

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Sharla Arp

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

Official School Name Miles Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1001 Robinson Street

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

City Miles State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 76861-0308

County Runnels County

Telephone (325) 468-2861 Fax (325) 468-2179

Web site/URL http://www.milesisd.net E-mail sharla.arp@milesisd.net

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Robert Gibson E-mail robert.gibson@milesisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Miles ISD Tel. (325) 468-2861

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

Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Cary Houston
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	4	2	4
K	16	17	33
1	19	13	32
2	11	19	30
3	14	15	29
4	19	17	36
5	11	16	27
6	17	8	25
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	111	107	218

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 38 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 61 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 16%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	18
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	237
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.156
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 36 %
Total number students who qualify: 78

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %
19 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.

- 3 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 1 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 1 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 11 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 2 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	15
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 15:1

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

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

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

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

Yes No X

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.

The purpose of Miles Elementary, in partnership with parents and community, is to educate and develop the whole student -physically, mentally, morally, and emotionally.

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

“Striving for success without hard work is like trying to harvest where you haven’t planted.” The people of the Miles community and Miles Elementary know the value of hard work and are planting seeds that will produce a great harvest.

Miles is a small, rural, farming community in Texas located 17 miles east of San Angelo on US Hwy 67. The original settlement, Miles Station, was named after Johnathan Miles who made a generous donation to Santa Fe Railroad in 1888 when it ran out of funds to complete a railroad project from Ballinger to San Angelo. The current location of the Miles community is where the original railroad section house was built and where the funds ran out for the railroad project. In 1905, “Station” was dropped and Miles was incorporated.

Fertile farmland brought many families to the Miles area. It was a booming community in the early 1900’s, however the population declined during the Depression and after World War II when families moved to larger cities to find work. Today Miles has a population of 823 and continues to thrive as a rural farming community.

Miles schools were and continue to be the heart of the community. The first one-room school was built in 1891 on the south side of town on Baptist Hill. Other school buildings were constructed throughout the years including the 1953 “modern three-wing structure” that is the current elementary school. New construction is underway, and a new Miles Elementary School will open on August 1, 2016.

Miles ISD is comprised of three safe and supportive campuses (elementary, junior high, and high school). As indicative of the community, the schools are non-violent, have little to no drug activity, and no gang activity. With safety and security in place, the goal of the district is to develop and enrich the lives of all of its students - academically, socially, and emotionally.

Miles Elementary has a strong focus on academics. Quality teachers are hired, a well-rounded curriculum is taught at depth and with complexity, research-based strategies are used, high expectations are sustained, and obstacles are removed or minimized to ensure academic success for all. Parent involvement enriches the lives of the children and supports the learning environment.

In addition to academic skills, social and emotional education is provided through a variety of efforts such as classroom instruction, a supportive school environment, and involvement in the community. Character education is taught, practiced, and modeled. Miles students pledge each day to be respectful, honest, kind and responsible, and they demonstrate those skills at school and in public. Another strategy for developing social and emotional skills is through the creation of the Bulldog community, which encompasses all students in the district (Prek-12). Due to close campus proximity, elementary students have many opportunities to interact with older students. In the fall, elementary students proudly wear spirit gear on Fridays and have the opportunity to hang out with cheerleaders or throw a football with varsity players on the playground. This sense of community develops throughout the year as elementary students attend pep rallies, One Act Play, cross county, basketball, and band events. They also benefit from these interactions individually as they are read to by high school students and informally communicate with them at school. Involvement with the community also develops social and emotional skills. One annual tradition is the Cotton Festival held in the city park. Community members and visitors camp, shop, cook, and spend quality time with friends and neighbors. Elementary students attend with their parents and even participate in the Cotton Queen contest alongside the high school candidates. They are also included in the Cotton Festival parade. Another annual tradition is the Homecoming Parade. Each year, students line the schoolyard fence and cheer as high school students drive tractors and other decorated vehicles around the school block to celebrate Homecoming Week. These traditions, experiences, and interactions enrich students socially, emotionally, and culturally, which positively impacts them academically.

As result, Miles Elementary has experienced much academic success. Exceptional performance on state tests has led to “Recognized” and “Exemplary” ratings for many consecutive years. When the rating system transitioned with the implementation of the new state test (STAAR), the labels changed, but they were still indicative of a high-performing school. Since 2013, Miles Elementary has “Met” the required state standard and has earned several Distinction Designations including the following: Academic Achievement in Reading/ELA, Math, and Science; Top 25% in Student Performance, Top 25% in Closing Performance Gaps; and Post-secondary Readiness. Additionally, Miles Elementary has been identified as a “Star Honor Roll School” by the Institute for Productivity in Education as a high-performing, high-poverty school.

The philosophy of Miles Elementary is simple but clear – “It’s all about the kids.”

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) is the curricular foundation at Miles Elementary, therefore, it is important that there is a deep understanding of the structure and the student expectations at each grade level. It is equally important that teachers are knowledgeable of the underlying, major concepts that must be mastered in order for students to access the grade-level curriculum and master the core curriculum. Miles Elementary educators immerse themselves in the TEKS as well as in research of underlying concepts that must be taught in order for students to progress through the state curriculum and meet or surpass the student expectations.

All core instruction begins with good planning. Each teacher at Miles Elementary is required to create long-term, TEKS-documented plans for each core area annually. This ensures that all of the foundational skills are taught as well as the designated TEKS. Teachers then create lesson plans, implement activities, and track progress to determine mastery of basic concepts and TEKS. A solid foundation is evident when students are able to perform the student expectations at the level of the verbs (engage, analyze, compare, etc.).

Continuity is very important in order for students to be exposed to and learn all that is expected of them from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Vertical teaming facilitates this process at Miles Elementary. Teaming blocks are built into the schedule; teachers use this time to discuss such topics as foundational skills, common academic vocabulary, assessment data, instructional strategies, student progress, RtI groups, disciplinary strategies, resources available, new technology, and other current topics.

English Language Arts/Reading is introduced in PreK and is taught throughout elementary. In reading, underlying, foundational skills must be mastered in order for students to access the grade-level TEKS and become fluent, life-long readers. Miles reading teachers are extremely knowledgeable of the big five reading concepts (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) and understand that without this foundation, students will not be able to reach their full potential as readers or master the state standards. Teachers use basal readers, internet-based programs, and other research-based programs to teach reading. The classroom teachers, as well as the interventionist, track student progress in the programs and monitor engaged reading minutes per child. Struggling students are provided inclusion support, participate in research-based activities during Response to Intervention (RtI), work in small groups with the teachers, and participate in after-school tutorials. Students who are dyslexic or have other reading disabilities work with the dyslexic teacher using a multi-sensory approach or with the special education teacher. Students who have mastered the general curriculum participate in enrichment activities during RtI.

Math is also introduced in PreK and taught throughout elementary. Math teachers at Miles Elementary provide classroom experiences which build upon the students' existing knowledge of math. Just as in reading, major math concepts provide the foundation for future development. Miles teachers understand the importance of providing meaningful experiences that allow students to develop an understanding of patterns, language, and symbols of the math world. Once they have a broad understanding of these concepts, the students are ready to access and master the TEKS. Math teachers use state-adopted textbooks, manipulatives, a state-funded internet based program, and other research-based products in their classrooms. When students have deficits in math and need assistance, they participate in small group sessions with the teacher, participate in research-based activities during RtI, or stay for after-school tutorials.

For Social Studies, the teachers teach the TEKS using the textbook as well as other resources. They incorporate non-fiction texts, poetry, songs, and biographies to enrich the curriculum. Social Studies texts are often incorporated across other subject areas for additional exposure. The passages are used for reading comprehension, fluency practice, etc. Curriculum is accommodated or modified for struggling students if necessary, and instructional aides support them in the general education classroom. Teachers often incorporate projects, demonstrations, and visuals to make the subject matter come to life. They also incorporate field trips to Ft. Concho and to Frontier Texas to reinforce historical concepts taught.

Students learn the basics of science in the lower elementary grades and build upon that knowledge. Teachers use the adopted text book, technology, and other scientific equipment to implement hands-on experiments, explorations, and projects. Instructional aides provide support in the general education setting to assist struggling students. Gifted and talented students extend concepts taught and create science projects as enrichment. Upper elementary students also visit a nearby university for Science Day; this provides exposure of college life and hands-on science experiences.

Miles ISD offers a PreK program for eligible students. A PreK curriculum is taught, which focuses on the core subject areas, and the teacher supplements the program with research-based activities that incorporate movement and development of social, emotional, communication, and technology skills. By following the state guidelines and collaborating with the kindergarten teachers, the curriculum is aligned and the students are prepared to transition. Kindergarten TPRI data shows that students who attend PreK outperform those who do not— particularly in graphophonemic knowledge.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to the core curriculum, students also participate in other curricular areas including Physical Education (PE), music/band, and technology during their school week at Miles Elementary. The Texas Education Agency has also outlined student expectations for each of these subject areas.

Physical education is a daily portion of every child's day (PreK–6th) at Miles Elementary. As in the core subject areas, student expectations are outlined in the TEKS and demonstrated in the PE environment. Movement, physical activity, health, and social development are all incorporated. Students engage in moderate to vigorous activities that are developmentally appropriate and are designed to develop motor skills and self-management skills. Students participate in PE each day for thirty minutes. Students are led in games and activities that develop their gross motor skills, their social skills, and their problem-solving skills. The PE teacher often incorporates academic concepts into the games to reinforce what is being taught in the classroom. Elementary students also have the opportunity to participate in Jump Rope for Heart; this program teaches the importance of heart health, allows the students to raise money for the American Heart Association, and jump rope for a charitable cause. They also participate in Field Day at the end of the school year; during this event, they run relays, navigate through obstacle courses, and compete in fun water games for prizes and recognition. In addition, sixth grade students compete against area schools in Little Olympics; this gives them exposure to competition as they prepare to enter junior high and the world of extracurricular sporting activities.

Music is used routinely in the classrooms to stimulate brains, calm energetic students, and to teach concepts in a fun and memorable way. However, music is also a subject that is taught at Miles Elementary by the band director. As students are taught the skills outlined in the TEKS, they develop an understanding and appreciation of all types of music. They also have opportunities to showcase what they have learned throughout the year at concerts and other events. Kindergarten students attend music one day a week for 35 minutes. Students in grades 1–4 have music two days a week for 30 minutes, and fifth grade students have music four days a week for 35 minutes. Sixth grade students participate in band five days a week for 40 minutes a day. In the lower grades, students sing, dance, and learn music appreciation. As they move into upper elementary, they learn to read notes and play instruments. They start with a recorder in the fifth grade and move to an instrument in the sixth grade. The elementary students are fortunate to be instructed by the district's band director and often continue in the band program after leaving Miles Elementary.

The elementary students at Miles also participate in technology class each week. Just as in the other core and non-core subject areas, the TEKS outline the student expectations for each grade level. Students in grades k–6 attend this class one day a week for 30 minutes in the computer lab. In addition to the basic technology skills, students also practice skills being taught in the classroom using games, programs, and electronic textbooks. Collaboration among classroom teachers and the computer lab facilitator allow this to occur.

Physical education, music, and technology, though non-core, are very valuable in the development of the whole child. When students are exposed to physical activity and music, the brain is able to develop; a healthy, developing brain will benefit a child in every subject area and in life. Learning to live and embrace

the ever-changing technology in this world is another life-long skill that students will benefit from during school and definitely beyond.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Miles Elementary prides itself on its ability to know each child and meet his/her individual needs. Best practices, RTI interventions, and other innovative strategies are incorporated and contribute to the success of the students at Miles.

Students are unique and diverse; therefore instructional methods must be as well. Individual strategies are selected based upon what the data says about each child. A multi-sensory approach is used with students who are dyslexic or have other reading difficulties. A visualization strategy is used to assist students who have difficulty in creating pictures in their heads; this could apply to reading, spelling, or math. A computer-based program is incorporated for students who have attention deficits or executive functioning issues. A wide variety of visuals are used to assist English language learners in the acquisition of vocabulary. Computer-based programs are also incorporated to address reading fluency and comprehension. These are just a few of the many instructional methods used to meet the students' needs; as these needs change, so do the strategies.

The RtI process is perpetual. Student data is continually gathered and reviewed during the school year and summer. This data is organized and presented to the teachers during beginning-of-year staff development. Students are placed in Tier I, II, or III groups based on the intensity of interventions needed. The instructional specialist and teachers explore the needs of the Tier II and III students to determine the reason for the unexpected academic progress. The goal of RtI is not to re-teach a concept but to find an underlying problem which is interfering with learning; it might be a memory, attention, or processing issue. Once it has been determined, an intervention is implemented and progress monitored for a designated period of time. These interventions are accessed from a data base of well-researched academic interventions. If data proves that the intervention is working, it is continued until it is no longer needed. If it is not working, a new intervention is implemented. All Tier II and III students work in small groups or individually with certified teachers. Tier I students are facilitated by instructional aides and participate in enrichment activities during RtI.

Less-traditional strategies are also incorporated into the school day. One school-wide strategy is the implementation of morning yoga. Students are led through a pose daily; each has a purpose (to develop self-awareness, slow down, manage emotions, etc.). Research shows that anxious or stressed children find it impossible to learn. Therefore, daily yoga helps create a calm child who is ready to learn. Another non-traditional approach to meeting the needs of the Miles students is through the Motor Lab. This is a designated space equipped with a mini-trampoline, balance beam, rope, and other equipment. Each station addresses a specific behavior or sensory need. Hyperactive students are frequently sent to the lab to prepare their minds and body for the day.

Students are unique people with unique needs. At Miles Elementary, EVERY need is explored and is addressed.

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

Data drives all educational decisions at Miles Elementary. Therefore, assessments are ongoing, progress is monitored continuously, data is analyzed periodically, interventions are implemented, and individualized student plans are adjusted as needed to meet student needs.

Screeners and diagnostic tests are given to all students in grades PreK-6. A screener (Get Ready to Read) is used in PreK to determine if students have the early literacy skills needed to become readers. Students in grades k-3 are tested three times a year using a state-approved reading assessment (TPRI) to assess reading and listening comprehension. State assessments and local TEKS-based benchmarks are given in grades 3-6, which provide data for reading, math, science, and writing. In addition, other research-based assessments are given throughout the school year in grades 1-6 to determine grade equivalencies, fluency, and

comprehension in math and reading. These assessments are given multiple times a year and provide valuable data for tracking growth and improving instruction.

Additional evaluation data is collected and tracked for students in Tiers II and III using appropriate screeners that measure identified areas of concern (fluency, decoding, vocabulary, spelling, cognitive development, comprehension, thinking, TEKS performance, computation, etc.). This data is used by teachers and the interventionist to monitor student progress (or lack thereof) and make intervention decisions. This data is also shared with parents during conferences and committee meetings.

In addition to screening and intervention data, classroom data (including daily grades and benchmarks) is constantly monitored by teachers and used to improve Tier I instruction and/or individualize instruction for students. If concepts are not being mastered, instruction is adjusted or the delivery method is changed to ensure that students reach mastery. Local classroom data is primarily reported to parents through report cards and conferences.

Teachers also use state assessment data to guide instruction. Miles teachers use a software program to disaggregate data, identify strengths and weaknesses, and plan instruction. Each spring, teachers share and interpret state assessment data with individual students and parents during conferences and meetings (ARD, LPAC, 504). School-wide, general assessment results are shared with the school board and community through meetings, the internet, and the local media.

The Behavior and Educational Support Team (BEST) analyzes and monitors all student data on campus. Based upon data, the team creates and/or adjusts tier groups five times a year and gives teachers recommendations for interventions and tier delivery. The team members review all student progress six times per year and develop plans for students who display insufficient progress.

Miles Elementary continues to be a high-performing school because of the data tracking, which allows the staff to make informed decisions about instruction for each child and for the entire school.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Miles Elementary believes in providing an academically challenging and supportive environment. A positive, supportive, and safe environment must be established before students will begin to learn. This includes the facility itself, but it also centers around the relationships among the people involved in daily school life (students, staff, parents).

The Miles Elementary environment is conducive to learning; it is clean, orderly, and safe for children and staff. Within the safe confines and beyond, behavioral and academic standards are high. Teachers challenge students to excel behaviorally and academically while maintaining a very encouraging and supportive environment.

Engaging students is an integral part of educating them. Though several incentives are in place to encourage students to attend and perform well at school, most Miles Elementary students simply enjoy coming to school. Students and parents are welcomed upon arrival as students are helped out of their cars, as they ride up on their bikes, and as they enter the buildings. They are greeted by name by staff members, including the superintendent and principal each morning. This sense of belonging fulfills an emotional need of all students, and assures them that they are in a safe place where people care about them. This supportive tone is carried into the classroom where teachers model and teach important life skills, such as mutual respect, emotional well-being (identifying and dealing with emotions), and appropriate peer relations.

As relationships develop, social skills are refined. Students mature in social character as they interact with each other and adults throughout the school day. Since Miles Elementary is small, all of the students know the administrators, teachers, aides, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers and coaches by name. They are comfortable in asking questions, seeking help, or just conversing with them. All of these connections contribute to their social development and give them the security they need to be receptive to the learning environment.

Teachers also need to work in a safe and supportive environment. Though a challenge with the existing facility, teachers are taught how to keep the students and themselves safe in a crisis situation, and safeguards are in place for their protection. They are also tremendously supported by each other and by the administration. Administrators hire the most qualified people, trust them, and allow them to make instructional decisions. The master schedule provides the framework, but the scope and sequence as well as the implemented strategies are designed by the teachers. As result, they and their students excel. Rapport is good among staff members. Teachers are commonly seen eating together, celebrating together, walking in the afternoons, and car-pooling to after- school events.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Just as student engagement is important, so is that of families and community. Miles Elementary has implemented several strategies and incorporated several events to create a positive working environment among families, community and the school. Before families ever “officially” step on campus, they have informal interactions with many staff members and students through school or community events.

A parent’s first “official” interaction with the Miles school system is through Kindergarten Round Up. During this event, students are registered, and staff members share academic strategies with parents that will be beneficial in preparing their children for school and creating a smooth transition. Another annual school event is Open House. Parents and students are invited to meet the teachers, tour the classrooms, and drop off school supplies in a relaxed, informal environment. Other annual events include teacher/parent conferences, awards assemblies, and the Thanksgiving meal.

Miles Elementary also prides itself in creatively engaging parents in parent involvement nights. One academic and one health-related event are held each year. An example of an educational parent night

activity was Camp Cocoa. The evening began with a parent meeting (Title I and Reading). Then hot chocolate was served to parents and students as they moved from tent to tent, listened to stories read by flashlight, and took home story bits as keepsakes. In the spring, events are health-related. Students complete “healthy tasks” with their families and earn t-shirts for school-organized runs. One such event was the Jingle Bell Run. Students performed carols at the city park before the run. Then they and their families (dressed in Christmas attire) ran through the streets of Miles. The event concluded at the park where families and staff visited and enjoyed refreshments. These runs have been especially beneficial in educating students and parents about healthy lifestyles and have provided opportunities for family involvement.

The community of Miles is primarily composed of students and parents, but local businesses and organizations also contribute to the well-being of the students. Miles has a local 4-H and Boy Scouts chapter that are very active. In addition, students participate in community-organized events such as Little Dribblers and Little League, which exposes them to sports and competition. The Lion’s Club is also very supportive of the school and annually provides school supplies for students. Local businesses also sponsor events, such as the runs, and provide services to keep them safe. Finally, ultimate support of the school was demonstrated by the community when the voters approved a multi-million dollar bond for a new elementary school.

When students, families, and the community engage, students benefit. Each event, whether academic or not is beneficial in establishing connections and demonstrating to students that “school is important.”

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is very important in all professions – but especially in the field of education. Educators realize that the needs of the students are ever-changing, so there is a need to continue to learn, grow, and address these needs. At Miles Elementary, professional development priorities are determined by teachers and through the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) process.

Teachers are the most valuable resource in determining appropriate professional development, as they are closest to the students, and they see the needs first-hand in their classrooms. Throughout each school year, teachers are encouraged to seek professional development through the Region XV service center pertaining to their teaching assignments as well as explore topics of interest or individual needs through other means (webinars or conferences). However, since Miles is not in close proximity to large cities, conferences are not always feasible. Regardless of delivery method, individualized professional development allows teachers to target personal needs or identified student needs. In addition, at the end of each school year, teachers are asked to submit topics of interest for future professional development. These submissions are reviewed by the campus site-based committee, and local staff development is designed for the upcoming school year.

The other approach to addressing professional development is through the CNA process. Each spring, the members of the site-based committee are assigned components of the needs assessment to address. The components include the following: Demographics; Student Achievement; School Culture/Climate; Staff Quality, Recruitment and Retention; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Family and Community Involvement; School Organization; and Technology. Site-based members assemble committees to gather data and identify needs. Once the needs have been identified in each area, they are prioritized and presented to the site-based committee. This committee convenes to review the data and prioritize needs. This approach allows for an enormous amount of data to be condensed down to very specific needs of the campus. A plan is then developed to address the needs through professional development. Miles professional development has included such topics as poverty, computer-program implementation, TEKS tracking and implementation, RTI process, brain-based strategies, and data-driven decision making.

Professional development is an ongoing and life-long process for educators. Miles Elementary believes that in order for students to receive a high-quality education, the teachers must be current and flexible in approach to bring out the best in the students. This process of determining what professional development

will look like each year requires teacher input, teacher ownership, and a process such as a CNA to best identify the professional development needs of the campus.

4. School Leadership:

At Miles ISD, the administrative team consists of the superintendent and two campus principals. The philosophy of this team is very simple but very powerful. It provides clear direction for every decision that is made on each campus. "We are here for the kids."

Leadership in any organization sets the tone for the working environment. At Miles ISD, the administrative team believes in the power of positive relationships; this creates a positive climate. The administrators interact with students and staff in a very supportive manner, and all three believe in an open-door policy; staff members, students, and parents are always welcome. Administrators value family and allow staff members to attend their children's sporting/academic events, to be with aging parents, and to take care of personal business as needs arise. Administrators also take a personal interest in the lives of the employees and students and genuinely care about each individual.

The administrative team keeps abreast of current educational policies and laws through legal workshops and administrative conferences. Each school year, the principals update the student handbooks and code of conduct, review them with the school board, and seek approval. Since Miles is a small district, all three administrators are accessible and collaborate often regarding school matters. This ensures consistency and compliance among the grade levels and campuses.

In addition to the administrators, the special programs coordinator and the director of the special education cooperative help keep the district in compliance. They implement and closely monitor all special programs (ESL, Special Education, Gifted and Talented, Migrant, 504) and ensure compliance for each. They also complete and submit annual federal applications and compliance reports for the district. The principals, special programs coordinator, and the superintendent keep a steady eye on the federal expenditures ensuring that they are allowable for the specified programs. Budget meetings are held throughout the year to determine if the district is on track for spending federal funds as budgeted and plan future expenditures for additional monies as they come available.

Miles ISD uses local, state, and federal monies to fund the programs deemed most beneficial for the students of Miles. Administrators, teachers, and other staff members are constantly seeking research-based products/programs to enrich the curriculum. If a program looks promising, it is implemented on a small scale; if the data shows that it is improving student performance, it is implemented on a larger scale. When data speaks, money is found to implement the programs that are working. It is the experience of Miles Elementary that a few solid programs supplement sound teaching practices and improve student performance.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Miles Elementary, the focus is where it needs to be – on the whole child. Therefore, the one practice that makes Miles Elementary successful is the attentive eye that follows each and every student; all needs of every child are identified and addressed.

Research shows that children must have their basic needs met before they can reach their full potential. Since Miles Elementary is a small campus, it is possible to know every child and his/her basic, social, and emotional needs. Therefore, a variety of approaches and interventions are implemented each year. Students are greeted at the main entrance each morning by the principal and then by their teachers as they enter the classrooms; this provides a daily gauge of the emotional well-being of each child. Mentors also support students by checking in on them routinely, eating with them, and monitoring academic progress. The teachers, school nurse, local Lion’s Club, churches, and counselor ensure that all students have adequate food, clothes, glasses, blankets, and personal hygiene items. When these basic needs are met, students are ready to learn.

In addition to basic needs, students have many unique needs that are discovered as they move through the school system. Some have sensory, attention, memory, processing, hyperactivity, or other special needs. Teachers continually incorporate research-based activities to address these needs. They incorporate music, which can improve focus, mood, reading comprehension, etc. They also provide opportunities for movement, which is proven to improve behavior and academic performance. In addition, teachers lead students in research-based physical activities during “brain breaks” to re-engage the brain. They also incorporate a new program designed to exercise the brain. These exercises improve cognitive functioning in several areas including attention, response inhibition, processing, cognitive flexibility, and memory. Teachers also provide access to items such as wiggle seats, weighted vests, and t-stools for students with identified special needs. Children and their needs are unique; the staff at Miles Elementary is ready and willing to address each and every one.

Once basic and unique needs are met, it is feasible for students to reach their full academic potential. Hard data is gathered and monitored to track the academic achievement of each child. This data drives decisions about individual student plans, instruction, interventions, tutorials, etc. Overall data proves that the programs and practices being implemented at Miles Elementary are effective. Students are passing core classes at a rate of 96.7% to 99.5% (2013-2016) and are promoting at a rate of 97% to 97.8% (2012-2015). The attentive eye on the unique needs of each child is what makes Miles Elementary successful. At Miles Elementary, “It’s all about the kids.”