

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Kristina Maddux

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

Official School Name Discovery School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1165 Middle Tennessee Boulevard

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

Murfreesboro TN 37130-5075
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Rutherford County

Telephone (615) 895-2123

Fax

Web site/URL

http://www.discoveryschoolexplorer

s.net/

E-mail kristina.maddux@cityschools.net

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*Mrs. Linda Gilbert

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail linda.gilbert@cityschools.net

District Name Murfreesboro School District Tel. (615) 893-2313

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. Butch Campbell

(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):
- 12 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 12 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	18	42	60
1	30	30	60
2	24	36	60
3	28	31	59
4	28	38	66
5	28	32	60
6	9	13	22
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	165	222	387

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 7 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 78 % White
 - 6 % 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: 2%

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	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	387
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %
Total number students who qualify: 16

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
12 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>10</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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: 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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
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	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%
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. 2012

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

To creatively challenge students to explore, discover, and develop their personal and academic potential.

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

Magnet: We administer two admissions tests. One is a vocabulary based assessment. One is based on logic, problem solving, and math reasoning.

PART III – SUMMARY

Discovery School, a kindergarten through sixth grade school for high achievers, first opened its doors in August of 2005. The school is in the Bellwood Building built in 1962. Discovery School is in an established neighborhood in an older part of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, about 30 miles from Nashville and the geographic center of Tennessee. Our students come from within the city of Murfreesboro, which is a very diverse and highly sought after community. We are the fourth fastest growing county in the United States. With this comes a diverse set of applicants from all demographics. Our population is based on creativity and high achievers and although we do not have a large percentage of economically disadvantaged students, we do have a wide-range of disabilities that encompass social and emotional needs.

In the months prior to opening in 2005, the principal and assistant principal visited other successful programs for high achievers. They met extensively with Joe Renzulli and colleagues at the University of Connecticut. Newly hired staff attended a retreat with presenters from the Renzulli camp prior to the opening of the school. The phrase “a rising tide lifts all ships” was instrumental as the framework for building a challenging, rigorous program.

Since Discovery School opened its doors, it sets the standard for the district in leading student exploration in STEAM with an emphasis on the engineering design. This is done through our robotics, our drones, our technology-coding, 3D printing, etc. and our community partnerships. Students are engaged in real-world applications in each grade level throughout their time here. This real world mindset allows us to bring college and career readiness into elementary school, helping prepare them for their secondary education. Discovery School engages in service learning every year. Some of the service learning that our students have lead has brought books to disadvantaged students, clothing and supplies for local homeless shelters, and supplies for learning opportunities through community outreach. Our campus is known to be the hands that reach all of our campuses as a resource for gifted and high achieving learning.

Discovery School vision is one that is centered on student-interest based as well as problem-based learning. We are currently applying to be a STEM certified campus due to the engineering design and other STEM/STEAM practices that are a part of our daily curriculum. Students are challenged to reach their academic and personal potential by being encouraged to take risks, develop their ability to persevere in the productive struggle.

Identifying students for a school of high achievers presents a unique challenge. Applicants are given a verbal and a non-verbal assessment. Our students consistently score among the highest in the state in every subject. They regularly win awards at the state and national levels in writing competitions, DAR competitions in all categories, the state e-Tales competition, LEGO Robotics, BEST Robotics, Jr. BETA, and spelling bees. In addition, through the implementation of Professional Learning Communities, we have strong growth across the board as well, reflected in our value added scores. We were honored as a Blue Ribbon School in 2008 and we have strived to maintain the same level of excellence.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Tennessee State Standards drive Discovery School’s curriculum. Our school district organizes the standards through curriculum mapping. We develop a quarterly pacing guide for each content area. In addition, teams of teachers collaborate to identify the major work of their grade.

We rely on student performance data to further refine our curriculum. By analyzing the data, we identify areas of strength and areas to strengthen. Since Discovery School serves high achieving students, our curriculum is customized to serve the unique needs of this population. For example, we go much deeper into all content areas using instructional strategies such as Socratic Seminars.

Discovery School reading curriculum is built around Tennessee State Standards. Our district adopted Reading Streets from Scott Foresman for grade level instruction. This recent adoption addresses the five components of reading and offers options for differentiation.

Our reading curriculum builds from one grade level to the next and focuses on phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing. Instructional strategies include small and whole group instruction, guided and independent reading, literacy centers, writer’s workshop and individual instruction. Proficiency in language arts impacts success in all curricular areas. Reading, writing, listening and speaking are not taught in isolation but are applied across the curriculum. Strong communications skills are required to be successful in any field. We offer a wide selection of reading materials and require writing for a variety of purposes.

Our math curriculum is very hands-on. We use a variety of textbook resources including iReady. The math curriculum in all grade levels includes numbers, number operations, algebra, geometry, measurement and data analysis. Instructional strategies include small and whole group hands-on activities, math centers, math journals, and Exemplars that help strengthen problem-solving skills.

During the 2010-2011 school year, math instruction and achievement became a focus for Murfreesboro City Schools. Grade level teams across the district met to identify power standards, those standards which were the most important for each student to master. Teams also constructed pacing guides to ensure that critical skills were mastered. Grade level teams developed pre-assessments and post-assessments to monitor progress and flag skills that required re-teaching. This year, formative assessments continue to help us to identify students who are already proficient as well as students who need to become proficient in necessary academic skills.

Our social studies curriculum focuses on history, geography, economics and civics. We provide many real-world experiences through guest speakers, projects, field trips and Socratic Seminars. Our annual career fair invites students to interact with a host of career representatives. These experiences empower students to become critical thinkers, effective communicators and participating members of our local and global communities.

Grades K-3 utilize Studies Weekly as a social studies curriculum that is tied to our state standards. Fourth and Fifth grade students focus on Tennessee Through Time curriculum (early and later years).

Teachers at Discovery School collaborate through a Professional Learning Community (PLC) that includes our Academic Coach, our Data Interventionist, our district Reading Specialist, and school administration. These grade level teams meet weekly to plan for the needs of each student, skill by skill. During our PLC meetings, teachers focus on finding texts that meet the rigor and complexity of the standard. Teachers utilize resources such as Common Lit, Goalbook, and Newsela to differentiate for the diverse learners in each grade level. There is a ninety-minute, uninterrupted block for literacy, which consists of whole group, small group and individual time. Teachers use leveled readers in small groups to work on comprehension skills. Group discussion and skillful questioning stimulate reflection and help to develop comprehension.

Other techniques that we have found effective are summarizing, graphic organizers and Think-Pair-Share. Grade level teams develop common assessments to monitor reading progress. Book Buddies is a program that couples an experienced reader with a novice. Classes pair up and enjoy literature as they read to each other. If all reading goals are met, the student is challenged with an enrichment activity. The enrichment activity is frequently project-based and stimulates higher order thinking. Teachers use Webb's Depth of Knowledge as a point of reference as they plan for high achievers.

Science and social studies are integrated with reading instruction as often as possible. Discovery School has developed a very strong science program designed to reach beyond basic scientific knowledge and skills. A fully equipped science lab offers an empirical approach to experiments and projects that make science come alive for all students K-6. A part time teaching assistant prepares materials needed for each lab experience. Occasionally guest instructors from MTSU lead the students in experiences like dissecting cow's heart or sifting through owl pellets. Our science curriculum is designed by Scott Foresman. However, due to our students' high ability, teachers embed Kaplan's, the Engineering Design Process, as well as numerous resources such as, National Geographic, Mystery Science, and Google Expeditions.

Many Discovery School students are already proficient in the skills delineated by state standards. These students are challenged with problem-solving applications, projects or research opportunities. Our teachers supplement iReady Curriculum, our adopted textbook, with material from many resources which include Goalbook, Mathematical Mindset, Number talks, and other online resources. Manipulatives are imbedded in lessons thus providing the opportunity for acquiring skills in discrete mathematics on a very concrete level.

Test data from iReady and Lexia are scrutinized, looking at three predictive exams given throughout the year. This information allows teachers to differentiate instruction for each student. Collaborative grade level teams use flexible grouping to address individual needs based on data analysis. Mathematics is a high priority for our school. Expectations are high for all students. Each student is expected to show academic growth, regardless of their background, ability level, or present level of performance.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Visual and performing arts are also an important part of our curriculum. Classroom teachers collaborate with music, art and media teachers to enhance what is being taught in the classroom. Artwork is displayed in hallways throughout the school. Each year, the art room is transformed into lighted tunnels where art and music come together as a part of a walk-through experience. Musical performances are scheduled throughout the year. Fifth grade students get an introduction to band and sixth grade students form a beginning band. We also offer a choir for fourth through sixth grade as well as a drama club that exposes children to Broadway productions once a year. This opportunity is open to all students through an audition process.

Physical education is an integral part of our K-6 students' education at Discovery School. The curriculum primarily focuses on motor skills, movement, physical activity and fitness, as well as nutrition. Students are encouraged to develop a positive attitude toward physical fitness, make healthy nutritional choices and form a lifetime commitment to wellness. Additional opportunities for our students throughout the year include Cross Country for second through fifth grade, Project Fit (a running club) for all students, as well as Jumprope for Heart (Red Cross partnership).

We offered French as an after school opportunity for students in grades first through fourth as language enrichment. There was also a Spanish enrichment offered after school through our Extended School Program for third through sixth grade students. We hope to be able to offer a language program again through other partnerships.

There are several area competitions that require students to apply scientific knowledge to reach creative solutions through the use of technology and critical thinking. Each year Discovery School students design and build a working robot to meet a unique challenge set forth by B.E.S.T. Robotics. Science Olympiad offers a variety of problem-solving opportunities to teams of students. This is our first year to participate in The Invention Convention hosted by Middle Tennessee State University. Students present an invention that

will solve a problem or create a new game. We also began Lego Robotics for first through fifth grade this past year. Technology is infused into the curriculum in all content areas. Students use their laptops for research and projects. They become proficient in Garage Band, iMovie, iPhoto and PowerPoint. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments.

Our librarian collaborates with classroom teachers to enhance all subjects with quality literature. The librarian and teachers frequently co-teach a lesson. The librarian promotes new books and resources at faculty meetings. A large collection of leveled readers is housed in the book room, adjacent to the library. Our library boasts over 17,000 volumes. Our students have continual access with open checkout daily, as well as a forty-five minute lesson led by our media specialist. These lessons enrich the learning that is occurring in the classrooms.

Technology provides critical tools for our math program. SMART Boards are used to support instruction by importing math lessons from teachers around the globe. Discovery School is a Dell laptop 1:1 school for grades 4 through 6. Computer assisted programs like BrainPOP and Study Jams enrich our math program. These programs allow students to delve deeper into math content or provide needed practice. In addition, we also have a growing selection of iPad applications with fresh challenges.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The Tennessee State Standards serve as minimum expectations for our students. We acknowledge the school's role in producing future leaders, who will not only need a command of the standards, but will be challenged with problems that we cannot even imagine. Therefore, we have raised the bar for engagement in the STEM areas, for higher order thinking and individual challenge. This fulfills our vision to enrich the curriculum.

Discovery School vision recognizes the need to challenge our academically advanced students by enriching the curriculum. Teachers meet weekly in their Professional Learning Communities to discuss individual students and appropriate programming for them. They look at performance on common assessments as well as classroom performance to determine instructional needs. Even though Discovery is a school for high achievers, students naturally have gaps in certain areas that must be addressed.

Each grade level has a 45 minute block of time set aside for intervention in reading and math. We use AIMSweb, Lexia and running records to assess specific skills in reading development. Students who are identified meet daily with the academic interventionist during the intervention block. All other students are assigned to small flexible groups based on instructional needs. Educational assistants work with each grade level during their block. One group may be working on a skill review while another group has an enrichment project. Teachers meet regularly for progress monitoring. We analyze iReady diagnostic and standards mastery data to create small groups for math instruction in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. They consider the data as well as classroom observations as they plan for individual instructional needs.

Teachers provide additional enrichment opportunities for students each Monday for nine weeks, twice a year. These are multi-age groups and are based on student interest. Examples of enrichment clusters are studying art by the masters, ancient Egypt, architecture, edible science experiments, poetry or aerospace. Students watch a PowerPoint presentation of the possibilities and then select a cluster that is of interest to them. Each student develops a culminating project at the end of the nine weeks. Projects are shared during an evening event for parents and guests.

Learning and real world connections are supported through technology. There is a QUMO SMART Board in each classroom, laptops for all 4th through 6th graders, a mobile laptop lab for K-3rd grade. We are one-to-one with iPads in kindergarten and first. Students become quite proficient at using PowerPoint, iMovie and Garage Band. There is a document camera in every classroom that students and teachers use to instruct and facilitate learning.

Students at Discovery have autonomy through project-based learning. This includes self-guided learning where student contracts are created based on enrichment outcomes, student interest, and standards-based

learning. Students are allowed a variety of methods to share their learning with peers, both at or below grade level. This is done through peer mentoring and coaching opportunities.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

There is a relaxed and comfortable feeling inside Discovery School. Students and staff treat each other with consideration and mutual respect. Students are often seen working in small groups or in multi-aged peer sets. There might be a group working in the hallway. Classrooms are not silent. There is a hum of activity and social learning. Students and teachers come and go from the library. Parents are tutoring in the hallways and preparing materials in the workroom. Students have a degree of freedom because there is a clear understanding of responsibility. Learning flourishes in this type of environment. Student autonomy is one of our primary goals to develop and nurture a life-long love for learning. Our three key character goals are: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Remarkable. Sixth graders came up with the last character for our campus when we moved campuses three years ago as a way to "leave their mark." Every year, we have our sixth graders complete a project that is for the betterment of our campus as their legacy and way of being remarkable and "leaving their mark." We teach students and adults that being remarkable means to leave something better than you found it and leaving your mark on that growth/improvement.

Part of our success comes from an outstanding teaching staff. We have award-winning teachers who have placed in the National Teacher's Hall of Fame, were Tennessee Teacher of the Year Finalists and three Scholastic Top Teaching Consultants. Some are excellent grant writers who have earned national and local grants to implement outstanding projects such as a BEST (a middle and high school) robotics competition team, a fully outfitted science lab, digital science probes, a weather station, rockets, physical fitness equipment and numerous other valuable projects to inspire learning. Additionally, our teachers regularly present at state and national conferences and are respected leaders in the fields of education and gifted education. Our library has placed first in the National Scholastic Book Fair competition twice under the direction of an innovative librarian and her student led initiatives. Teachers are encouraged to visit other classrooms in the building and throughout the district.

Our Director of Schools along with The Board of Education has provided our school with strong leadership, support and resources. Our district's mission is to assure academic and personal success for every child. It was with this mission in mind that Murfreesboro City Schools saw a need to further serve high achieving and gifted students. A skilled instructional support team has been added to the Central Office staff. Education specialists observe and coach in our classrooms and share their expertise at faculty meetings.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our thriving PTA is a major vehicle for parent involvement at Discovery School. The PTA is structured around a fifteen member board. Volunteer opportunities include working at the book fair, tutoring students, preparing materials for teachers, entering a family table in our annual chili cook-off and serving on committees. PTA sponsors an annual "Boohoo, Yahoo Breakfast" on the first morning of school to help our kindergarten parents say goodbye. They also host a social event for new students each August. Discovery parents share their expertise as artists, scientists, grant writers, musicians and mathematicians with our students during our career fair. Parents are urged to partner with the school in a way that will work with their schedule and utilize their talents. On the average, our parents log over 150 hours of volunteer service monthly.

There are additional opportunities for parents apart from PTA. We have a dad program called WatchDOGS (Dads of Great Students). This is a program to highlight the father's role and discuss important family issues. It brings in our dads as volunteers for a day where they work with students, check doors and parameters for safety, and participate in school daily events. Our counselor hosts workshops for parents throughout the year. Internet safety, nutrition and social and emotional wellbeing are some of the topics addressed this year.

One of our strongest community partnerships is with Middle Tennessee State University. In conjunction

with units of study, our students tour the rock and mineral museum, math night, MTeach (mentorship between MTSU preservice students and Discovery teachers), Project Inspire (year long cohort to build content knowledge of math standards and practices), and aerospace department. MTSU athletes collaborated with us to offer mentorship through reading or teaching specific sport activities. Two other community partnerships are with Kroger and Publix, both grocery stores. They offer funding and incentives throughout the year.

3. Professional Development:

The summer before Discovery School opened, we hosted a retreat with a staff member from The University of Connecticut's Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development. This experience provided direction for our school, which was to serve high achievers. A follow-up to the retreat was Confratute, a summer institute at The University of Connecticut that focuses on enrichment-based differentiated teaching. Some of our teachers attend Confratute each summer. It provides educators with research-based practical strategies that focus on the engagement and enrichment of all students as well as meeting the unique needs of the gifted and talented.

Our staff has participated in diversity training and poverty training to increase our sensitivity to others. Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP) training was provided for all new teachers. It focused on effective classroom organization and management techniques. We are serving an increasing number of students with autism. Our Response to Intervention-Behavior Team (RTI2B) focus on mentoring and coaching teachers who have students with any behavioral or special needs within the school.

Beginning in 2010, Robert Eaker, co-author of Learning By Doing, has offered several training sessions in our district on the development of Professional Learning Communities. Dr. Eaker's training gave us a step-by-step approach to establishing an effective Professional Learning Community. Discovery School followed up with a book study of Learning By Doing. Dr. Eaker has empowered our teachers to form collaborative teams in which all members assume a collective responsibility for the education of all students, child-by-child, skill-by-skill. Our training with Dr. Bob Eaker has had a tremendous impact on our ability to work as a team to make sure that every child learns critical skills and is challenged to grow as a learner.

When Murfreesboro City Schools identified gaps in student reading performance, they provided Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, LETRS training. This training formed a bridge between research and practice. Teachers learned the importance of teaching phonemic awareness and phonics to all students. Many of our kindergarten students come to school already reading and may have missed some of the critical skills that will enable them to decode words as they progress as readers. This training addressed that issue.

We take advantage of the many highly skilled teachers in our district. Several Discovery School teachers have observed in classrooms across the district. In addition, our teachers regularly share innovative ideas and strategies at faculty meetings and weekly PLC meetings.

4. School Leadership:

Discovery School is a Professional Learning Community (PLC) where all members are working together towards success for every student. Both principals attend weekly PLC grade level meetings as well as monthly leadership team meetings, IEP meetings and monthly faculty meetings. The staff has a clear focus on the following four critical questions that frame our PLC work.

During our meetings we focus on what we want our students to learn. How we will determine how learning has occurred. Our meetings also focus on creating an action plan for students who have not learned what was expected. Furthermore, we also focus on a plan for students who need challenge and depth of knowledge to extend learning.

The principal and assistant principal at Discovery School serve as role models for teachers and students,

voicing clear expectations of excellence. The principals empower the teachers to help each child achieve. Principals frequently meet with parents, teachers and students to explore how they can play a supportive role in attaining achievement. The result is a feeling of mutual respect and collaboration. Principals visit classrooms daily and sometimes join in on the lesson. Principals greet the students each morning at the front door and direct traffic in the afternoon with a smile and a wave good-bye. It is up to the administration to set the tone for the school by being active, accessible, supportive and positive. Outstanding work and good effort are recognized and rewarded. Students frequently bring their work to the office to share. Our office staff is just as excited about student work as the principals. School pencils and small awards are handed out daily. Good work is posted on bulletin boards and hallways along with the objective. Teachers and students are recognized for accomplishments on the news broadcast each morning. During the news, special challenges are issued to students. The challenge may be to research a topic further for specific information or to design a study to answer a question. A recent challenge was to find out what kind of music caused dairy cows to produce more milk. A third grader did the research and reported that it was jazz.

There is no question about why we are here. Our mission for staff and students is to continually learn and grow. It is the role of school leaders to embrace that mission with clarity, and to weave it into the fabric of the school.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Murfreesboro City Schools and Discovery School are dedicated to the Professional Learning Communities model for collaboration around the single purpose of student growth and success. Creating and measuring student growth is dependent upon the consistent, strategic use of assessment results. At the onset of a new school year, collaborative PLC teams are formed and armed with two types of data: the summative data collected from TCAP and TNReady for grades 3-6 and carryover classroom data. The classroom data includes writing samples, AIMSweb scores for reading fluency and comprehension, Lexia, 95%, iReady, as well as other benchmark information that might include running records and math fluency measures. Teams are formed not only by grade level, but also vertically to ensure that each grade level is examining the status of incoming and outgoing students through the eyes of the data collected by the sending team.

All students are benchmarked three times a year for reading fluency using AIMSweb, iReady, and 95%. Some are strategically monitored weekly as a part of their intervention. The data is used in the formative process of identifying student needs in the weekly grade level meetings. Once a month, data meetings are held and all benchmark and class student data is analyzed and discussed. The administration, school counselor (reviewing our social/emotional data), academic coach, grade level team members, and our educational assistant who manages our Tier 2 groups are present. This process provides tremendous insight into the ongoing instructional process.

In addition to parents receiving quarterly report cards, our school participates in Student-led conferences scheduled twice a year. We use a variety of communication tools such as emails, newsletters, websites, weekly communication from administration, and current apps.

Each year, our teachers present sessions at state and national conferences. We have presented at The National Association for Gifted Children Conference, Scholastic National Reading conference. Several of our teachers are contributors to Scholastic and other educational blogs. Other topics that have been presented are using technology in the classroom and working with high achieving students. We host a steady stream of teachers from neighboring school districts. Administrators conduct school tours highlighting the components of Discovery School that have contributed to its success.

We continue to show our commitment to sharing successful strategies locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It is important to network with other educators. We grow as professionals when we contribute to the field.