

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Jennifer Anne Stanley

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

Official School Name Lake Murray Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 205 Wise Ferry Road

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

Lexington SC 29072-9186  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Lexington County

Telephone (803) 821-3100

Fax (803) 821-3103

Web site/URL

<http://www.lexington1.net/schools/lake-murray-elementary-school>

E-mail [jstanley@lexington1.net](mailto:jstanley@lexington1.net)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Gregory Little

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail [glittle@lexington1.net](mailto:glittle@lexington1.net)

District Name Lexington 01 School District Tel. (803) 821-1000

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. Cynthia Smith

(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**

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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 2019 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 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
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. 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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 17 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 6 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 31 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
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	67	31	98
K	56	53	109
1	65	46	111
2	52	50	102
3	71	54	125
4	54	61	115
5	61	65	126
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
<b>Total Students</b>	426	360	786

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 7 % Black or African American
  - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 80 % White
  - 3 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 10%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	45
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	30
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	75
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	768
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8%  
66 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Mandarin, Spanish, Gujarati, Vietnamese, Japanese, Polish, Korean, Indian, Saurashtra, Portuguese, French, Telugu, Finnish, Tigrigna, Greek, Urdu, Tamil, Shona, Arabic, and Lithuanian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 17%  
Total number students who qualify: 131

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %  
148 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.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>24</u> Autism                 | <u>8</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>5</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>29</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>20</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>39</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	20
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 24:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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 2018.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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.

Our school mission is "Anchored in Leadership, Anchored in Learning." This is achieved by promoting leadership development, academic growth, and collaborative relationships for students and staff.

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**

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Lake Murray Elementary School, located in Lexington School District One in Lexington, South Carolina, opened in 1999. This rural community saw steady growth in the late 1990's, as farmland began to be sold to home builders and developers. Families continue to relocate to this area due to its small town feel, close proximity to Lake Murray and our state capital, Columbia. With the district growing on average 500 students per year, multiple elementary schools were being built in this attendance zone. The first time the attendance lines were redrawn to lessen the student population of Lake Murray Elementary was in 2006; however, the biggest divide of the school came in 2009. The school year began with two elementary schools, each led by their respective principal, sharing the same school facility. In December, the new school was completed and the staff moved, over the winter holiday, to their current campus. What started out as a school with over 1,100 students, Lake Murray Elementary was reduced to less than 600 students in K-5. This was a challenging time for the school, staff, and community. LMES was left behind with many empty classrooms and a huge sense of loss. With this occurring mid year, the effects were more drastic than the opening of a typical school in August. It was at this pivotal moment, LMES began rebuilding its school culture into what it is today. Our mission, "Anchored in Leadership, Anchored in Learning," became a way of life as the school forged into a new chapter.

In this rebirth, the school leaned on the work of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People as a foundation for the school culture. Through the Leader in Me model, the students and staff became intentional in empowering all students to view themselves as leaders as well as recognize the qualities and actions of one. In addition to classroom leadership roles, school leadership teams, for which students apply, were created. Due to the school's level of implementation, the staff aspired to be a Lighthouse School for Leadership, and they achieved this honorable distinction in 2013. The core values of this program still exist on our campus today.

Presently, Lake Murray Elementary has over 810 students in grades 3K-5th grade. The needs, backgrounds, and cultures of our campus are diverse, which is one of the many things we celebrate. Our families speak twenty different languages other than English, and we serve ten different conditions within our special education population. The school's culture is one that embraces growth and continuous change to best meet the needs of each individual child. Children come to us with their unique story. As educators, we ensure they achieve their personal best both academically as well as socially and emotionally. There are multiple ways we accomplish this. For example, students have opportunities to apply for aforementioned leadership teams within the school such as: Mariner Book Buddies, the LMES News Team, and World Language Leaders. In addition to these, we have a school chorus for our 4th and 5th grade students and opportunities for 5th grade students to take band or strings. These activities purposefully begin prior to the start of the academic school day to make certain all students have the opportunity to participate.

When it comes to curriculum and instruction, our teachers differentiate to meet the needs of the students. The "one size fits all" approach does not meet the academic goals for all children. Therefore, teachers use data from running records, item analysis of unit assessments, our progress monitoring system STAR 360, conference notes, state assessment results, and formative assessments to design small groups and individual conferences to help students meet their academic goals. Through our Response to Intervention Team (RtI), we are able to provide targeted instruction in the areas of reading and math to students in grades K-5th. In addition, our interventionists are also certified Reading Recovery teachers. This has proven to be an amazing resource to our fragile readers in first grade. Through a balanced approach of research based best practices, RtI, gifted and talented, and special education, our students individual needs are met each and every day. Furthermore, we have a mentor program, school counseling services, and outside agencies who support both students and families with any social or emotional concerns. LMES truly reflects the statement of developing the whole child.

We are often asked what makes our school such a special place. It is not the awards we have received for academic performance, closing the achievement gap, or scoring Excellent on our recent state report card. What sets us apart is that Lake Murray Elementary School has an amazing school culture and heart. This year our slogan was "Lake Life is Best at LMES," and it is!





## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

At Lake Murray Elementary School, reading and writing are taught using Units of Study for Teaching Reading and Writing by Lucy Calkins, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. Our school, alongside the district, chose to implement this curriculum to intentionally teach and support the progress of each child in a classroom setting. Units of Study for Teaching Reading and Writing is a workshop curriculum designed to teach the learning standards in a mini-lesson format, along with small group instruction and independent work time. Small group instruction is a tiered instructional process within the workshop model where teachers provide intensive, personalized instruction based on students' individualized reading and writing goals.

Teachers analyze a variety of data to improve student and school performance. In reading, all grade level teachers K-5 use running records to assess students' independent and instructional reading levels and set individual learning goals. The running records also guide teachers in creating small groups to effectively instruct students, according to areas of growth. In kindergarten and first grade, teachers use observations in shared reading, read aloud and interactive writing to target foundational reading and writing skills. In grades second through fifth, teachers use pre- and post-standards performance assessments to determine instructional strengths and growth opportunities through the learning progression from the Units of Study. The reading learning progressions, in both narrative and informational text, are a guide for teachers and students to evaluate performance and to support students' advancement along the standards. Furthermore, the writing learning progressions are a guide for instruction in narrative, informational, and opinion writing. Our data is evidence that using learning progressions, rubrics, self-reflection checklists and exemplars to teach standards meets the instructional goals of our students and is growing them as readers and writers.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Through the use of the Everyday Mathematics Curriculum, which is designed to build and expand a student's mathematical proficiency and understanding, LMES is able to emphasize the use of concrete, real life examples to introduce key concepts. The spiral design provides our students with repeated exposure to concepts and skills, frequent practice of basic computation skills, and multiple methods and problem solving strategies to allow for differentiation.

Everyday Mathematics is a balanced approach of whole class instruction, small groups, partner work, and individual activities where teachers are able to confer with students and give specific feedback to support growth. There are multiple opportunities for open-ended problem solving, hands-on explorations, long-term projects, and ongoing practice. Students are given opportunities to explain their mathematical thinking and the multiple strategies that can be used to solve problems. Each unit provides readiness activities for students who struggle and enrichment activities to challenge students working at or above grade level. In addition, the Everyday Math online website is utilized at school and home as an additional reinforcer. Math manipulatives, technology such as iXL, and supplemental resources such as Math In Practice and V Math are all fundamental in meeting the different needs of our students. Students scoring below grade level as evidenced by STAR360 progress monitoring, benchmark testing, state testing, and district common assessments are referred for assistance through our Response to Intervention Program. This program offers research-based remedial support for our kindergarten through fifth grade students in a smaller setting.

Everyday Math provides a wide variety of assessment opportunities. Students are assessed through multiple formative and summative assessments. Teachers use an item analysis after summative assessments to form small groups and reteach concepts for mastery. It is the combination of each component working together that ensures that we improve mathematical understanding for all students.

## **1c. Science:**

Teacher leaders throughout the district work collaboratively to design interactive units that align to the South Carolina State Science Standards at each grade level. Our teachers study these units, adjust for varied student needs, and implement with fidelity.

Acknowledging the fact that many scientific concepts may be difficult for young minds to grasp, we work hard to make sure students have concrete experiences to relate to these concepts. Fourth grade students set up a scaled solar system replica to help understand the size and distance between the planets, while fifth grade students create ocean floor models, all to help students visualize something they could not otherwise explore.

Teachers have become masters at integrating science into other academic areas as well. For example, all fourth grade classes conduct weather research projects which allow them to learn research techniques while also studying deadly storms. In our second grade classrooms, students conduct hands-on experiments with magnets, and then create lab reports to show their findings. In order to develop the conceptual understanding that organisms depend on the air, land, and water to live and grow, you will find our kindergarten students planting a garden, measuring growth, and reporting their observations.

Our school works hard to provide academic feedback in the area of science. Teachers and administrators dive deep into summative and formative data to provide students with the instruction they need to grow. For instance, when state testing feedback reported that our fourth grade students needed further development with reading tables and graphs, the teachers intentionally worked to integrate various visual stimuli into all content areas, working beyond science and into math as well. Additionally, teachers collaborate to review student work, looking for trends in each unit, adjusting further instruction to correct misperceptions and deepen thinking.

## **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

The social studies curriculum is based on the South Carolina State Standards. Each grade level engages students with compelling questions in order to teach students the enduring understandings of that standard. For example, a kindergarten enduring understanding is “Rules and authority figures provide order, security, and safety in the home, school, and larger community.” Teachers drive instruction by asking compelling questions such as “What are rules and why do we have them?” and “What does it mean to be a good citizen?” Teacher leaders collaborate with the district’s social studies coordinator to build engaging experiences for students founded on the South Carolina Standards.

A variety of instructional approaches are used to teach social studies. All grade levels teach reading and writing units with embedded social studies content. In these units students read, write, speak, listen, think, analyze and debate compelling social studies questions. These embedded units engage students and allow for a reciprocal transfer of skills and content between ELA and social studies. In addition, content is integrated through the arts. For example, third graders present a concert of songs about South Carolina history. To decorate the stage, students create yellow jessamine, the state flower, in art. Upper grade levels facilitate social studies inquiry by asking debatable questions and having students generate their own positions. Students will use a variety of sources including maps, primary documents, textbooks, and online sites to research, answer, and defend their positions. Other instructional approaches include the use of interactive notebooks, simulations, and read alouds to engage students. Social studies instruction at Lake Murray is designed with the goal of shifting students from passive learners to apprentice historians.

Assessment takes on many forms including traditional tests, authentic performance tasks, and analytical writing. For example, during a fourth grade unit on the American Revolution, students are assessed with a traditional paper and pencil test. They also engage in a performance task as they choose a side to research and debate the topic, “Should the colonists stay with Britain or declare independence?” Finally, students write a research paper about a specific event during the American Revolution. In the paper, students analyze the importance of their chosen event and convince the reader why it should be remembered. Assessment

data is used to provide timely feedback to students, to monitor and adjust lesson pacing, and to evaluate and improve lesson design.

**1e. For secondary schools:**

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

Creative Curriculum, the foundational curriculum used in our preschool classrooms, supports the development and learning that align with the South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SCELSS). The SCELSS's goals and development indicators are divided into six domains: Approaches to Play and Learning, Emotional and Social Development, Health and Physical Development, Language Development and Communication, Mathematical Thinking and Expression and Cognitive Development. It promotes the development and learning of the individual child and guides assessments and instructional practices to meet each child's needs. According to the SC Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), this year 87.5% of students that attended a preschool program at LMES scored approaching or demonstrating readiness, as opposed to 79% of students that did not attend preschool at LMES.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

At LMES, we greatly value the arts and the benefit they bring to the whole child. Like other content areas, these instructors follow the South Carolina State Standards to ensure that all students have access to these areas.

Our visual arts instructor meets with all K-5th grade students forty-five minutes weekly. Students use various media and strategies to create beautiful artwork that is displayed throughout our building. The Artsonia Leadership Team gives our students a chance to showcase every Mariner's masterpiece in an online gallery. An art show where students' artwork is showcased in a more formal setting is open to the public once a year.

Our music program provides each student with the chance to perform through a variety of experiences such as our musical performances where students are highlighted as singers, dancers and actors. Fourth and fifth grade students can also participate in our school chorus. These students meet two mornings weekly to prepare for various shows and concerts, such as the South Carolina and Veteran's Day performance. Fifth grade students also have the opportunity to join morning band or strings which meets three times weekly. All students in K-5th grade are instructed in musical performance and appreciation 45 minutes weekly through the implementation of our state and national music standards.

Movement and physical activities are maximized through our physical education program. It is our goal to develop healthy habits and promote a love for an active lifestyle. All students receive sixty minutes of instruction weekly in addition to recess. Our Fitness Leadership Team is comprised of 5th grade students. These students arrive at school early twice a week to lead games and other activities for students. Each year our students participate in Jump Rope for Heart to encourage fitness and doing good for others by raising money for heart disease research. LMES has raised over \$150,000 since the school opened in 1999.

Beginning in third grade, students have Spanish instruction ninety minutes weekly. Fourth and fifth grade students have the opportunity to discover more about international studies by joining our World Language Leaders Team. Here students get to try various foods from different cultures while learning about people from all over the globe!

Computer Science standards are addressed in our computer lab 45 minutes weekly. From fun and rewarding typing challenges to making presentations where they invite guests in to showcase their work, our students build their technology proficiency each week. Our Computer Team is comprised of 2nd grade students who take the lead by helping students in the morning with tasks such as typing practice or online curriculum programs.

Opening each morning at 7am, our school library has much to offer. Students are allowed opportunities to participate in various activities including art, STEM activities, and games. Our Media Leaders are 4th grade students who learn how to use the library circulation program, put on puppet shows, read aloud stories for younger students, and help manage the daily activities of the library. Our News Team, Lake Murray Live, is led by our 5th grade students. These students have the opportunity to learn about journalism with hands-on practice with equipment and show script writing. We have an open library where students are allowed to access books and complete research at any time.

Power Skills are purposefully implemented by our school counselors here at Lake Murray. Career Week and Career Cafes are two different opportunities that expose students to guest speakers from many different fields of the workforce. Guest speakers share details about their career, educational background and training. Our school counselors lead the Navigators Team. These Navigators welcome new students to our campus, give tours, and answer questions for our new Mariners. School counselors also host events such as our Mix-it Up Lunch with 5th graders and various stakeholders from the community. Here they begin the discussion of transitioning to middle school and encourage manners, respect, and kindness. Red Ribbon Week is filled with activities that inform students about making healthy life choices. Our K-5th grade classes meet with our counseling department once a month for specific lessons aligned with the ASCA Standards. Our counselors also serve students in small groups based on data from various needs assessments.

### **3. Special Populations:**

It is essential to tailor instruction and the manner in which it is delivered, to best meet the academic goals of our students. To support our students, who need a more specialized approach, we have programs such as Response to Intervention (RtI), Special Education, Reading Recovery, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), as well as gifted and talented (GT).

Our RtI program is a three tiered model. Based on math and ELA data, students receive services from least intensive, tier one, to most intensive, tier three. Tier two and tier three students are pulled in a small group by a certified teacher to improve a specific area of weakness. The students are progress monitored bi-monthly using STAR 360 to ensure the customized curriculum and instruction are working. In kindergarten and 2nd grade we use a push-in model, which has proven to be very successful at our campus. For third through fifth grades, students are pulled out in small groups to work on skill deficits. First grade is a blended model of support, due to Reading Recovery.

Students qualifying for GT, in accordance to the state requirements, are served in a pull-out model weekly. The William and Mary School of Education has developed an Integrated Curriculum Model which is based on three dimensions: advanced content, higher level processes and product development, and interdisciplinary concepts, issues and themes.

Our ESOL students receive support in a pull-out program. Both small group and individual instruction are used to increase the proficiency of the English language. Students are assessed through the WIDA model in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

According to our state assessment data, students with disabilities had a 10% performance gap when compared to all students, both in Not Met and Exceeds Expectation in ELA and Math. For these striving students, an Individualized Educational Plan is developed. Students are progress monitored to ensure the action steps in place are positively impacting student achievement. We are working hard to bridge the gap in the services the students receive related to their IEP goals and the demands of the on-grade level curriculum. Instead of teaching skills and strategies in isolation, our special education teachers push in to the regular classroom to differentiate through small group instruction. This method allows students to transfer knowledge within the general education classroom. Pull-out services are offered to students whose data indicates the need for more intensive individualized instruction.

For our students from economically disadvantage backgrounds, there is a 10% gap in the following categories: Not Met for Math and Exceeds Expectation in ELA. We are emphasizing the importance of

analyzing students' running records and using small group instruction as a way to teach what students need at each text demand level. In math, teachers use an item analysis as a way to plan for small group instruction. In addition, teachers are using technology, manipulatives and resources such as Math in Practice to support the foundational skills needed to create higher level thinking and reasoning in problem solving.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

This year our motto is Lake Life is BEST at LMES! Each day, it is our goal to support our staff and students to be their very BEST self. School climate and culture are driven from the top down. This year we launched a study with our staff and students centered around the book, FISH!. Through this text, we have implemented the four components of the FISH Philosophy: Be There, Make Their Day, Play, and Choose Your Attitude. This has been very energizing and has brought our staff and students together around a common language. Also, we begin faculty meetings with celebrations. Teachers are recognized by their colleagues for special accomplishments and going above and beyond for students and for one another. At the end of every month, the administrative team recognizes a certified and support staff member, “Catch of the Month,” for their leadership.

Social and emotional health are essential components to establish a high performing school culture. For our first year teachers, school based mentors are assigned. In addition, all new faculty and staff members are supported through our counseling department. The school counselors meet with all new staff, over the course of the year, to go over upcoming events and provide an outlet to share concerns or questions. Another way we achieve this is through our teacher leaders. For instance, we have teachers who offer a free after school fitness program appropriately named Lake Murray in Action, secret pals, and book clubs. The goal for all of these initiatives is to build strong relationships between all faculty and staff members.

There are a variety of ways we engage and motivate our students. In addition to positive reinforcement and rewards in the classroom, students are recognized on our news show for displaying one of the FISH Philosophy components. Students are also invited to a monthly breakfast to celebrate their accomplishments. Each grade level has a “team time” where all the students and teachers celebrate student learning, birthdays, and special accomplishments. Furthermore, students are taught to be leaders of their own learning and set academic and/or behavioral goals for themselves within the classroom. When goals are met, students are recognized, and they are able to communicate their growth during student-led conferences. At the school level, students are engaged in leadership roles through leadership teams. These teams are sponsored by staff members, and they are a great way for students to develop confidence as well as learn the importance of helping others in our school community.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Lake Murray Elementary has an amazing school culture which welcomes families and community members. By extending a common leadership language to home and community, our students benefit. Our campus has hosted book studies and monthly parent workshops. We have found inviting parents and community members into the classrooms to see student leadership and learning in action to be the most effective way to foster relationships. Furthermore, our mentoring program has grown over the past three years, and we are very proud of this. It is a goal for every child at LMES to have an adult advocate, in addition to their classroom teacher. This avenue has helped improve student attendance, grades, self-esteem and confidence.

We involve parents and community members in our school leadership through our PTA and School Improvement Council. Both of these are very active components of our school and allow stakeholders to provide both support and feedback regarding school programs and initiatives. Their dedication has provided books for our library and on-site professional development and technology.

We have a variety of annual events aimed at bringing family and community members into our school. Some examples include our own fall celebration “Murrayfest,” breakfast in honor of different family members, grade level music programs, literacy night and parent information sessions on topics such as cyber-safety and drug trends. In addition, we celebrate Music in our Schools Month by inviting musicians to share with our students during lunch and family dining nights at local restaurants. Our Career Cafes are yet another example of parents and community professionals sharing different occupations with our

students.

Parents are kept abreast of school information and their child's progress through methods such as phone calls, weekly and monthly newsletters, email, daily agendas, Powerschool, school website, Facebook and Twitter. Administration and staff believe in an open door policy and the power of face to face conferences. Not only do we host formal school conferences, parents meet regularly with teachers regarding both academic growth as well as social emotional development. We also hold a student led conference evening that allows students to practice their leadership skills while they share their academic and personal growth with their families.

At LMES, we firmly believe that when we put children first, it brings out the best in all of us!

### **3. Professional Development:**

Our approach to professional development is specifically aligned with our mission to cultivate teacher leaders and administrators. These opportunities positively impact the achievement of all students. Just as we promote a growth mindset in our students, teachers and administrators at Lake Murray are continually looking for ways to hone our craft.

LMES teachers and administrators are involved in numerous learning opportunities centered around our state's academic standards as well as our district competency-based standards. We believe when professionals are given choice and voice in their learning, they feel valued and supported. Last year, we looked at data and surveyed our teachers to gather feedback on topics they felt would be most effective in growing their knowledge and practice. Based on the results, four different Professional Learning Communities were created and are lead by teacher leaders.

As a school, this year's professional development has focused on analyzing student work and identifying ways to expand learning using academic standards and the learning progressions. The literacy coach and administration work collaboratively to plan, facilitate and reflect on professional development and its impact on school improvement. This is attained by not only analyzing student data, but also the effect it has on overall student achievement. As a grade level, teachers and coaches analyze student work to identify next steps for instruction to further student growth. In vertical teams, teachers collaborate on the progressions of standards through the grade levels in order to support those students performing both below and above grade level. Coaching labs are another professional learning experience where teachers learn strategies on how to confer or instruct small groups to best meet the needs of their students. Likewise, coaching cycles with the literacy coach allow teachers to develop individualized professional development goals that are monitored through student achievement.

Teachers and administrators are also given multiple opportunities to grow professionally through our district. Some examples include: ELA PD-On-The-Go on various topics, visiting "model classrooms" and collaborating and training within content-alike groups across the district. First year teachers and teachers new to our district participate in a week long professional development orientation prior to the start of the school year. Teachers also have the chance to participate in a Homegrown Institute provided by Teacher's College, Columbia University Staff Developers in the area of literacy. Furthermore, administrators engage in learning walks with district coordinators to look at teacher practice within each content area on our campus. Also, administrators are involved in professional development sessions such as: Building Effective Teams, Data Analysis, Equitable Practices in Education, and Coaching Teacher Leaders.

### **4. School Leadership:**

At Lake Murray Elementary, our philosophy and structure are based on the concept of shared leadership. The staff and stakeholders have a vested interest in contributing to each child's success. Weekly, the assistant principals and principal meet to ensure the communication and expectations of the school's strategic plan are in alignment. Our Response to Intervention Team, which includes the school psychologist, school counselors, interventionists, and administrative team, meet bi-weekly to reflect on data. The outcomes provide support for the classroom teacher, additional services, academic and/or

behavior plans, and parent conferences. We also hold data team meetings which consist of administration, special education teachers, literacy coach, lead interventionist, school counselors and district personal, who the school specifically invites, to help support the needs of LMES as it relates to resources. Furthermore, our classroom teachers meet both by grade level and vertical teams. The effect has produced a culture of respect among colleagues, a common academic language, and calibration of student writing and assessments to ensure grading practices are consistent.

The administrative team firmly believes everyone has a leadership role on the campus. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to lead professional development in their area of expertise. This year, LMES was chosen to participate in a Leadership Continuum Pilot Program for our district. We have worked with consultants from the NYC Leadership Academy to develop leadership growth plans. The principal is working with both assistant principals on a targeted competency-based leadership goal. In addition to the normal steps of an action plan, this model includes self assessment, coaching and reflection, as well as developing a plan for future growth. Assistant principals are leading teacher leaders through this same process. This coaching model allows for conversation and support throughout the process, rather than only evaluating growth at the end, which is in alignment with the principal's vision for developing effective leaders.

Through our mentor program and partnerships with local businesses and organizations, community members are becoming advocates for our children and support academic and social/emotional growth. Our PTA has been very instrumental in supporting student learning by providing leveled texts to help increase reading stamina, Chromebooks to enhance engagement, and on-site ELA professional development to help grow our literacy practice. At LMES, we may have different roles within the school but we believe that leadership development and growth is a shared system commitment that empowers all of us to do our personal best for our school, colleagues and the students we serve.



## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Our academic success is founded on the concept of collaborative practice, multiple educators, parents and community stakeholders working together to provide the highest quality of education to all students. In essence, we have created a campus that not only communicate and work together as a team, but who constantly reflects and thereby grows in ways to support each individual student. There is a saying at our school, lifted from the Units of Study by Lucy Calkins, “When you think you’re done, you’ve only just begun.” The community at Lake Murray Elementary firmly believes they are never done. New professional learning leads to new practices which leads to student growth in multiple areas.

We have been immersed in the workshop instructional model over the last three years. During our first year, we focused on the components of a mini lesson. Last year, we honed in on small group instruction, and this year we are growing in individual conferences and goal setting. With every target, a new phase of professional development unfolds. The power of reflection by our teachers on student work and data has been one of the biggest game changers for student achievement. Collaborative practice builds a framework to take risks and promote partnerships with others outside of your individual grade level and content area in order to focus on a primary task such as student growth and achievement. It breeds an environment where we view all students as “our children” rather than students belonging to a specific teacher or grade level.

Another example of collaborative practice is our model classrooms. At LMES, we have two teachers recognized as model classrooms for the district in the area of 4th grade ELA and 2nd grade math. Outside educators and administrators come to our campus to view best practices in action. The most important component of this process is that our teachers reflect with the observing team afterward. These conversations permit the teachers to share the why behind what they did as well as ponder what they would like to improve moving forward. The ripple effect of this practice is felt schoolwide and leads to all of us becoming better practitioners.

Academic success is a multifaceted product, but collaborative practice is the most critical component that has led to the success of Lake Murray Elementary School. Our environment has not happened over night, but has been cultivated through trust in one another and shared leadership. We are here for the children, each other, and public education’s core beliefs. This common bond is the key to “Lake Life is Best at LMES.”