



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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

1. 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

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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)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 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
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	137	117	254
<b>6</b>	125	127	252
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	262	244	506

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 42 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 48 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 5%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	25
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	489
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9%  
45 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cantonese (Chinese), English, Estonian, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Kannada (Kanarese), Konkani, Korean, Lithuanian, Malayalam, Mandarin (Chinese), Marathi, Mongolian, Oriya, Panjabi (Punjabi), Pilipino (Tagalog), Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Shanghai (Chinese), Spanish, Taiwanese/Formosan/Min Nan, Tamil, Telegu, Telugu (Telegu), Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9%  
Total number students who qualify: 44

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %  
59 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>9</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	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.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Prepare every student to thrive in a global society through personalized learning experiences that are challenging and designed to promote academic, social and emotional growth.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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Built in 1994, Meridian School is one of four schools serving Aptakisic-Tripp CCSD 102 (D102) located in southern Lake County, Illinois. Meridian is a district school comprised of many cultures and languages. Meridian serves 491 students, in grades five and six, with a wide range of programming including performing arts and the integration of modern technology. The Meridian community is rich in linguistic and cultural diversity with approximately 72% of households reporting over 40 languages spoken at home. Approximately 9% of Meridian families receive EL support. Meridian supports its students and families with caring teachers and administrators who continually reinvent themselves professionally to best serve the needs presented by increasing diversity and enrollment.

Meridian students are expected to demonstrate safe, respectful and responsible behavior in all interactions and activities. Students demonstrate these expectations at school and community events, as they walk the halls, gather in the cafeteria and while on the playground. Individual students receive ‘Pride Slip’ acknowledgements for making positive behavioral choices and are recognized weekly for their success. Meridian School is committed to preparing its learners to thrive in a global community where rapid and unprecedented change is a certainty. Preparing students for this reality requires more than content mastery across core disciplines. Preparing students for an unknown future drives Meridian’s leaders and teachers to take risks, fail forward, innovate, create, and embrace the increasing diversity as an opportunity to develop global citizens in the heart of Buffalo Grove, Illinois.

The celebration of student success a visitor finds upon entering Meridian School is obvious. As the door opens, one is greeted by our Apple Distinguished School (ADS) banner, as well as our three NAMM Foundation awards for Best Communities for Music Education which celebrates our student success in Band, Orchestra, and Chorus. Additionally, Meridian School embraces the cultures from which its students originate and the global perspectives they offer. Meridian School provides its students and families that “home away from home” experience - whether enrolled for a semester or for two years.

Before students even begin their experience as fifth graders, new families are welcomed through the annual Meridian Parent Orientation event held each spring. During the day, fourth grade students visit all areas of the school and hear from current Meridian students using a ‘panel of experts’ forum. Furthermore, the fourth grade elementary students hear from the Meridian principals about the great offerings at Meridian. During the evening, parents learn more about the programs, curriculum and learning opportunities that exist for their future Meridian Mustang. In August, all families are welcomed at the “Meet and Greet” event that gives students the opportunity to meet their classroom teacher before the school year begins. These relationships forged at the beginning of the Meridian experience continue throughout their two years of enrollment and promote continued success.

Events and activities held throughout the year illustrate the unique aspects of the Meridian community and learning opportunities afforded all students. Meridian School participates annually in many educational enriching field trips. Meridian School promotes family literacy through child/family book club nights and a series of ‘Encore’ nights for all families to attend. Reading nights have taken a family friendly approach as students and parents determine together the various books they will read throughout the school year. All book club nights selections reflect the diversity and the wonderful books on the Rebecca Caudill reading list.

The use of technology across all classrooms has made learning accessible, attainable and visible to all. Students and staff select the most appropriate digital tools to meet learning needs. Every student is equipped with an iPad (1:1 technology initiative) and every classroom is equipped with a Promethean interactive whiteboard and document camera allowing learners to research, collaborate, and develop learning resources and artifacts. Technology amplifies learning experiences through connection to global audiences, resources and limitless opportunities for collaboration. Students are active participants in “makerspaces” and code clubs, Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and serve as presenters at the annual Students Involved with Technology (SIT) conference.

Meridian School celebrates its students and their achievements throughout the year culminating in a year-

end assembly. At this event, Meridian School honors staff, bids farewell to outgoing sixth graders, and says “goodbye” to another year spent together. Meridian students and teachers then watch a culminating video that encompasses all the great learning over the course of the school year.

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

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

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are incorporated in all academic curricular areas to promote student growth and achievement at each grade level. Science and STEM curricula are aligned with Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and integrated across content areas (especially informational text, measurement and calculation). Teachers have embraced these standards and made them understandable and attainable for students through the creation of daily learning objectives (posted in all classrooms as “I can statements”) providing consistent opportunities for personal reflection.

To prepare Meridian students to thrive in a global society, all curricular areas embed opportunities for students to develop what many call “soft skills” or “success skills” of critical thinking, communication, creative problem solving and collaboration. Teachers integrate speaking and listening skills in all subjects using locally developed rubrics to assess student growth in these skill areas.

Reading instruction focuses on literature, novel study, informational text, and foundational skills, while language instruction emphasizes writing, speaking, and listening. Students in both grade levels engage in a balanced literacy approach with leveled texts to build academic vocabulary and conceptual understanding across multiple content areas. Close reading strategies are employed across all classrooms to build students’ critical thinking skills and their ability to frame powerful questions to construct meaning. Students write for a variety of purposes using traditional and 1:1 digital tools to expand the impact and influence of their ideas. Student progress toward mastery of learning standards is achieved through teacher and student conversation and reflection upon growth.

The Math curriculum was designed and aligned with CCSS-Math over two years of planning and articulation. 5th & 6th grade mathematics instruction is focused on operations and algebraic thinking, numbers and operations in base ten, geometry, measurement and data, and mathematical practices. These practices include math exchanges, number talks, and guided math groups where teachers observe and conference with groups of students for the purpose of understanding mathematical reasoning, clarifying approaches taken and monitoring progress toward learning standards. Additionally, students are actively engaging with mathematical concepts in “real life” situations. These practices reinforce the notion that there are multiple pathways to finding an answer to a given problem and that one’s reasoning for applying selected strategies is a critical part of the learning process.

The focus of Social Studies is to provide students opportunities to understand and develop their roles, not only as historians, but as global citizens. This inquiry based approach is consistent with the college, career, and civic life framework (C3 Social Studies Framework). Pedagogical techniques include experiential learning, visual discoveries, reflection, writing, and response groups. Students learn the principles and relationships of the social sciences including political science, financial literacy, history, and geography through activities that are engaging and aligned to the Illinois State Standards. The knowledge and understanding gained is applied to evaluate differing perspectives on historical, political, geographic, or social issues.

In Science, Meridian students are engaged in hands-on activities designed to foster a better understanding of the impact of science concepts, processes, and connections to their lives. Students develop and apply processes of scientific inquiry to question and propose solutions to current and future challenges. The Next Generation Science Standards are the basis for all 5th and 6th grade science units. Teachers and administrators teamed to develop the scope and sequence that is aligned to the 5th and 6th grade Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Each grade level focused on embedding the Cross Cutting Concepts (CCC) and Science and Engineering Practices (SEP) with the Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) as they developed three units at each grade level to ensure that students gain a solid understanding of what it means to be a scientist. Students also experience the NGSS Engineering and Technology performance expectations through Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Design Thinking introduced in 2015.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Meridian students develop a great appreciation for the performing arts, STEM and physical education programs through active participation in learning environments. The fine arts are an essential and integral part of the core curriculum. While D102 Fine Arts learning targets are in the process of being aligned with the National Core Arts Standards, Meridian students continue to experience the joy of creation with visual arts and musical performances. This includes our communications course, annual musical production along with our band, chorus, and orchestra programs. Teachers and parents partner to provide authentic fine arts experiences that challenge, nurture, and develop the whole child.

Meridian students participate in music for a quarter during their fifth and sixth grade year. Music includes singing, playing instruments, listening, note reading, and movement. Encore musical performances allow student collaboration and often combine multiple classes. When students leave Meridian School, they are prepared to expand continue their studies with Band, Orchestra and Chorus ensembles. This year's program has 140 in band, 83 in chorus, and 148 in orchestra. In recognition of its dedication to Music education, D102 was awarded the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Best Communities for Music Education Award in 2015, 2016, & 2017.

Art classes in grades fifth and sixth balance art production with concepts of design, appreciation, and art history by studying master works from around the world. Each year student works of art are framed and displayed in the District Office. Students are invited to present their master works to the Board of Education where they are recognized for outstanding creativity and production. Teacher and parent collaboration in the visual arts provides a positive model for successful teamwork. The Meridian PTO facilitates the Cultural Connections program that provides additional opportunities for students to study artistic masterworks across cultures.

Meridian students develop and apply Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics skills (STEM) in a variety of ways. In 2015, Meridian School introduced Project Lead The Way's (PLTW) Design Thinking modules at fifth and sixth grade. One teacher pursued training to become certified PLTW Design Thinking Lead teacher and has brought this new approach to design thinking and problem solving to every fifth and sixth grade class. Students who had not previously been observed exhibiting leadership skills suddenly rose to the challenge as divergent thinking and problem solving became requisite skills to accomplish team challenges. In addition to PLTW, Meridian students also participate in a variety of STEM related activities through after school club opportunities.

Technology is integrated into the curriculum at every grade level and is used to amplify authentic, engaged learning for all students. All classrooms have high-speed Internet access and are equipped with interactive whiteboards, document cameras, and mobile devices for each student. Every fifth and sixth grader is provided an iPad and a Schoology learning management system (LMS) account to collaborate with peers on shared projects. Through this authentic use of modern tools, Meridian school develops technologically literate digital citizens who model the ethical use of technology and a passion for learning without limits. Students develop skills related to personal productivity, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration with modern technology and receive instruction on Internet Safety and Digital Citizenship aligned with the National Education Technology Standards.

Physical education classes in grades five and six teach the importance of regular physical activity, teamwork and lifelong fitness. Physical education courses emphasize movement, physical fitness, and team building. Using the Presidential Fitness Youth Fitness standards, students set personal goals to improve physical fitness. The health curriculum teaches students skills to increase physical, mental and social health with an emphasis on nutrition and drug awareness.

## **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Instructional methods and teaching strategies are differentiated to meet the needs of students at all levels. Data are collected and analyzed by teachers to determine progress and next steps across subject areas. As students learn through a balanced literacy approach, teachers monitor individual performance through small

group and individual instruction to determine appropriate interventions for developing skills in literature, informational text, and foundational skills. Word study and close reading are used in all classrooms which require students to engage in the analysis of a text to better understand the author's meaning, style, and techniques employed. Comprehension strategies are emphasized daily in ELA classes to foster student understanding. In grades 5 & 6, reading instruction is delivered in small group and large group settings across content areas. Students learn to process increasingly more challenging text resulting in improved understanding and fluency.

Student writing is used to monitor progress and scaffold support toward mastery of learning targets. Teachers across multiple subjects devote significant time and effort to writing. Students learn to write in multiple content areas including: ELA, Science, and Social Studies. Interventions are used through a weekly writing model that incorporates writing binders showing growth over time in student writing samples in ELA. Enrichment, mainstream and EL programs emphasize student writing as a key intervention that promotes reflection on learning and growth.

Teachers also incorporate writing strategies into mathematics instruction making mathematical reasoning and metacognitive processes visible. Additionally, flexible approaches including guided groups, centers, and math exchanges are used to meet the needs of all students. Enrichment activities are also introduced through tasks and projects to address mathematical practice standards.

The Gifted and Talented Education (GTE) program serves high ability readers and writers in grades 5 and 6. The goal of GTE is to further develop and extend students' reading and writing abilities through the English Language Arts curriculum. Students in fifth and sixth grade who qualify will receive enrichment activities in reading and writing two times per week with a GTE specialist outside of the English Language Arts period. Project Based Learning (PBL) provides all students opportunities to engage in sustained inquiry, reflection, critique and revision as they pursue challenging problems or questions. Students develop essential skills of collaboration, creative problem solving, critical thinking and communication by applying them in the context of authentic projects. They also learn to embrace failure as an essential component in the process of learning through iteration and continuous improvement.

Meridian School collects and analyzes data from multiple sources to guide instruction, monitor student progress, and evaluate school performance. Student growth is measured systematically through formative, summative and standardized assessments. Assessment data are used to guide instruction and measure student growth.

Building teams analyze achievement data and climate survey results regularly to determine areas for student growth, evaluate school programs and services, and create professional development plans to improve instruction. When concerns are detected regarding a child's development, Tier One interventions are added at the classroom level. These decisions are made collaboratively at grade-level team meetings and/or problem solving meetings.

Teams analyzed student achievement data from the 2017 Partnership for Assessment for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment (designated for benchmarking purposes only in Illinois) to monitor student growth. Also analyzed were results from the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, and Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Teachers and administrators reviewed WIDA ACCESS for ELLs data to assess EL student growth toward English proficiency.

Special Education students receive an additional thirty-minute intervention block in the academic areas where additional support in ELA and Math is needed. EL students requiring additional support receive up to ninety-minutes of center time to support development of academic language, oral fluency, and comprehension.

Each trimester, student progress is communicated with parents through report cards containing achievement results, narrative comments and progress updates from interventionists. MAP reports are distributed after each administration. Teachers contact parents directly to share updates on classroom performance via email

and telephone. Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled twice each year for all parents and more frequently for students more closely monitored. The District Annual Report is shared with the entire community and provides an overview of student achievement data and school performance.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

The culture and climate of Meridian School recognizes its diversity as a gift celebrated across all parts of the school community. The beautiful thing about having so much diversity is that everybody is unique, yet connected. Students arrive each day and are greeted with smiles and “hi-fives” from caring staff. Teachers embrace all learners as individuals and support their social, emotional and academic progress through personal contact, positive encouragement and personal attention to individual needs.

The Meridian community supports its school fully and provides resources to ensure the growth of all learners. Meridian School is responsive to the needs of its changing community and engages parents and students in learning not only academic subjects, but also ways to connect with the greater community through family-oriented events. Traditions like the both the “Welcome Orientation” for incoming students and parents, and the “End of Year Celebration” mark the passage of time from fifth to sixth and from sixth to seventh grade provide some of the most personal and engaging student memories. Throughout the year, teachers maintain a focus on continuous improvement where students participate in goal setting with teachers aligned with learning standards and social-emotional expectations. Students appreciate how much they are loved, cared for and supported by their teachers at Meridian School.

Teachers meet regularly in teams to design entry events and plan units that will engage all learners. Teams meet before and often after school to address student needs and how the team will respond. The teachers know that they have the full support of the D102 learning community. Years ago the community passed a referendum guaranteeing that teachers would be compensated well so they did not have to seek jobs elsewhere to earn more money. The collective bargaining agreement negotiated and ratified in 2016 ensures a teacher contract is in place through the 2019 school year.

Meridian School is a place where all teachers are valued and supported not only in their roles as teachers, but also as members of the Meridian family. Teachers go above and beyond the call of duty to support their students and each other. Teachers recently opened the “Meridian Closet” which provides needy students with basic supplies such as clothing, toiletries, and other personal care items.

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

Student success is rooted in partnerships between school, family, community and institutions of higher education. Meridian School provides many opportunities for communication and collaboration to support this partnership. “Meet & Greet” and Open House events are held in the fall to welcome families, familiarize them with the school and staff, and share how students’ academic and social-emotional growth will be developed over the course of the school year. Meridian families and teachers regularly attend PTO sponsored events like the D102 Challenge Family Run, BASIC PSA Contest, McTeacher Night, BINGO event and the Fall Book Fair. Each of these events is attended by hundreds of D102 families.

Parents, family, and community members engage and support Meridian School through various student exhibitions. Each quarter students celebrate and share their learning through Encore Night Exhibitions in Music, Art, STEM, and Communications. Furthermore, parents, family, and community members support the fine arts which includes 5th & 6th grade Band, Orchestra, and Chorus. The different evening concerts highlight and focus on student growth and performance standards. Each year, Meridian produces a student centered musical that includes two evening performances hosted at the Buffalo Grove Community Performing Arts Center. Other events that engage Meridian families and the local community include the annual Talent Show, Spelling Bee, and Child/Parent Book clubs.

Meridian’s Student Council initiated a ‘Give Thanks’ drive in accompaniment with the Buffalo Grove Rotary Club. Meridian children in Student Council created over 200 Thanksgiving Cards that were distributed with the Buffalo Grove Rotary Thanksgiving holiday baskets. Money has been raised to support the Children’s Craniofacial Foundation. Each year, the Meridian Student Council identifies one charity to

help support. The 2017-2018 recipient is Alzheimer's Foundation of America. Meridian students and staff also participate in the annual Holiday Stars drive which helps support families during the holiday season.

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

Meridian School embeds ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators year round. Staff members seize opportunities to strengthen their skills through local, state and national professional development events. Collaboration between the Division of Learning and Growth and building leaders is an integral component of the professional development plan that is afforded to all staff. With this in mind, Meridian School is working continuously to improve student achievement by integrating proven high yield teaching strategies and pedagogy across all learning environments.

Teachers collaborate as professional learning communities at least two times per week, exploring ways to improve achievement through analysis of student data, common assessments, and academic, social, and emotional needs of students. They generate new ideas and co-plan strategies for student engagement and growth. Administrators, specialists, and support staff are all involved in these meetings throughout each trimester. This practice results in a student-focused atmosphere committed to high student achievement with an emphasis on serving the needs of the whole child.

Teachers pursue multiple opportunities to learn and apply best-practice strategies such as close reading and reader's workshop. Administrators will often model the strategy, or team-teach, with staff members. Based on professional preference, teachers elect to observe facilitation of the strategy with students, or to co-teach a lesson. Over the course of this school year, several classroom teachers have requested the opportunity to co-teach a lesson. Teachers accomplished the transition to the close reading model of instruction through this approach. By developing teacher capacity with strategies modeled in their classrooms, teachers have embraced this form of lesson study. New is the implementation of a co-teaching model between regular education teachers and special education case managers.

Faculty leaders serving on the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and as facilitators help to lead focused, ongoing professional development through team meetings. Faculty members engage in learning through curriculum alignment, materials and resource selection, trainings with consultants, and Subject Area Leadership Team meetings. These sessions are also led by building leaders, the instructional technology or literacy coaches, outside experts, leaders from the Division of Learning and Growth, or other faculty members with proven knowledge and expertise.

Meridian teachers facilitate workshops and other learning opportunities for their colleagues and for neighboring districts. They also provide "Fire Hose" sessions (which deliver large amounts of information in highly energized settings) and serve on panels during Institute Days. Meridian teachers have also presented at local conferences and school districts to share freely with the wider educational community.

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

Shared leadership begins with the principal and extends throughout the school. The principal has an inclusive, team-oriented approach that creates avenues for staff to provide input on policies and decisions affecting the school. He leads and facilitates Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings, building committee meetings and faculty meetings. In addition, the principal is an active participant in grade-level team meetings, is visible to students, and has demonstrated a clear commitment to student achievement.

Building level committees are an important component of Meridian's shared leadership model. All staff members serve on one or more building level committees and attend monthly meetings where relevant information is shared and feedback is encouraged. Each committee determines clear roles and responsibilities for its members. Each committee is made up of representatives from every team. Meridian's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) was created to foster a shared sense of purpose and direction between all staff members. Members of the Culture Club lead the effort to maintain a positive atmosphere by planning special events designed to inspire their colleagues throughout the school year. Coordinators oversee the building procedures and communications regarding building wide schedule

changes and other systemic issues. These committees are vital components of Meridian's shared leadership model.

The principal meets with teachers and teams to address daily challenges, and to determine steps to increase student achievement and to build individual teacher's capacity for teaching. The principal believes in and supports the power of each teacher's influence and expertise. Each teacher's skills, perspectives and opinions are honored and respected. This serves as a model expectation for teachers as they interact with each other.

Meridian School is committed to creating the conditions of success for all students. When faced with a concern, teachers are able to problem solve with the Collaborate, Achieve, Succeed (CAS) team. This group meets regularly to discuss the school wide interventions provided while examining student academic and social emotional growth and achievement.

Meridian School strives to support all new staff through D102's teacher mentoring program. This program recognizes the importance of providing support to teachers new to the profession and D102. Veteran staff members serve as mentors to their colleagues, acclimating them to the school culture and climate while also supporting their understanding of the curriculum and instructional practices. This state approved program illustrates the collective commitment to all staff improving, growing and learning with and from each other.

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

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Meridian School values Social Emotional Learning as core to continued success. Every year, students at each grade level are assigned to homeroom teams. These homeroom teams serve as anchors for all learning activity that will occur over the course of the year. To start each new school year, Meridian School has established a “Team Day” to help each student forge new relationships with fellow students and classroom teachers. There exists a core team of teachers and support personnel that develops the Team Day schedule and planned activities grounded in the Illinois Social Emotional Standards. Team Day activities are designed to develop student mastery and application of the following Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards: develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success, use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships, and demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

On Team Day, the entire school assembles in the gymnasium. The focus of the assembly is teamwork, trust, respect, and rapport. Each student wears a Team Day shirt in the color of her/his specific team. The students participate in several team-building activities designed to develop relationships with teachers and other students. Following this assembly, students are dismissed to participate in several smaller team-building and trust-building activities. Through the monthly Team Day activities, Meridian School students learn about each other, strengthen relationships, and forge friendships that often last a lifetime. As the weeks and months of school pass, the bonds between teachers and students grow stronger. Students who were once strangers to the school, its teachers and each other emerge united in their identity as Meridian Mustangs who support and promote Meridian School as a safe place to fail forward, take risks, explore new interests, and stretch beyond expected limits.