media center was not acting as the “hub” of the school and students were having difficulty finding books that were engaging or relevant. As a result, our media specialist researched the Learning Commons philosophy extensively, began aggressively weeding books, and began laying forth her vision for how to help students PRODUCE rather than CONSUME information. With summer construction and careful collaboration with our teams of teachers, the media center became the first fully-functional Learning Commons in our school district, circulation has increased drastically, and students are involved in reading engaging literature regularly.

The implementation of Readers’ Workshop was an entire school reform effort. Teachers recognized that they could become more proficient and have spent personal time in the summer, collaborated extensively as teams, and have been receptive to ongoing coaching and feedback.

Our PTA and Foundation support all of our efforts, and our community works as a team to ensure work is happening on behalf of our students. The PTA provides release time through Trained Parent Volunteers and the Foundation provides funding to allow teachers to have the materials needed. Commitment, rigor, teamwork, and getting everyone rowing in the same direction has ensured our continued success!