

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 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 Dr. Ashley Aldridge Wilson

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

Official School Name Nolan Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4435 Shackelford Ridge Road

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

City Signal Mountain

State TN

Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 37377-1255

County Hamilton

Telephone (423) 886-0898

Fax (423) 886-0897

Web site/URL https://nolan.hcde.org

E-mail wilson\_ashley@hcde.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Justin Robertson

E-

mail Robertson\_Justin@hcde.org

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

District Name Hamilton County Schools

Tel. (423) 886-0898

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. Tiffanie Robinson

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

---

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

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

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 44 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
0 Middle/Junior high schools  
25 High schools  
2 K-12 schools
- 71 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	0
K	110
1	125
2	125
3	127
4	128
5	128
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	743

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 87 % White
  - 4 % 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: 7%

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	34
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 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, 2021	721
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Mandarin, Spanish, Guatemalan, Korean, Arabic, Hindi

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

4 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %

Total number students who qualify: 36

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 8 %  
Total number of students served 62

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>8</u> Autism	<u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>1</u> Deafness	<u>6</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>12</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>5</u> Developmental Delay	<u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 7 %  
Total number of students served: 52

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

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	35
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	96%	98%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes ☐ No ☒

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

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

We work together to provide a caring, nurturing environment which will enable all children to become successful, independent, lifelong learners who will make positive contributions to our community. To become the most highly respected and outstanding elementary school in the state of Tennessee due to our academic excellence and nurturing atmosphere which promotes a child's maximum learning potential.

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

[https://www.hcde.org/district/non-\\_discrimination\\_policy](https://www.hcde.org/district/non-_discrimination_policy)

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

---

Nolan Elementary serves a small mountain community just outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Our campus is adjacent to Prentice Cooper State Forest with over 20,000 acres of forested land, hiking trails, waterfalls, and wildlife. Our school serves 742 students from our community in grades kindergarten through fifth. When students and families enter Nolan Elementary the warm, familial environment immediately envelops them. With committed community support, strong parental involvement, and a dedicated staff, Nolan stands out as a wonderful place to learn and grow. Many of our Nolan families are multigenerational mountain residents who recall the high academic standards and loving school community of their childhoods, and they expect and support the same for their children. Families who are new to the mountain have frequently sought out our community so their children may attend our school, and they also offer a high level of support to our staff. Nolan was established with a philosophy of inclusive instruction; therefore, many families of differently-abled students have moved into our school zone in order to benefit from our programs for these students. With high academic standards, intentional character education, and a high level of community involvement, Nolan is an excellent elementary school in which students are able to thrive.

High expectations are collectively upheld at Nolan by all stakeholders. Our faculty collaborated to define and agree upon operating principles, a vision, and shared norms and values about teaching and learning that serve as a compass to ground our work. By promoting a culture of transparency around student performance data, teaching teams engage in regular cycles of examining student progress for instructional prioritization, using data from benchmarks, running records, writing rubric scores, and i-Ready diagnostics in order to individualize instruction based on student needs. Colleagues seek to be thinking partners when student progress has stalled. We collaborate and brainstorm about available supports and strategies that may be used to meet student needs. Open-ended questions and reflective dialogue engage teachers in thinking deeply about their practice, and this helps them to consider new ideas and possibilities to promote student success. Faculty at Nolan take pride in being aware of which students are making the most gains and which students need greater support to have equitable access to learning.

Nolan's commitment to student personalization and academic press are defining characteristics of our program. Social emotional learning and character education are a vital part of Nolan's curriculum with students reciting Nolan's character pledge each morning, receiving character lessons every month, and awarding outstanding students with character awards at monthly assemblies. Students take pride in making good choices and being kind to others, and this is encouraged by our fifth grade "Kindness Ambassadors" who motivate students towards kindness with regular kindness announcements and incentives for kind behaviors. Nolan is currently the top school in our county for committing acts of kindness on our campus.

A driver in our academic press plan is that our staff has collectively identified and committed to use highly effective, research-based instructional practices, so that we can provide continuity to our instruction throughout our classrooms, promoting student success. The use of clear learning targets unpacked with the students and referenced throughout each lesson, deep pre-planned questions encouraging purposeful student discourse, frequent checks for understanding, using public records, and summarizing are some of the key instructional practices our staff has agreed to implement in every classroom. These strategies are all centered around standards-based lessons that are purposeful and engaging, requiring a strong cognitive lift from our students. Our instructional coach and teacher leaders design our professional development around these strategies. The instructional coach and administrative team conduct frequent informal classroom walkthroughs to observe and provide feedback on these practices to ensure that every Nolan student experiences excellent, high quality instruction.

Nolan offers many afterschool clubs and extracurricular activities to enable students to experience opportunities in the arts, athletics, theater, and more. Our goal is that all of our students will have the opportunity to join a club, finding a place where they can experience a sense of belonging. Some of these opportunities include drama club, cross country, track, hand bells, choir, novel studies, writing club, and student council. These clubs enable all of the students at Nolan to find a place of connection while fostering our strong school community. By providing students opportunities to be a part of academic clubs and teams, such as Perennial Math Team, Chess Team, Science Olympiad, Quiz Bowl, STEM Go-Kart Team, and



LEGO Robotics, our students are given opportunities with like-minded students who are innovative and advanced learners. Like "iron sharpening iron," participating in competitions motivates our most advanced students to push themselves to achieve excellence.

Nolan's strong parent and community support are key to its success. The Mountain Education Foundation (MEF) is a non-profit that relies heavily on parent and community donations and sponsorships from local businesses and families, so that our three community schools can meet the needs of our students at a high level and dream big for our schools. The foundation provides instructional support by funding Spanish, technology, and STEM teaching staff, as well as literacy and math interventionists. They also fund supplemental instructional materials including our Spanish curriculum, IXL, Accelerated Reader, and StoryWorks. MEF hosts several community-based fundraisers including a family kickball tournament and a community carnival and fun run called the Dash and Bash. Additionally, the Junior League of Chattanooga has provided our staff with several mini-grants to enhance instruction. The Tennessee Valley Authority has also provided funding for our STEM program. Community support from families and local businesses is woven throughout our school year in many ways including our Junior Achievement in a Day program, our Veteran's Day program, campus clean-up days, philanthropic social services events, and more.

Strong academic expectations from all stakeholders, intentional social emotional support, and community and family involvement are the foundations that support Nolan as an outstanding place to learn and grow.

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

---

### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

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

Nolan's language arts teachers foster a love of reading, writing, and communicating in their students through a rigorous standards-based approach that meets students at their ability levels, then pushes them to excel with high expectations. Our school uses Hamilton County's adopted Expeditionary Learning curriculum as the framework for literacy instruction, while supplementing as needed with research-based supports to ensure that all of our students meet and exceed our state's ELA standards. Some of these additional resources include Wordly Wise, i-Ready, IXL, Reading 360, and StoryWorks. Beginning in the primary grades, our students are introduced to reading through a sounds-first approach where students receive whole group phonics instruction on their grade level and targeted, small group instruction on their individual levels. Providing students with a strong foundation in phonics supports them in decoding and encoding as they progress through the primary grades. While teachers meet with small groups to target a specific skill and standard, students work in their literacy stations in a heterogeneous way so that all levels can learn and work together. Some of these literacy stations include word-work, independent reading, writing, and fluency. During whole group lessons, students are exposed to a variety of genres through shared reading and choral reading. An emphasis is placed on making connections with texts and having ongoing opportunities to express thoughts and ideas through discourse and writing. Family and community involvement are key in developing our primary readers as parents are encouraged to read with their children regularly and to volunteer as reading "book buddies" at our school. "Book buddies" are trained to be reading cheerleaders for our students, and they agree to meet with their primary grade buddies weekly to read with them one-on-one.

As students move into the intermediate grades, their phonetic instruction progresses into a study of root words, affixes, and Greek and Latin roots. Students develop their vocabulary through regular use of Wordly Wise, and this further develops their comprehension in a variety of genres. Intermediate students are encouraged to read for pleasure, and this is assessed using the Accelerated Reader program. When students reach their reading goals, they are awarded a visit to our book vending machine where they may use special coins to purchase a book that is their own to keep. Teachers utilize Nolan's beautiful campus to encourage reading in the hammock forest where students read under the trees reclined in hammocks. Intermediate students work on writing in a variety of genres and learn how to write to a specific text-based prompt. Explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary enables students to have a thorough understanding of conventions in order to produce high quality writing. Often, technology supports students' writing as they transform their pieces into google slide presentations or completely published documents. Students' language arts growth is assessed through i-Ready diagnostic assessments and district benchmark assessments. When students complete these assessments, teachers meet in teams with our administrative staff and instructional coach to analyze the data, which allows them to determine which standards need reteaching, as well as which students will benefit from reteaching in small group instruction. These assessments guide our small group instruction. Nolan's language arts teachers work every day to develop competent readers and writers who are able to think creatively about texts and to express their ideas effectively.

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

Nolan's math teachers are dedicated to creating an environment that nurtures and encourages students to find their inner mathematician and challenges them to think critically, creatively, and confidently. Understanding that students often need to move from concrete practices to pictorial representations and finally to abstract representations of mathematical concepts in order to internalize their learning, students may be seen using manipulatives, sketching their thinking, discussing ideas, and working problems using traditional algorithms. Our goal is for our math students to become mathematically literate with a mindset as lifelong mathematical learners. Standards-focused lessons are planned using the framework provided by the school district allowing teachers to write daily, weekly, and monthly learning goals. State standards are thoroughly unpacked in order for teachers to understand the expectations of the learners, the needed prerequisite skills,

possible misconceptions, and strategies for extension and enrichment. Webb's Depth of Knowledge also guides the teachers during planning so that they can ensure that students are not only acquiring basic mathematical knowledge, but they are also thinking critically and using knowledge to solve problems. School-wide instructional practices are implemented in all math lessons. Clear learning targets are used to focus each lesson and guide students to summarize how well they achieved the target at the end of each lesson. Multiple opportunities for student discourse are provided and are critical to our mathematics instruction in order to increase student engagement and accountability. This is established through partner talks, restating concepts, and debates. Mathematical student discourse also provides opportunities for students to learn from each other and explore new strategies.

Often teachers develop lessons with a gradual release of responsibility to give students the opportunity to have explicit instruction, supported practice, and independent work. Teachers utilize district curriculum, i-Ready, and supplemental lessons. Teachers plan using the "launch, explore, summarize" method which encourages students to think creatively about the focus question or problem, explore the concept independently or with a small group, and summarize their learning by explaining newly learned concepts. Finally, mathematical Habits of Mind are used throughout instruction to ensure students are using research-based strategies and methods to think mathematically and problem solve. Assessments used to measure students' mathematical progress include regular i-Ready diagnostics and district benchmark tests. Students review math concepts with regular IXL assignments. The administration team and instructional coach meet with each team to analyze ongoing student performance data. Teachers determine which standards have been mastered, which need reteaching, and which students need targeted small group instruction in order to master specific standards. Teachers also use the benchmark test results to reteach specific concepts to the whole group. Thoughtfully analyzing data, understanding where misconceptions have occurred, and organizing small groups based on this information, has enabled our math teachers to excel in mathematics instruction.

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

When walking into a Nolan science class, primary students may be seen comparing different types of bird beaks using tongs, scoops, and tweezers, while intermediate students may be conducting an experiment to analyze man's impact on the environment by adding oil, fertilizer, and debris to a body of water which must later be cleaned. Following these tactical explorations, students summarize their learning through discourse, visual representations, and technical writing. Students create infographics, diagrams, or tables to explain their learning. The district provided curriculum, STEM Scopes, is used to drive instruction, integrate technology, and provide hands-on experiments and explorations. Teachers also supplement the curriculum in order to address all Tennessee state standards. Science students are encouraged to investigate, explore, think, and discover in order to develop an understanding of new concepts. Nolan has a fully equipped STEM lab, which the teachers utilize to support hands-on instruction and projects. The STEM teacher is a thinking partner to staff as they plan projects and activities to support the science curriculum. Each grade level plans and develops project-based learning lessons in STEM lab. Science teachers also use our entire campus to allow students to explore and understand our world. Third grade students walk into the forest to a stream for guided water testing, while first graders step outside with an expert on local birds, and fifth graders go on a guided trail walk to identify native plants and trees. The Parent Teacher Association's outreach funding supports science enrichment through in-school field experiences for every grade level. Examples include zoologists bringing animals to school, a local professor explaining matter through engaging experiments, and an environmental scientist sharing information on water quality. These experiences enhance our science curriculum and inspire our students to think about science in a real-world way. Nolan's students' progress is monitored through ongoing common grade level assessments and science mastery benchmark assessments three times each year. Benchmark data is reviewed during grade level meetings, which enables teachers to identify standards mastered as well as opportunities for reteaching.

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

Nolan was awarded the Tennessee Governor's Civic Seal in 2022 for prioritizing teaching our nation's history and civic values. We believe that social studies instruction enables students to gain a perspective of humanity and its place in the world. Through intentional cultural and historical lessons, students begin to

understand their place in our world and their roles and responsibilities as citizens of the world. Social studies instruction is standards-based using the district-approved Gallopade curriculum, as well as multiple supplemental materials. Students use primary sources and artifacts to encourage student inquiry and engagement. These sources are analyzed in order to help students gain an understanding of the beliefs and events of specific time periods and groups of people. Students begin to understand how to view events through a historical lens as they understand that when and where individuals lived determined how they lived by studying topics ranging from our state's history and culture to the causes of the Revolutionary War. Social studies teachers engage in ongoing professional development in order to learn more about their content and the historical context in which events occurred. Civics lessons are intentionally taught throughout the curriculum. Intermediate students write a soap box speech based on a meaningful issue to them, and these are filmed and submitted into a local competition. Our students also participate in state mock elections for Tennessee governor in order to understand the election process. Social studies teachers use Socratic Seminar in order to facilitate students' ability to listen, speak, and engage in meaningful conversations around a common text, artifact, or historically significant artwork. Aspiring to provide students with real-world experiences, teachers use materials from area museums' learning boxes and take students on trips to local battlefields and Native American sites. Through strong social studies instruction, we hope that our students will be responsible and engaged citizens of our school, community, and world. Nolan's students' progress is monitored through ongoing common grade level assessments and social studies mastery benchmark assessments three times each year. Benchmark data is reviewed during grade level meetings, enabling teachers to identify standards mastered and opportunities for reteaching.

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

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

**2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

Students at Nolan receive weekly visual arts instruction which integrates art history and multiple mediums that allow them to make connections, explore, and create. Students entering the art room learn the mantra: "I am an artist. I am brave and try new things. I am confident and learn from my mistakes. I am respectful to all other artists. I come to the studio ready to learn. I work hard to create amazing and unique works of art." Lessons are planned with a specific artist, time period, and style as the focus, and instruction is adjusted in order to be appropriate for the varying grade levels. Art instruction connects to the other core subject areas when possible. For example, first graders studying birds may paint birds in art class, and third graders studying Native Americans are able to create Native American dwellings. Student artists are able to contribute to the broader community as they provide artwork for Alexian Village, our community's senior living residence. Students are able to showcase their work as they enter pieces into contests such as the Humane Educational Society's competition, raising money for the organization. When our students are able to create art for a cause or purpose, they have a sense of making the world a better place.

**2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Recognizing that students' physical health is an imperative part of educating the whole child, every Nolan student participates in standards driven physical education each week where they explore movement, sports, and general physical conditioning guided by our veteran P.E. teacher. Physical education units are planned around themes including gymnastics, ball sports, running, jump roping, hand-eye coordination, and general conditioning. P.E. is a place where students are able to exert their energy, have freedom to move and run, learn how to follow specific rules, consider strategy and complex thinking, all while getting along with others. Games and activities are designed to build students' confidence while encouraging them to

collaborate and work together. Our P.E. teacher recognizes his role as a mentor and encourager of our students, and he frequently spends time playing basketball with students before and after school. He also finds time to eat lunch with different students throughout the week, serving as a positive mentor and role model to them. Intermediate students have the opportunity to participate in cross country meets after school, and to try out for a variety of track events for an end of the year, county-wide track meet. Nolan students participate in a variety of community-based sports. The school partners with the community basketball league, allowing teams to use the school gym at no cost. Believing that all of our Nolan community benefits from physical fitness, parent volunteers offer free fitness classes to staff members on campus after school two days each week.

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

Nolan students receive immersive Spanish instruction each week using a multi-modal curriculum involving songs, dances, videos, writing, and art. Believing that hearing, understanding, and learning a different language at a young age stimulates brain growth and increases the likelihood of retention of the new language, Nolan uses funds from the Mountain Education Foundation to pay for this foreign language experience. Students document their learning using an interactive Spanish notebook that enables their families to know what they are learning each week. Nolan has several Spanish speaking families, and we encourage our students to learn to communicate with these peers while learning to appreciate their unique cultures. Our Spanish teacher emphasizes a cultural context in her lessons, and she incorporates the study of her native country, Mexico, into her lessons. Through this experience, students are able to learn a new language as well as Mexico's holidays, traditions, and culture.

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

Nolan's media center engages students in literacy and technology education through innovative whole group lessons and interactive learning stations. At the beginning of each library class, students participate in a mindfulness, whole-body activity that encourages them to approach the class in a calm, open-minded way. Students purposefully chant and move their bodies in specific ways to set their intention for learning. Internet safety and digital citizenship are explicitly taught to students, and parents are invited to workshops on these topics as well. Learning stations engage students through collaborative activities that involve creating through puzzles and construction activities, problem solving through intellectual challenges, and thinking analytically through strategic games such as chess. Opportunities for research and discovery that align with grade level core content standards are provided as students learn how to research online safely. Students are exposed to new literature as they read and vote for the Volunteer state book awards, explore books through a musical book protocol, and have the opportunity to weekly book checkouts. Students collaborate across grade levels by writing book reviews for each other, and sharing books they love through book buddies. Nolan is proud to have the highest circulation of library books in the entire county. We have won the Hamilton County Mayor's Read 20 Award for reading outside of school for three years, and our librarian won librarian of the year for Hamilton County Schools for the 2022-23 school year.

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

Nolan benefits from two music teachers who integrate general music knowledge, music history, creative movement, and instruments into their classes. Students are exposed to playing the guitar, recorder, drums, handbells, and xylophone. Students receive music instruction weekly, as well as an extra music class bi-monthly. Each month a different grade level performs for parents and students through singing, dancing, and their instrumentals. The music teachers also provide students with performance days on which they may share their musical abilities with their peers. Students who especially enjoy music may join the before school choir, handbells group, or musical theater club.

STEM education is also emphasized at Nolan through our STEM lab which is facilitated by our STEM teacher who works with teachers to develop project-based learning experiences aligned with grade level standards. Our school has been awarded a Volkswagen E-Lab grant for the 2024 school year, which will enable our STEM instruction to grow through the use of multiple fabrication tools such as laser cutters,

screen printers, woodworking tools, and more. Collaborative planning between content area teachers and the STEM teacher allows students to experience highly engaging and innovative projects.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

We hold the belief that each child deserves an opportunity to learn at their own pace with adequate support. The instructional leadership team has worked diligently to craft a master schedule that provides daily WIN (What I Need) time of intervention and enrichment for every grade level. During WIN, all students receive an appropriate challenge at their instructional level. All Nolan students receive daily tier 1 instruction that uses grade level curriculum and standards. Students struggling to access tier 1 instruction are identified through our i-Ready diagnostic screener which is a nationally normed assessment. Students identified as working at 10% or lower are moved into tier 3 instruction with our Response to Intervention team. These students receive research-based instruction using the Sonday System or i-Ready five days per weeks for forty minutes. Their progress is monitored weekly and reviewed regularly by our RTI team. Parents are regularly informed of their student's progress. Students working between the 10th and 25th percent receive tier 2 instruction with our RTI team using i-Ready and Reading 360 four days per week for forty minutes. Regular communication is also maintained between the RTI team, teachers, and families. Homeroom teachers, the RTI team, the instructional coach, and administrators meet each month to review student data and adjust our tier 2 and 3 groups as needed. Our goal is to provide these students with quality supports so they are able to transition out of these intervention groups. The intervention groups are fluid and enable students to be successful with tier 1 instruction.

With a desire to support all of our learners, we have been able to hire WIN time tutors through a state grant. These tutors provide reading support for our students in grades first through third identified as scoring between 25% and 60% on i-Ready. Students practice specific reading skills and work to master grade level standards when they work with these tutors. The tutoring program was developed to assist our students in becoming successful readers and writers by third grade.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

With a goal of keeping every student engaged and challenged at their level, high performing students are given opportunities to stretch their thinking, increase their problem solving, and to go deeper into high interest topics by participating in our advanced studies program. Students working above grade level are identified through high academic achievement on standardized tests and intellectual testing. When a student meets the criteria for advanced studies, they begin to meet with the advanced studies teacher two times each week for enrichment during the daily "WIN" time. Advanced and intellectually gifted students receive enrichment through literature circles, project-based learning, and Khan Academy. Students in advanced studies are encouraged to complete in-depth research projects, compete in academic competitions, create projects, engage in novel studies, and more. Students who desire an additional academic challenge may also participate in quiz bowl competitions, chess club, Science Olympiad, Perennial Math Team, LEGO Robotics, and STEM Go-Kart Team.

With a desire to challenge above grade level students, different instructional strategies are utilized for every student. Small group literacy instruction allows teachers to work on above grade level texts with students who are needing an extra challenge. Also, with the use of Accelerated Reader advanced readers may continue to challenge themselves with a range of complex novels. Exceptional math students work on educational platforms that naturally adjust to students' instructional levels, providing them with continued challenges and new concepts. Intermediate teachers also plan enrichment for advanced students who may not qualify for advanced studies during WIN time. We believe in keeping our above grade level students engaged, challenged, motivated, and excited about learning.

#### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Our Nolan staff truly believes that every child can learn to his or her full potential, participate in the regular school day, and have memorable school experiences including forming close friendships and experiencing the joy of childhood. Our special education students participate in academics, related arts, recess, lunch, special programs, and clubs. Nolan was designed to serve differently-abled students with an intensive needs classroom, a k-2 special education inclusion teacher, and a 3-5 special education inclusion teacher. Our special education team also includes several assistants who attend to their students' needs and provide them with support so they can access the curriculum and programs offered during the school day. Our intensive services students hold a yearly science fair where they present to their typically developing peers. Intensive students also conduct Nolan's "Fat Bear Week" where they teach the school community about Alaskan bears and encourage all to vote on which will be the fattest bear of the winter. These students benefit from Unique Learning Systems, which is a curriculum that provides them support and allows them to access state standards. Other members of our special education team offer our students occupational therapy, physical therapy, visual guidance, and speech and language support. This team strives to align their supports in a seamless way so that our special education students receive a holistic approach while they attend Nolan. Additionally, our school offers a four week summer program which allows our special education students to continue to learn and interact with their peers. Finally, Nolan considers these students' needs in all areas including our playgrounds which are accessible to all students. A highlight of every spring is when we celebrate World Down Syndrome Day by wearing fun socks on March 21st. Another sweet celebration is when our intensive students participate in the county-wide Special Olympics where many of their typically-abled peers and staff members cheer them on.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

English as a new language students have the opportunity to go to a nearby school for intensive language instruction; however, these families may also choose to sign a waiver to remain at Nolan without the intensive ENL instruction. Several of our English as a new language students' families have chosen to remain at Nolan, learning English through an immersive experience. Currently, we have four ENL students who are participating in the regular education program with a district provided ENL teacher monitoring their progress through school and classroom visits. Progress is monitored using the yearly WIDA test. These students receive support through WIN time interventions.

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

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

Nolan is using an academic press and personalization framework this school year to streamline our engagement practices in both areas. Our teachers met to set agreed upon high-yield instructional practices that would be used in every classroom. These include student discourse, clear learning targets, frequent checks for understanding, and complex tasks. Protocols have been practiced during professional development to help all staff members have a deep understanding of unpacking clear learning targets and facilitating student discourse. We also investigated what constitutes a complex task using Bloom's Depth of Knowledge to determine whether different assignments were providing our students with a true cognitive lift. All of these lessons are planned around our state standards and designed to be on or above grade level. Engaging our educators with continued learning around best practices ensures that we are continuing to engage our students academically. Nolan teachers believe that students' primary needs must be met in order for them to be engaged academically, and those needs are met before students arrive in the classrooms. The academic press and personalization also addresses students' need for connections, belonging, and emotional development through the agreed upon practices of morning meetings, our P.R.O.U.D. tier 1 behavior plan, and cultivating a classroom environment of belonging. New students are welcomed with a "New Knight" yard sign posted in their home's front yard and checked on within the first weeks of school to ensure they are transitioning well and making friends. During daily morning meetings students are able to share their thoughts and feelings, and a classroom community mindset is established. The P.R.O.U.D. acronym is our students' promise to be prepared, responsible, orderly, united, and determined in every part of our school day. A sense of belonging is encouraged in many ways. Our guidance teacher offers "lunch bunches" for students who need extra support with friend groups. Encouraging kindness throughout the day, each playground on our campus has a "buddy bench" where students who need a friend to play with may sit until another student comes by and invites them to play. All of our students learn the "zones of regulation" so they can identify when they are becoming very upset or frustrated. Breathing techniques have been taught for students to use to calm themselves. Every classroom includes a "calm corner" or "zen den" where disregulated students may go to regroup during especially stressful days. Additionally, many of our staff members volunteer to be "hug buddies" (hi, update, goodbye) which pairs them with students who need additional emotional support during the school day. These students start their day by visiting their staff "hug buddy" who encourages them to be confident, make good choices, and to know they are valued and loved.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Nolan's Parent Teacher Association is one of the most active and successful PTAs in our state. Our PTA supports our students and staff in so many ways including creating a school directory, organizing grounds clean-up days, providing classroom enrichment experiences through local museums, zoos, and organizations, grant writing, fundraising, monthly staff encouragement events, serving on steering committees for school decisions, and so much more. Students at Nolan are able to participate in a PTA Reflections Art Competition where students send in photography, writing, visual arts, and dance performances to compete against other students across our state. Every fall our community has a large homecoming parade and Nolan's PTA helps students design and build a Nolan float for our fifth graders to ride. Each spring the PTA organizes Junior Achievement in a Day where local business professionals and parents are trained to teach our students about economics, finance, and entrepreneurship. Our PTA also organizes school supply kits each year for all of our families to easily order and equip our students and teachers with needed school supplies. Nolan recognizes the importance of grandparents and other family members in our students' lives; therefore, we host a grandparents day event with the PTA. Students are able to invite their grandparents or special grand-friends to visit the school where they have coffee and cookies, tour the building, take fun photos in our Nolan photo booth, receive a gift created in the art room, and visit the library's book fair. The joy on grandparents' faces as their grandchildren guide them through the building is absolutely magical. Nolan's PTA also sponsors a yearly fun run which focuses on character education and raises money for the school. This is separate from the MEF fun run. A monthly PTA happy cart loaded with treats for teachers is pushed through the hallways each month to uplift our staff members. Our PTA also provides funds for teachers to have ongoing professional development, hosts staff lunches on holidays, and



organizes our teacher appreciation week. Nolan's doors are open to all families during open house nights, PTA performance nights, grade level information nights, and parent conferences. Families join us for monthly character assemblies to celebrate their students' character. We also host families to learn more about science and technology on our STEM night each spring. Our community donates items for student council sponsored Signal Mountain Social Services multiple times each year. We host a coin drive, hygiene drive, food drive, and book drive. Students collect these items and organize them in our school foyer. Student Council members decorate pumpkins each October and students vote on their favorite pumpkin with coins. These are also donated to our social services program. Families and community members join together in our school gym on a Saturday every December to organize and pack holiday boxes to be delivered to families experiencing food insecurity on the mountain. Parent volunteers are in our building daily making copies, reading to children, organizing our workrooms, supervising our cafeteria, re-shelving library books, working in the art room, and cleaning our school grounds. Nolan's families and communities are vital to our school's success.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

At Nolan Elementary, there is an atmosphere of professionalism, trust, and respect that is the foundation of our positive school climate and culture. Teachers and staff feel valued and supported in many ways throughout the school year and are inspired to the highest level of professionalism. Our administrators, teachers, and staff members work hard to exemplify professionalism with our students and their families, with our colleagues, and with our community. For example, Nolan teachers and staff members seek growth opportunities by attending numerous professional development trainings focusing on academic instruction as well as the social emotional health for students and ourselves. Teachers are given support to implement social emotional health initiatives in and out of the classroom by our Nolan counseling department. As teacher leaders, we are also provided with additional professional growth opportunities in the classroom such as education grants awarded by the Mountain Education Foundation, the Chattanooga Junior League, and Nolan PTA. There is a culture of excellence at Nolan that includes academic rigor, high performing students, and high performing teachers. In fact, Nolan has a long history of teachers recognized as Hamilton County Teacher of the Year recipient, including 2022-23 Elementary Teacher of the Year and Librarian of the Year. These teachers leaders inspire colleagues and support students with their innovative teaching strategies and creative ideas. In addition, Nolan also has a representative on the sounding board of Scholastic StoryWorks magazine which has in turn developed into a close relationship between the school and this organization. Academic professionalism is the norm at Nolan, and all teachers and staff collaborate routinely through grade level and team weekly planning, schoolwide committees, mentor-mentee sessions, and RTI meetings. These meetings enable us to plan meaningful, student-centered instruction, plan and evaluate school initiatives, support new staff, and provide intervention to our most vulnerable students. Another highly effective tool that supports the overall school climate and culture, is the use of school-based committees such as the Instructional Leadership Team, Climate and Care Committee, Student Advocacy Team, Hospitality Committee, Field Day Committee, and Response to Intervention Behavior Committee. These committees give all grade levels and teams the opportunity to work collaboratively to plan and problem solve throughout the school year. Lastly, new teachers are supported through a mentor training program which includes close collaboration with a paired mentor as well as monthly group meetings, and all teachers are provided opportunities to observe and learn from peers. The administrators, teachers, and staff at Nolan work hard to uphold the highest standards of professionalism with our students, their families, our colleagues, and the community. The emphasis on professionalism helps provide the foundation for a positive school climate and culture.

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

Our principal has been honored to serve as Nolan's leader for five years, with this being her twenty-sixth year in education. She is a nationally board certified teacher and was recognized in 2020 as the National Association of Elementary School Principal's National Distinguished Principal from Tennessee. Nolan's assistant principal has been in this role for one year, after twenty-six years in education serving as a teacher in grades kindergarten through sixth, and as an instructional coach in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth. Both school leaders believe in an authentic leadership style which means they are true to their core beliefs as servant leaders, and they maintain open and honest communication with staff members. Being

highly committed to serving our staff, students, and families, and helping them to achieve at their highest potential, is a constant for them. Also, they believe in equity of voice among staff members and a shared leadership style. Shared leadership is essential at every layer of Nolan to balance the demands of leading operations and instruction at Nolan. Deprivatized practice, collaboration, having a collective focus on student achievement, engaging in reflective dialogue and professional learning, having standard operating principles, and creating avenues for communication are cornerstones of the "Nolan Way." Teacher-voice matters, and at Nolan we have created multiple avenues for input, feedback, and communication as we reflect on instructional practice, student success, and embrace a growth mindset. While staff members have opportunities to participate on committees and be a part of decision-making on some level, three teams are especially instrumental in advancing our work. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has a representative from all teams and leads the ongoing work of our professional learning community. We reflect on student data for standards prioritization, dig into best practices, reflect and collaborate, and are the first to implement new instructional strategies. Each member of the ILT facilitates the discussion for their team and replicates ILT priorities, ensuring our whole learning community is growing and learning together. Having a joyful and motivated faculty that enjoys coming to work is paramount. The Climate Committee was formed to provide ongoing care and encouragement to colleagues, be keenly aware of staff needs to ensure morale stays high, and be solution-oriented when issues arise. By having a committee focused on creating solutions for operational and instructional issues, we head off problems before they affect our positive climate. The Student Advocacy Team is another extremely important team that collaborates to review RTI progress monitoring and intervention (academic and behavioral) and brainstorms supports for students who are facing learning struggles or are vulnerable or at-risk due to home life and trauma situations.

Leading by example, shoulder to shoulder with staff, and recognizing that great leaders empower others, Nolan's administrators serve as a guide and fellow team member in this shared leadership style.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Nolan's staff and curriculum aspires to expose our students to cultures, people, events, and beliefs outside of our small, rural community. Our curriculum in both content areas and the related arts can be used as a tool to expose our students to cultures outside of our own. Our music teacher creates monthly PTA programs across grade levels performing musical selections from around the world. Our media specialist engages students in Tennessee culture, a wide variety of literary genres, and month-long journeys into a variety of history months, including women's history, Hispanic history, and African American history. Our language arts curriculum, Expeditionary Learning, exposes students to cultures from around the globe, and presents texts about the same events from different viewpoints and perspectives. Students in third grade may research the ways people around the globe access books in unique ways from burros carrying small libraries through the rainforest to elephants delivering books in India. While our fifth graders study how Jackie Robinson changed professional athletics during segregation or the impact of an earthquake in Haiti, second graders learn the unique challenges of accessing an education by children around the world. Exposing students to differing worldviews and experiences, while asking them to create their own projects based on these topics, enables us to open their eyes beyond our small mountain community. During art class students experience art and artists from a variety of cultures. Finally, our social studies teachers present topics from a worldview, encouraging students to experience events and topics from different perspectives. Although many of our students are from the same community with similar religious, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, teachers are proactive to invite culturally diverse families to share their experiences, cultures, and holidays. We celebrate our diversity with our differently-abled students who are included in every facet of our school. Students regularly play basketball and other games with our intensive needs students, cheering when they have success. Alumni of Nolan, who benefited from our special education program, return to school to speak at our character assemblies. Students are proud of the relationships they develop with all of their peers, and celebrate our differences. While recognizing that it is a challenge to expose our students to the greater world outside of our own, we believe that by emphasizing kindness, acceptance, and a spirit of open-mindedness to others, we are equipping them to be successful in our diverse world.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

---

The culture of high expectations is the main factor that sets Nolan apart as an excellent elementary school. Teachers and staff members, parents, and stake-holders set high expectations for themselves, as well as their students. Nolan's teachers provide lessons that are aligned with Tennessee state standards focused on clear, attainable goals that are realistic and achievable. Our teachers build relationships with all students through compassionate and respectful language, so students are willing to give their best to the learning process. Nolan teachers convey belief and confidence in our students in order to assist them in meeting our high academic expectations. Students are expected to take ownership in the learning, which instills pride as we all celebrate their success. We also set high expectations for the personalization of our students' school experience. Our behavior team has worked to create a behavior matrix that is used consistently throughout the school. P.R.O.U.D. was designed as a simple way for our Nolan Knights to remember our high behavior expectations throughout the day. Our staff also works to develop a warm, loving environment where every child has a sense of belonging. Using the restorative practices of "Love and Logic" to guide our behavioral expectations, we are able to maintain high behavioral expectations while maintaining our warm, loving atmosphere. This strong emphasis on restorative practices and personalization results in Nolan having very few behavior incidences each year. These high expectations are also held by our families and community members who support our school through their time and financial gifts, as well as academic support as they hold their students accountable for learning and behavior. The support our school receives from families, community members, and the MEF is evident every day at Nolan as we see students arriving at school prepared for a day of learning. Without these consistent commitments to make Nolan a strong community school, we would not be able to achieve our incredible academic results, and our students would not have the breadth of experiences offered at Nolan. High expectations in every area of our school community is the reason for Nolan's success. Our staff has high expectations for teaching and learning. We have high expectations for behavior and the facilitation of a positive school culture, and our community has high expectations for providing them with a hub of learning, engagement, and family involvement. Without all of these, Nolan would not be able to have the incredible success that it has experienced.