

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Mr. Eric Eric Rigsby
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 800 10th Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Jasper State AL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 35501-4175

County Walker County

Telephone (205) 384-6461 Fax (205) 387-5219

Web site/URL http://www.jasper.k12.al.us/3/Home E-mail erigsby@jasper.k12.al.us

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Ann Jackson E-mail ajackson@jasper.k12.al.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Jasper City School District Tel. (205) 384-6880

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

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

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

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

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

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, 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. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	51	29	80
1	40	47	87
2	39	47	86
3	41	43	84
4	35	42	77
5	33	47	80
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	239	255	494

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 87 % White
 - 1 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 5%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	27
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	503
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.054
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
11 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Gujarati, Urdu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %
Total number students who qualify: 202

8. Students receiving special education services: 23 %
115 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.

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

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	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 21:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	95%	95%
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 2016.

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.

Inspire students to achieve academic excellence and make positive contributions to our interconnected community and world.

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

Memorial Park School (MPS) is located in the quiet, rural town of Jasper, Alabama. MPS is one of three elementary schools in the Jasper City School System, and we serve students in kindergarten through fifth grade. We are located adjacent to a forty-acre park in a residential section of our community. We have a rich history of student success, family involvement and school pride. Our diverse population embodies a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures which enriches the school learning environment.

Our school opened in 1951 and has evolved over the years to serve our community. Recently, economic shifts in our area, such as the loss of the coal mining industry, have changed the dynamics of our population. In 2001, the total enrollment of MPS was 443 students with nine percent of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. By 2016, our total enrollment slightly increased to 499 students. However, the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch has risen to 40 percent. Maintaining high student achievement during difficult economic times is a source of pride for our stakeholders. Our success is a direct result of commitment, determination and willingness to rise above all expectations.

MPS celebrates our many years of significant milestones. We have consistently taken on new challenges by being at the forefront of implementing new programs such as the Alabama Reading Initiative and Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI). In addition to a strong academic focus, we have emphasized character education and leadership opportunities by becoming a Leader in Me School. This program has permeated our daily school environment and has created an increase in student leadership and citizenship. We have also received recognition from the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools as a Banner School. This honor exemplifies our dedication to the highest standards of excellence.

MPS has a community of learners in which teachers, students and parents are willing to try new and varied ways to pursue knowledge and acquire skills. Individuals and committees continually explore research-based approaches to teaching. This research has produced the successful incorporation of such programs as AMSTI, enVision Math, Wonders Reading, Accelerated Reader, Leader In Me, Intel project-based learning, Alabama College and Career Ready Standards (CCRS), and an array of technology initiatives. Progress monitoring takes place on a daily basis using a variety of tools to access and enrich student performance. We use the following to assess learning: ASPIRE Data, ASPIRE Interim Data, JCS Benchmark Assessments, DIBELS, AIMSweb, enVision Unit tests, and McGraw-Hill Unit Reading Assessments.

MPS meets individual needs in a variety of ways. An array of resources, special education and reading intervention services are available to students who need extra support. Students are identified and monitored through our Problem Solving Team (PST), AIMSweb, DIBELS progress monitoring and enVision assessments. Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular programs in order to promote a broader sense of belonging. Service and leadership opportunities are enhanced through participation in the following: Safety Patrol, flag duty, kindergarten escorts, library helpers, WMPS news anchors and school greeters. Art, music, Cheernastics and 21st Century after-school programs are also offered. School clubs include: National Elementary Honor Society, Student Council, K-Kids, Chess Club, Technology Competition Team and Bringing Up Grades (BUG) Club. Students are encouraged to donate nonperishable food items at Thanksgiving and toys at Christmas to share with our families in need. Students also volunteer their time to serve as bell ringers for the Salvation Army at Christmas. Parents provide tremendous support for our teachers and students. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) provides bi-monthly duty-free breakfast and lunch for the faculty, donates instructional materials and supply money for teachers to begin the school year, pays the leases on copy machines and hosts a teacher appreciation luncheon each spring. PTO provides additional funds and resources to the school as needed. Parents volunteer on a regular basis to read to students and assist with other school activities. During the 2012-2013 school year, the district implemented a 1:1 technology initiative. Elementary students continue to receive an iPad, and students in grades 6-12 continue to receive laptops. This focus reinforces our mission of providing our students with 21st Century skills in order to be successful learners and productive citizens. We are proud of our students and the volume of books they read each year. During the 2015-2016 school year, our students read over 190,000 books! We believe this is a major factor in our student achievement.

Working together as a team to meet the needs of all students is the cornerstone of our success and the driving force for continued growth. It is our firm belief that we possess the attributes worthy of Blue Ribbon School status.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At Memorial Park School (MPS), we believe high expectations promote superior achievement. Research-based standards drive our curriculum which results in high student achievement. Students are actively engaged and use technology on a daily basis to master the curriculum. Our foundation is placed on the rigorous Alabama College and Career Ready Standards (CCRS). We also use district-wide pacing for scope and sequence at each grade level in language arts and math. Student learning goals are vertically aligned within the school. Instructional strategies include whole group, small group, hands-on, differentiated instruction, partner learning and cooperative learning.

In reading and language arts, teachers employ the McGraw-Hill Wonders reading program. This program has a spiral curriculum which introduces key concepts at a young age and covers these repeatedly with increasing degrees of complexity. It allows for differentiated instruction at all grade levels. All language arts components are integrated into this reading program. We employ small groups, turn and talk, partner talk, literature partners and circles and mini-lessons for skills. Volunteers from the community read and work with the children to develop comprehension skills. The Accelerated Reader program supports student success in comprehension within their individual reading range of proximal development. It also motivates students to reach higher independent reading goals. Library checkout is available daily. A reading intervention teacher is available to work with students daily who need help in specific areas of reading components such as comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, phonics, phonemic awareness and fluency.

The curriculum basis for math is Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI) Investigations and Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley enVision math. Manipulatives are used daily. Teachers add to the programs as needed in order to effectively teach the math standards. Teachers employ peer partners, number talks, math games and other activities in order for the students to be able to visualize and understand what numbers represent and to aid in acquiring number sense. The On-Going Assessment Program (OGAP) is used in our mathematics program especially in the instruction of fractions. The eight Standards for Mathematical Practice are focused on through the use of math manipulatives, solving of real world problems and other strategies.

MPS uses AMSTI science kits for the basis of the science program. The foundational belief of AMSTI is that students learn math and science best by doing math and science, especially when it relates to their daily lives. The investigation-based kits are aligned to the CCRS standards and shipped to the school throughout the year. Through the hands-on approach, the children build and test hypotheses and learn to use the scientific method.

Social studies curriculum is based upon CCRS standards. Teachers use expository texts and functional reading texts to meet the required standards. Periodicals such as Scholastic News are used to meet standards and teach current events. The importance of social studies and civic duties are evident by our participation in the Leader in Me program. Leader in Me principles are employed in our school daily. A student-led Leadership Day showcases students' leadership abilities for the community. Students give presentations, vocal performances, act as host/hostesses and tour guides. The students also share details about the school's clubs, organizations and data notebooks. We also have a student-led Diversity Day program which features a variety of cultures represented at our school. For example, one student whose parents were born in India, modeled her sari and shared an essay describing the different types of Indian female clothing.

Some of the civic learning strategies include field trips such as the fourth grade's annual visit to the State Capitol in Montgomery. The Montgomery field trip has a component of civil rights history and government learning. The students visit the Governor's Mansion, State House and Civil Rights Memorial. Civic learning is also focused upon in our National Elementary Honor Society. This group has partnered with North Highlands School for students with severe handicaps. Twice a month they aid these students in mastering their standards and building relationships. In addition, our Student Council meets once a month after school to help make decisions related to the school. Another way we promote civic duties is our television show

(WMPS) each morning. Last year, we had a second grade student who was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. Our school showed support by wearing pink every Tuesday, which was her chemotherapy day. We had a pink parade to encourage and support her while she couldn't attend school due to her cancer treatments.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

MPS is committed to providing enrichment and resource opportunities to all students which will enhance their talents, essential skills and knowledge. All students receive weekly instruction in the following areas: visual arts, music, computer technology, guidance counseling and library. All students participate daily in physical education classes. Our resource teachers strive to help create well-rounded individuals.

Our visual arts classroom provides weekly hands-on activities correlated with state and national standards. Student instruction is based on core art skills which embed cognitive, psycho-motor and effective learning goals. They learn a variety of art techniques and have opportunities for creativity and self-expression in the classroom and the art lab. Students explore various mediums including collage, painting, mixed-media and printmaking. Students' art work is showcased throughout the entire school as well as community displays. Recently, our PTO provided funds for a school-wide leadership project to transform the lunchroom into a kid-friendly "walk in the park" mural. We feel this project has contributed to cleaner and quieter lunch periods.

Our music classroom fully engages students through music history and theory, singing, dancing and playing instruments. The program embraces cultural diversity and integrates all curricula. Performances provide students with an opportunity to gain self-esteem, increase oral communication skills and improve teamwork abilities. Each November, multiple grade levels perform in our annual Veteran's Day program. After school classes are offered to fourth and fifth graders for choral instruction. They perform for our school and community in Christmas and spring programs. Each spring, ten MPS students are selected to attend an invitation only performance. They attend workshops to perform in the statewide elementary choir.

Computer technology is integrated daily to create 21st Century learners. It is also embedded in every classroom. Our school participates in the 1:1 iPad Initiative. All students have their own iPad. SMART-boards and digital projectors are used to deliver instruction in each classroom. Students learn keyboarding skills, internet safety and how to research in the computer lab. Direct instruction provides students with opportunities to develop technology literacy. We are currently piloting a statewide program, STRIDE Academy, which scaffolds the curriculum to support individual student needs.

Weekly guidance classes enhance study skills and support academic, social and career development. Our counselor provides support to MPS families in crisis. She unites our campus during Red Ribbon Week to support a safe and drug-free environment. She teaches a school-wide safety unit and works with our fifth graders to develop a career portfolio. She also works to strengthen each student's test taking skills.

Our school library serves as the hub of the school culture providing a bridge between school-based learning and independent, lifelong learning. The lessons prepare students for an informational society. Our library's 13,000 book collection reflects students' interests as well as state academic standards. Our library has a set class schedule as well as flex time for daily checkout. Listening and reading standards are addressed at each grade level. The library media specialist works with classroom teachers to diagnose individual reading levels that guide appropriate selection of books. Educational resources are also available for teachers.

Our physical education classes instill the value of teamwork, sportsmanship and lifelong physical activity in daily classes. The physical education coach also provides differentiated instruction through the use of technology. Students participate in a multitude of fitness, movement, health and sports specific skills. Our 2nd - 5th graders train year round to participate in the kids' Mercedes Marathon and local 5K fun runs. Heart health awareness is promoted through the Jump Rope for Heart Program. Classroom learning is strengthened through improved brain function as a result of our physical education classes.

As an extension to the curriculum and resource classes, multiple grades are encouraged to join after school clubs and activities such as Cheernastics Team, Chess Club, Safety Patrol, Technology Team and K-Kids.

We strive to prepare students for opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Our main focus is to produce citizens that will drive innovation and lead change.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

It is the belief of the faculty and staff of MPS that all students can learn. Therefore, we hold our students to high academic standards. Our teachers use a variety of data to set school-wide improvement goals and help students set individual learning goals. Students write academic goals and record personal data in their data notebooks. This allows them to track their progress. This practice helps students take ownership of their learning. Teachers meet with students one-on-one throughout the school year to review goals and progress. Parents are invited to come to the school for student-led conferences in which students share their goals, recorded data and progress.

Instructional strategies at MPS are data driven and research-based. This allows teachers to develop effective lesson plans during weekly grade level and data meetings. Cross-grade level meetings also occur periodically throughout the school year to ensure students are being prepared for their next grade level. Differentiated instruction is used in order to address the different learning styles and levels of the students. A variety of instructional methods are used which include modeling, whole group, small group and individualized lessons. Students are actively engaged and are encouraged to participate in many ways such as turn and talk, pair-share, games, write a response, etc. Hands-on project-based learning is especially visible during AMSTI lessons. Technology is integrated throughout the day.

Our teachers strive to meet the needs of all students. The Problem Solving Team (PST) includes grade level representatives, special education teacher, instructional partner, the guidance counselor and principal. This team meets at least twice a month to review the progress of students that are being monitored. They make recommendations to the classroom teacher for specific interventions for each student. Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction is provided by the classroom teacher. Tier 3 instruction is provided by an interventionist. A computer based program is used to monitor the progress of our growing English Learner (EL) population. These students spend thirty minutes daily in the computer lab. They begin with "English in a Flash" to work on vocabulary skills and move to "Essential Skills" once mastery is reached. We also have EL support staff that are contracted to work with these students twenty hours per week. EL students are monitored by the state using the ACCESS test. Differentiation is also addressed through our challenge class, a weekly pull-out program for gifted third, fourth and fifth grade students. The purpose of this program is to enrich and expand the existing classroom curriculum.

MPS teachers adjust instructional strategies and interventions based on data from multiple types of student assessments. This allows teachers to address individual learning needs. Formative assessments allow teachers to give immediate feedback and make adjustments to lessons to better meet the needs of students. Each grading period, all students are assessed using the McGraw-Hill Wonders Reading Unit Test and the two part Jasper City Schools' common math assessments. Part one of the common math assessment tests the math standards, and part two tests the basic facts for each grade level. The results of the assessments are graphed by grade level on a bulletin board to show progress toward our school goals. STRIDE Academy is a web-based program used school-wide that monitors students' progress in varied subjects. MPS is currently using the program to focus on reading. Our school's local indicator is to raise our STRIDE performance two percentage points compared to last year's score. The Star Reading Test is also taken by first through fifth grade students each nine weeks. This computer program shows students' reading proficiency. DIBELS is administered only to our kindergarten, first and second grade students three times per year to measure growth in reading fluency and comprehension. Students who do not reach benchmark receive progress monitoring from the classroom teacher. Third, fourth and fifth grade students are also assessed using the Star Math program each nine weeks and the ACT ASPIRE Interim three times per year. This test monitors progress in English, reading, math and science. Teachers analyze the results from the ACT ASPIRE Interim to aide in preparing students for the actual ACT ASPIRE.

To help encourage and maintain high levels of achievement, students are recognized in many ways throughout the school year. The names of students that achieve the A and A/B Honor Roll are printed in the local newspaper and announced on our daily television show. Students that improve report card grades or

maintain all A's are recognized each nine weeks through the local Kiwanis sponsored Bringing Up Grades (BUG) Club. A pep rally is also held before the ACT ASPIRE to encourage students to do their best on the test.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Memorial Park School (MPS) is an exciting and wonderful place to spend the day. From the moment a visitor enters the doors of the school, it is evident that students are engaged and motivated to be the best version of themselves. There are banners of past awards, leadership quotes, and highlighted student accomplishments. Framed photographs of The Principal's Choice Award Winners, which highlight students that exhibit outstanding character and leadership, are displayed. Student of the Month photographs are prominently visible in the hallways. These pictures highlight students with high academic success. Reader Leaders are spotlighted on the hallway outside the library, and the school-wide reading goal is displayed on the School Scoreboard that tracks grade level data for Unit Reading tests. Successes and encouragement are found throughout the building in the form of highlighted accomplishments and also in the smiles and encouraging words of the entire MPS staff.

All members of the MPS staff believe that the first mission of our school is to ensure that all students feel loved, valued and safe. This belief is evident in the kindness that can be found throughout the entire school where everyone is pulling for each other. Students cheer for each other during the ACT Aspire pep rallies and provide constant encouragement for each other when striving to achieve their personal and academic goals. Teachers and other staff members take a genuine interest in each individual student that comes through the doors. The MPS community is constantly supporting the academic, social and emotional growth of our students. The staff truly believes that Theodore Roosevelt was correct in saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." The faculty and staff recently participated in a book study of "A Framework for Understanding Poverty" by Ruby K. Payne. This was done in an effort to have a better understanding of students in those situations and how best to communicate effectively with those students and parents.

The overall atmosphere of MPS is that of a positive place to learn and to work. Teachers are valued and supported by the principal, as well as the Jasper City Board of Education. It is very common for most every teacher in the building to arrive early, stay late and work whenever is needed to contribute to the success of students. This is not done out of obligation, but out of genuine love and pride for our school. This type of high teacher morale has developed as a result of an atmosphere where teachers' opinions are important. Teachers are consulted when decisions need to be made. The expertise and years of experience of seasoned teachers as well as the new strategies and ideas from the next generation of excited young educators are both viewed as integral parts of the decision-making process. True collaboration takes place due to the fact that teachers feel valued, supported and free to have a voice.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

MPS teachers and staff strongly encourage parental and community involvement in the education process of our students. We believe their support is of the utmost importance for the success of our students. There are many means of communication used to keep families and community members informed about the activities of MPS. Social media is utilized as an extensive source of information for students, parents and the community. MPS maintains a current website, Facebook page and a Twitter account. Our school marquee displays upcoming events and student/faculty recognition. Remind is used by teachers to communicate reminders for assessments, field trips, club meetings, etc. Weekly newsletters are sent home by each classroom teacher with assignments and announcements. The PTO publishes a monthly calendar of events as well as a school newspaper each grading period. Our principal makes announcements with our district-wide SchoolCast software. Chalkable, a web-based program, enables parents to access their child's current grades. Quarterly progress reports and report cards are also sent home to keep parents informed of their child's academic achievements. Student-led conferences are scheduled each fall and spring to engage families in their child's learning process.

MPS partners with many local clubs and organizations to meet the needs of our students. The Jasper Rotary Club members read with students throughout the year. The Jasper Kiwanis Club sponsors our K-Kids, a

service club for fourth and fifth graders. Their service projects include Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF, Operation Christmas Child, ringing the bell at Christmas for the Salvation Army, making Christmas cards for residents of local assisted living facilities, fund raising for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, as well as cleanup projects around our school and local park. Our school partners with the non-profit organization, Backyard Blessings, to provide food for students in need for the weekends. MPS staff and local community members work together to provide "Santa" for many MPS families.

Our school and community are connected through many annual activities. Our PTO sponsors a carnival style Fall Festival. The Student Council hosts two community dances, Neon Nights and a Sock Hop. A luncheon in honor of retired faculty and staff members takes place each spring. Lunch is served by our Student Council members and the retirees visit classrooms. Families are invited to participate in the Book Fair Family Night, Grandparents' Day festivities, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations, Muffins for Moms and many other special traditions. It is the goal of MPS to create a welcoming climate where parents and community members feel valued as a part of our school family.

3. Professional Development:

MPS approaches professional development with an intentional plan to continually improve the quality of instruction provided to our students. This professional development plan serves as a way to stay up to date on current best practices to meet the needs of all students and to challenge ourselves to delve deeper in the art of teaching. All certified faculty are expected to routinely take part in planning and goal-setting activities focusing on school and personal growth.

Our school system provides different forms of professional development at different times throughout the year, including summer training, as well as days throughout the school year that are built into the calendar. Recently, we have added one day each quarter in which students arrive at 11:00 to begin their day. These morning hours have been utilized to facilitate professional learning and collaboration of faculty and staff.

Faculty members are also encouraged to seek out differentiated forms of professional development of their own interests in addition to the required training provided. Teachers are encouraged to participate in different forms of professional development, such as ongoing learning through technology, peer observations, mentoring programs, book studies, workshops, action research, and participation in conferences and/or conventions. Teachers routinely receive training from Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) that includes hands-on activities that teachers can use immediately in the classroom. The most recent training from AMSTI was specifically designed to align with new Common Core Science Standards for our state. All of our teachers were trained in the summer of 2016.

In addition to training on best instructional practices, our school also utilizes professional development hours to increase our faculty's knowledge and understanding of relevant topics such as generational poverty and overcoming economic class barriers. These topics are addressed in an effort to gain a better understanding of ways to successfully raise student achievement across all economic classes.

In addition to the required twenty-five hours per year of professional development, all certified faculty must complete a self-assessment that guides the formation of a personalized Professional Learning Plan. This plan is created to emphasize at least two goals that contribute to school and personal growth. These plans are revisited throughout the school year as teachers and administrators add evidence of progress and ensure that these goals are kept in the forefront of our minds to help us strive for instructional excellence.

As a result of the various professional development activities, our staff has developed a culture of high expectations and a common mission to meet the needs of each individual learner in our care. Teachers are given opportunities to take part in learning from experts in the field, as well as create their own learning aligned with our school and district's goals. These goals include our constant motivation of ensuring that each child is moving on a path of learning toward mastery of grade-level standards and beyond.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at Memorial Park Elementary is a collaborative effort between the district administration, principal, instructional partner, teachers, support staff and students. We believe that each stakeholder plays a vital role in the continued success of our students. Through each stakeholder's commitment and expertise in the learning process, students have ultimately reaped the benefits of the resources and programs that have been strategically implemented over time.

The principal, instructional partner and school leadership team have always taken an open door policy approach. It is our belief that stakeholders should be invested in the educational process and always have their opinions heard. One way this is accomplished is through communication. Teachers plan weekly during grade level meetings with the instructional partner and the principal. This allows frequent communication to address grade level and individual student needs. Leaders at MPS feel that this is vital to the continued success of our students. Through these meetings, teachers are always abreast of current school data that can then be translated into student data notebooks. This process also allows the principal to be aware of current needs throughout the school building.

Several years ago, the administration at MPS made the decision to implement the Leader in Me program. As this program has evolved, one phase that has recently been implemented is student data notebooks. As our faculty and students have grown in this process, we have begun to see the benefits of students taking responsibility for their own learning. Through the Leader in Me and Ron Berger's book "Leaders of Their Own Learning", the MPS faculty and staff have been able to implement student-led conferences. As these conferences have grown, parents have begun to see the benefits of students managing their own data and writing academic and personal goals for themselves. In the past three years, MPS has experienced dramatic growth in our academic test scores. We truly believe this is a direct result of students understanding their own learning process and taking the responsibility to monitor their own growth.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Dr. Joyce Epstein with John Hopkins University states, "If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development." At Memorial Park Elementary (MPS), we embrace the idea of viewing our students as children. It has always been our opinion that it is harder for students to have a true educational experience without the connection between the home and school. With this in mind, MPS places parent involvement in the school as one of our highest priorities. We know that students are the center of what we do, and we try our best to view the needs of the whole child as we work collaboratively to educate our students.

One way that MPS makes this connection with our families is through our PTO. This organization is intentional about reaching out to our families to bring them into our school and the learning process. The MPS PTO participates in events such as the new academic year orientation. At this event, our PTO introduces each member and invites all parents to attend meetings, participate in events and lend themselves to aid the classroom teachers throughout the year. The PTO also prepares a parent volunteer form that goes home at the beginning of the year. This form along with our new parent orientation, allows all parents to sign up to serve wherever they may have an area of expertise. By using this format, our PTO can reach a multitude of parents to serve students with various needs. Additionally, the PTO prepares a monthly calendar that is sent home with each student. This calendar along with the PTO's Facebook page, helps to keep parents aware of any upcoming events in which they can serve at the school.

In addition to our PTO, one event that brings parents into the learning process and has made an enormous impact on student learning is our student-led conferences. As our faculty studied Ron Berger's book "Leaders of Their Own Learning" and incorporated aspects of the Leader in Me, we were able to invite parents to become a stronger part of the learning community through student-led conferences. In October, teachers assist each student in conducting a student-led conference with their parent or guardian. This practice has been powerful as parents see that students have taken charge of their own learning and established goals to address their individual academic needs. As parents see that teachers and students are working in conjunction with each other, parents inevitably want to become part of the educational team.