

U.S. Department of Education
2018 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 Mrs. Jessica McCrary

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

Official School Name Arab Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 241 8th Avenue NE

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

Arab City AL State 35016-1006 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Marshall County

Telephone (256) 586-6085

Fax (256) 931-0427

Web site/URL http://aes.arabcityschools.org/

E-mail jmccrary@arabcityschools.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*Mr. John Mullins
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail jmullins@arabcityschools.org

District Name Arab City Tel. (256) 586-6011

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. Wayne Trimble
(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. 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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	125	79	204
4	96	112	208
5	97	99	196
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	318	290	608

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 94 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 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, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	25
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	608
(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. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
6 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44%
Total number students who qualify: 268

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
72 Total number of students served

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>10</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>34</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a 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.	15

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Invest in others. Serve our community. Seek growth. Shape the future.

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

4:30 AM. Teachers begin to rouse, eager to start the new day. Some begin with exercise, some begin with coffee, others begin with a spiritual focus.

5:45 AM. School bus drivers complete pre-trip inspections and bus engines roar to life.

6:00 AM. A custodian wakes the building for the day and shines restrooms, water fountains, and floors during the pre-student hour. A cafeteria employee unlocks the kitchen door and begins preparing breakfast.

6:45 AM. Faculty members arrive early to review plans for the day and get their minds set for the more than six hundred boys and girls who are eager to learn.

6:55 AM. The front doors are unlocked, and that is when the magic begins. Students are enthusiastically greeted with smiles, high fives, hugs, compliments of haircuts, and the occasional goofy sign or dance. Listen closely and you will hear the exuberance in students' voices as dawn breaks on another day of adventure.

Upon entering the doors of AES students are met by a cornerstone bearing a bronze relief image of a beloved and revered former principal whose vision for the school transformed the conventional institution of learning into an engaging, kid-friendly environment. The oldest campus in the district was revitalized with vibrantly decorated walls that pay tribute to the community heritage, capture the spirit of adventure, and spark imagination and wonder. Throughout the building floor-to-ceiling murals are enhanced by three dimensional museums, art galleries, and building edifices that extend into the halls due to the generosity of local donors and volunteers. The impressive and eye catching walls offer only a glimpse into and reflect only a portion of the spirit of the school. The heartbeat of the school is a compelling culture in which the best interests of students guide every decision, students and teachers are family, and student learning comes first. Another thing that sets AES apart is our family partnership. We have a unique relationship with the families of our students. They are encouraged to be engaged in all aspects of their students' educational experiences.

Arab is a small city perched atop Brindlee Mountain in the northeast corner of Alabama with a population of approximately 8,300. Many members of the workforce in Huntsville choose to make the twenty-five mile drive to call Arab home because of the close-knit, family-friendly community. This bond is evidenced by the partnership and participation among families, community, and the Arab school system.

While there is little ethnic diversity, there is considerable socio-economic diversity. In the past ten years, the number of our students living in poverty has more than doubled. In 2008, less than 20% of our student population was identified as living in poverty. Currently, 44% of our student population are identified as living in poverty based on the free and reduced lunch program guidelines. Even though attendance is typically lower in schools with a higher poverty rate, we are proud of our 97% average daily attendance. We believe that this achievement is due to the family and community partnership with the school even though that is not empirically measurable. Although the poverty level has continued to rise, our students have maintained academic excellence and have achieved stellar growth in many areas.

Arab Elementary School is one of four schools that comprise the Arab City Schools district. Arab Elementary School serves students in grades 3-5 and currently has a total enrollment of 608 students, 1 principal, 1 assistant principal, 2 academic coaches, 1 counselor, 47 certified teachers, 1 full time school resource officer, and 20 support personnel not including bus drivers that we share with the other three schools in our system. Classroom teachers use the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards to engage students in authentic, hands-on learning. Teachers differentiate instruction based on data in order to meet individual student needs. We employ whole group and small group instruction, enrichment, intervention, academic competitions, student engagement strategies, and extracurricular opportunities. This intentionality provides a fertile environment for student growth and achievement.

The faculty and staff of Arab Elementary School are committed to the success of all students through a strong network of support from classroom teachers, administrators, and instructional support personnel to equip every child to graduate being prepared for college, career, and productive citizenship in the 21st century.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Arab Elementary School's (AES) curriculum is aligned with the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards (ALCCRS). It provides every student with opportunities for high order thinking and application of skills through authentic practice. Each grade level content area has long-range plans that delineate the curriculum for the year. Teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches partner in weekly collaborative planning sessions to develop plans and to make adjustments according to student data. The math department teachers and coach incorporate Number Talks, math tasks, and math stations daily. They use the On Going Assessment Project (OGAP) frameworks to determine where each student is and which strategy to push next. The science department teachers use Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) kits to provide hands on, investigative learning experiences. Social Studies is embedded in the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. The ELA teachers and coach integrate reading foundations, reading literature, reading informational text, speaking and listening, language, and writing standards using Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) strategies. ELA teachers and the coach plan strategic lessons for whole group instruction, small group instruction, intervention lessons and stations each week. ELA teachers also use lessons and strategies from Laying the Foundation (LTF) modules. Literacy standards are incorporated into social studies and science lessons through reading, investigation, and writing. Social Studies teachers use a variety of resources including but not limited to LTF module lessons, textbooks, Liberty's Legacy Super Citizen Program materials, and primary sources.

The core reading curriculum is based on the ALCCRS standards for ELA. The curriculum includes high interest, authentic texts to help students develop a love of reading and increase reading fluency and comprehension. It balances reading literature and informational texts. It provides students with opportunities to interact, analyze, and evaluate texts, as well as use evidence to defend and justify their answers. The curriculum encourages rich student conversation and writing and consists of the five essential components of reading. ELA teachers use a variety of strategies during whole group instruction, small group instruction, literacy stations, and Tier II intervention. ELA teachers use LTF lessons, novel studies, ARI strategies and best practices, Content Literacy strategies, multisensory strategies, differentiated instruction, etc. to ensure mastery of the standards. The core curriculum also includes the Reading Street scope and sequence for phonics.

The core math curriculum at AES is based on the ALCCRS Math standards and the eight mathematical practice standards designed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). It is aligned from grades 3-5 and is challenging. Math teachers develop lessons based on conceptual understanding to ensure that foundational skills build from year to year. They promote the eight mathematical practice standards to develop students' ability to make sense of the problem and persevere in solving it, reason abstractly and quantitatively, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others, model with mathematics, use appropriate tools strategically, attend to precision, look for and make use of structure, and look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning. The math teachers collaboratively develop Number Talks and number tasks to promote number sense. Math teachers use AMSTI strategies and the OGAP frameworks to build conceptual knowledge and use hands-on manipulatives to ensure mastery. Students are provided opportunities for whole group and small group instruction as well as interventions and math stations for additional practice.

The science curriculum at AES is based on the ALCCRS standards for Science and the five E model of instruction. Science teachers provide opportunities for students to Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate during the investigation activities using the five E model of instruction. Students investigate topics such as weather and climate, simple machines, habitats, forces and motion, and ecosystems. Science teachers at each grade level implement AMSTI strategies and hands-on science investigation activities using the AMSTI kits.

The core social studies curriculum at AES implements the ALCCRS Social Studies Standards with the goal of actively involving students and promoting responsible citizenship. Social Studies teachers use units of

study that include geographic and historical studies in third grade, Alabama studies in fourth grade, and United States studies in fifth grade. The curriculum includes participation in the Liberty's Legacy Super Citizen Program as well as analyzing, critiquing, and evaluating data and building knowledge for developing student perspective.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arab Elementary School (AES) has several programs that support core curriculum programs in order to enhance student learning. The elementary arts curriculum includes the disciplines of music, theatre, and visual arts. In order to provide instruction in these disciplines and in other curriculum areas, AES has a music teacher, a computer teacher, an art teacher, and three physical education teachers. These programs and teachers afford students the opportunity to learn and experiment with different types of media, participate in musical productions, demonstrate appropriate audience behavior, produce music by moving, playing instruments, and develop basic fundamentals of music understanding, etc.

The goal of the music program at AES is to instill a love of music and create interest while providing students with hands-on experiences. The music teacher uses the Alabama Course of Study for Arts Education to plan lessons while making every effort to integrate music skills with general education curriculum programs when applicable. Students attend music class once a week for thirty minutes. The music classes focus on discovering beats, rhythms, patterns in music, reading music, and learning to use music vocabulary correctly. Students in third grade use the musical "Jukebox Time Machine" to incorporate their knowledge of music notes, tempo, pitch, choreography, and articulation as they prepare to perform for the student body and the community. Students in fourth grade learn to read more complex rhythms and how to demonstrate appropriate audience behavior during their yearly field trip to a spring performance by the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra. Fifth grade students perform during the D.A.R.E. program, Liberty's Legacy program, and the Veteran's Day program. AES students also have the option to participate in the youth ensembles for the Arab High School Musical Theatre productions.

Technology at AES supports and enhances the core curriculum programs. Students enjoy time each week in the computer lab learning keyboarding skills and using online educational programs for reinforcement. Students also learn to use technology to research topics and to use creative expression to demonstrate understanding. Third graders research topics such as the prairie grasslands, the Iditarod, simple machines, and biographies to coincide with their units of study in the classroom. Fourth graders research endangered animals, Greek mythology, and Alabama landmarks. Fifth graders research early explorers and Native Americans. Students in grades three through five use technological equipment and learn to obtain information from primary sources. They select tools that best communicate the new information and develop projects to share that information.

The PE program at AES is designed to promote healthy choices and active living. Students have daily PE classes. PE teachers plan engaging activities that provide a wide range of activities for students. During those activities, students learn to cooperate with others and follow established rules. Students also have the opportunity to participate in Jump Rope for Heart and Hoops for Heart programs which teach students heart healthy facts and choices. The PE teachers plan units of study for archery, team sports, tennis, cardio health, and jump rope. Students participate in the 50 Mile Club and earn "toe tokens" as a reward for every five miles completed. Students are also encouraged to run outside of the school day and are awarded "toe tokens" for up to five of those miles. The AES PE department also has an archery team that participates in local, state, and national tournaments. Every student is given the opportunity to try out for a spot on the team at the end of the archery unit. In addition, AES PE department teachers plan for and implement "Take Your Parent to PE" day. Parents are encouraged to attend PE class with their student to promote the department and its goals for the students to live a healthy lifestyle.

The goal of the art department is to provide students with art fundamentals through self-expression. Students work to develop fine motor skills and actively explore artistic processes. The art teacher meets with students quarterly. Students are involved in creating projects and learning about different mediums. Student artwork is entered into local art contests such as Mountain Valley Arts Council (MVAC) Christmas Card contest, MVAC INSPIRE art contest, People Against a Littered State poster contest,

Huntsville Symphony Orchestra Young People's Concert Cover Art contest, and College Counts Smart Art contest. AES students have won awards and have been recognized multiple times over the past few years for their accomplishments.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Arab Elementary School (AES) brings into practice a range of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of all of our students and to achieve instructional goals. Our first priority at AES is to create a risk-free, safe learning environment and a fair classroom culture that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all. In an effort to create this culture, clear and consistent procedures such as school wide behavior expectations, classroom routines and procedures, and the development of respectful relationships between teachers and students and teachers and parents are of significant importance.

Arab Elementary School (AES) is committed to meeting the needs of all learners. We utilize a multi-tiered instructional framework as well as use a variety of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments to meet those needs. Tier I instruction targets all students in the classroom with high-quality, evidence-based, and engaging learning experiences. Strategies include whole group and small group, scaffolding, Number Talks, formative assessment, self-reporting, and authentic learning experiences. Tier II instruction targets those students who do not demonstrate proficiency in Tier I content. Tier II instruction is provided daily in small groups by classroom teachers. Teachers respond to students' needs as evidenced by formative assessment data as well as benchmark data. Teachers triangulate the data and develop intervention strategies for each student. Tier III interventions are structured for students who have not shown mastery despite Tier I or II instruction and interventions. These interventions are provided by a teacher who is specifically trained in the area of weakness. Title I services are provided for students who have not yet been responsive to Tiers I, II, and III instruction. The Title I program utilizes a multi-sensory approach for intervention. Classroom teachers also target students who demonstrate proficiency by providing challenging practice that reaches beyond the standard.

Our school's master schedule is designed to afford the opportunity for teachers and instructional coaches to meet weekly to plan collaboratively. Planning purposeful lessons that include strong student friendly outcomes (SFOs) that are directly connected to the standards and formative assessments that measure the SFO is the focus of these meetings. The formative assessments are then used to guide instruction. To meet the needs of all learners, AES teachers intentionally plan lessons using student engagement strategies presented by the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) and Laying the Foundation (LTF) during reading instruction and other content areas to reinforce vocabulary and comprehension. Teachers include engagement strategies presented by Alabama Math, Science, and Technology (AMSTI) during math and science and The OnGoing Assessment Project (OGAP). A few of strategies employed are the use of manipulatives, turn and talk, jigsaw, project based learning situations, graphic organizers, chunking the text, and technology.

Common assessments are used in all subject areas across grade levels. Teachers collaborate to create these common assessments based on the Alabama College and Career Readiness Standards (ALCCRS). Teachers plan whole group, small group, and/or individual instruction to meet the needs of all students. These assessments are reviewed to ensure that expectations and requirements continue to equip our students to demonstrate understanding. Data are used to drive instruction at AES. Beginning with a variety of formative assessments to determine the effectiveness of instruction, we allow students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the standard and allow students to assess their level of understanding. Using the formative assessment data, we make necessary adjustments to instruction in response to the data. Data from summative assessments are also used to identify areas of focus for the following school year. Administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers work collaboratively to celebrate our academic success and strive to continue to improve instruction.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Arab Elementary School (AES) is a wonderful place. The murals on the walls of our school represent the pride in our town and the excitement that abounds within the classrooms. Our students are immersed in rich, engaging activities daily. Students collaborate with each other to solve problems and stimulate deep thinking skills. It is an everyday occurrence to walk into a classroom and see students working together to prove their answers to one another. Our students understand that problem solving is a necessary skill in our society. They know that we have high expectations for their academic growth as we encourage them throughout the year with reading and math challenges.

Just as much as we encourage academic success, we also encourage social and emotional success, or to be “Smart with Your Heart.” Through monthly guidance lessons, our counselor uses this motto to help our students understand that success comes from character just as much as it comes from education. Students also receive individual and small group counseling as needed. In order to help our students understand the importance of how we treat others, we have a school-wide initiative called “Choose Kind”. Our students are challenged to treat others with kindness. Our initiative began with guidance lessons about the importance of kindness and the regrets one can have if they are unkind to others. Mrs. Liz Huntley came to speak to each grade-level about the importance of kindness and how kindness from others encouraged and molded her into the person she is today. We encourage our students and teachers not only to “Choose Kind” at school, but also to “Choose Kind” at home and in our community. We had a Kindness Challenge month at school. Each family was given a calendar of thirty kindness challenges for the students and their families to do throughout the month. Our goal is for our students not only to understand the importance of being academically successful but also to understand the impact of being kind to one another.

Just as we have high expectations of our students, we also have high expectations of our faculty and staff. AES has a history of high academic success. That can be attributed to the work ethic and dedication of our faculty and staff. Our teachers are “all in” when it comes to preparing and facilitating lessons. They collaborate together weekly and often stay late to make sure they are ready for their students. It is evident that our teachers care about each other and support each other. We are truly a family here at AES. That plays a big role in the work we do everyday to educate our students. Our faculty and staff know they are supported by our administrators. Input from teachers is taken into consideration when decisions are made to ensure our students and teachers get what they need to be successful. Our teachers know that the administrators support them. One teacher stated, “Our administrators project a feeling of comfort to us. We can feel the confidence they have in us and it makes me want to do better than my best, both for them and my students.” Teachers are always welcome to come express concerns with administrators. Our administrators celebrate both students’ and teachers’ successes in order to foster and enhance our compelling culture.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Intentionality is the hallmark of Arab Elementary School’s family and community engagement plan. Much effort has been put into building relationships with students and families in order to promote student growth and achievement. Each day begins with friendly greetings as families drop off their students. As the day progresses, community mentors, reading buddies, and high school mentors arrive and meet with students. The lunchroom staff welcomes families to eat with their students. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) organizes parent volunteers who support teachers by making copies, laminating, sorting, decorating, and attending to any other needs that may arise.

In order to keep the lines of communication open and build support for family involvement, AES utilizes many forms of communication including our community newspaper, school website, student planners, weekly parent newsletters, Remind, and the iNow parent portal. AES also has an active social media presence. Many of our faculty members use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to showcase the amazing learning taking place in our classrooms.

“Choose Kind” is a campaign resulting from a partnership with the school, PTO, and other civic clubs. The campaign consists of student activities, lessons, and parent workshops aimed at helping students make a conscious effort to be kind in daily pursuits and relationships. A guest speaker reinforces the ideals that help create an optimal environment for student growth and achievement.

Additionally, a variety of annual events provide opportunities for families and the community to interact with our students. The physical education department hosts “Bring Your Parent to PE” days so that parents may participate with their children as they seek to be in the Fifty Mile Club by walking and/or running fifty miles during the school year. The media center hosts “A Grand Event” which invites families, specifically grandparents, to eat breakfast with our students and shop at the bookfair. AES pays tribute to those members of our community who have or are currently serving in our armed forces with our special Veteran’s Day program and reception.

Family and community partnerships are vital for all schools; however, the community in Arab rallies around our students with such eagerness and selflessness that it is unparalleled. These partnerships truly are the essence of student success at Arab Elementary Schools.

3. Professional Development:

Arab Elementary School is committed to supporting all students to ensure that each of them succeeds. In order to meet the needs of students, AES employs a strategic approach to professional development in which the needs of all students and faculty are considered. AES uses the Data Wise Improvement Process (DWIP) to analyze multiple sources of data and practices in order to identify strengths and areas for growth. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which is composed of teacher representatives from each grade level, core subject, and support areas, administrators, and coaches, analyzes data and seeks research based and research proven strategies in order to create a plan for improving practice. The ILT develops the action plan to guide decision making and creates a timeline for professional development needs based on high leverage strategies. The ILT then gets feedback from the faculty and makes adjustments accordingly. Through this process, a concerted effort for transparency and building relationships has evolved.

The Arab City Board of Education (ACBOE) supports professional development in many ways. One of the more important ways is by employing instructional coaches for core subject areas at all levels. AES instructional coaches for reading and math partner with teachers, facilitate collaborative and vertical planning, plan and facilitate professional development, and work hand-in-hand with administrators. ACBOE provides the opportunity for job-embedded professional development opportunities by including five professional development days within the school calendar. Teachers also attend professional development in the summer and the ACBOE provides flex days for approved professional development days.

Professional development efforts are further supported at the district level through the Data Wise Improvement Process, partnerships with the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) and Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). These partnerships feature support that begin with initial training in the ARI Modules, AMSTI science kit training, and AMSTI On Going Assessment Project (OGAP) framework training and subsequently progress to ongoing support during the school year as well as during the summer months.

AES demographics have changed dramatically in recent years; most notably the number of students who are living in poverty has more than doubled. “Teaching matters more than any other factor in a student’s school years. In fact, research (Hanushek, 2005) tells us that quality teaching can completely offset the devastating effects poverty has on students’ academic performance” (Jensen, 2013). Believing in the validity of this research, AES has made a concerted effort to concentrate on quality teaching coupled with a close one on one involvement with each student at AES. We at AES have found this approach to be successful in raising student achievement not only in academics but also in improvement in cognitive capacity, in relationships, and in lowering stress levels. This in turn helps students to overcome the effects of poverty. Rather than choosing a new professional development model each year, we redevelop and

refine the previous year's model. By eschewing fads and trends in professional development models, we are able to customize ours to fit the needs of our children.

4. School Leadership:

The faculty and staff of Arab Elementary School are committed to the success of all students through a strong network of support to equip every child to graduate being prepared for college, career, and productive citizenship in the 21st century. This leadership philosophy is based strongly on the foundation of collaboration and shared leadership among district administrators, building level administrators, instructional coaches, guidance counselor, teachers, support staff and students. All stakeholders are considered an integral part of our team as we work alongside one another to shape the future by investing in others, serving our community, and seeking growth.

School leaders at AES are committed to transparency and open lines of communication among all stakeholders; they are both highly encouraged and valued. Principals meet weekly with instructional coaches to examine data, celebrate successes, and identify areas in need of growth. Instructional coaches facilitate weekly collaborative planning meetings for each grade level/content area. The AES Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) is made up of the principal, assistant principal, reading instructional coach, math instructional coach, guidance counselor, one teacher from each grade level/content area and one teacher representing other curriculum areas. The ILT meets once monthly to assess school goals and to develop next steps. Team members disseminate information to faculty and staff, facilitate professional development and serve as the voice for their department. In addition, our school leadership team utilizes social media, our school website, student planners, weekly parent newsletters, Remind and the iNow Parent Portal to communicate with stakeholders.

School leaders at AES support teachers, parents, and students as we continue to strive for excellence through high academic and professional expectations.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

“What we do, how we speak, and what opportunities we provide our staff, students, and communities all affect the climate of our school.” Sean Slade, Director of Outreach for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, eloquently summarizes the one thing that puts Arab Elementary School in position for success.

AES has been a high performing school for many years. Over the past ten years, the number of students who qualify for free and reduced priced meals has doubled. However, students at AES have continued to grow and meet the high expectations set forth by our faculty, district, and state. How have we continued to see growth? Over the years, we have used a variety of strategies; however, the most beneficial has been to focus on cultivating a fertile climate for student growth and achievement. From professional learning to developing school wide initiatives that promote kindness, every effort undertaken is directed toward continuously improving the climate.