

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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	73	62	135
1	48	49	97
2	43	67	110
3	76	72	148
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
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	240	250	490

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 7 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 75 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 15%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	31
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	48
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	79
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	529
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Khmer, Arabic, Vietnamese, Korean, Hawaiian, Turkish, Amharic, French, Armenian, Nepali

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 45%
 Total number students who qualify: 221

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %
92 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>8</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>19</u> Developmental Delay | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>72</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 7
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.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 12:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	98%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

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.

Our mission is to provide all students with the academic and behavioral skills to reach their fullest potentials and to become life-long learners.

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

Murray Elementary School serves families within the Murray City School District and surrounding counties. Murray is a home rule-class city in Calloway County, Kentucky. It is the seat of Calloway County and the 19th largest city in Kentucky. The city's population was 19,200 during the 2017 U.S. census, and its micropolitan area's population is 37,191, making Murray one of the fastest growing cities in Kentucky. It is the home of Murray State University. In Murray, our existing industries don't just provide employment. Instead, they are a vital part of the community and very involved in our schools. For many of our students, our school and its activities form the nucleus of their lives.

For the past five years, our K-3 enrollment has consistently been around 500 students. Ten years ago enrollment was in the high three hundreds. This significant growth has caused the school to utilize every room and space. We are now first on the district facilities plan for the construction of more rooms. We have one preschool classroom located in our school and four classrooms offsite serving around 110 children. Our Preschool is a Head Start Preschool, therefore, their enrollment isn't included in our official school enrollment but they are a part of Murray Elementary. Within our K-3 enrollment, thirty-four percent live in the Calloway County school district and choose to pay tuition and come to our school. In 2011, Murray Elementary's Free/Reduced lunch percentage was thirty-seven percent. This number has grown to forty-nine percent currently. Our school is continuously looking for ways to help our families and these GAP (one of five components in Kentucky's accountability system. Comparing performance (percentage of proficient and distinguished) of students who are members of traditionally under-performing groups (ethnic minorities, special education, poverty and limited English proficiency) to the goal of 100 percent proficiency in all five content areas) students. Our teachers strive to challenge and promote the learning of all GAP students.

Our school was built in 1961 with an extension in 1963. We had major expansion projects in 1980, 1991, and 2004. In the past six years, we have seen a thirty-one percent enrollment increase. Our school prides itself in family and community involvement and a tradition of excellence. Our classrooms and school continuously have parent volunteers. We value the extra help and feel students value education more when they see their parents and grandparents giving their time to help make our school even better.

Our school values professional learning. Teachers strive to improve their craft by actively participating in Professional Learning Communities-PLCs. They want to be the best educators possible and provide the best instruction and activities for our students. We have high standards for not only our students but also our faculty and staff. We strive for every student to learn and grow every day. We are also educational leaders. For example, Murray State University sends many students to learn from our teachers and work with our students.

Our school is focused on building relationships with our students. We are fortunate to have a School Board and School Based Decision Making SBDM Council that value small class size to allow for more student teacher attention and time. We know research says effective teachers are effective even with bigger classes, but our teachers are able to provide more individualized, intense instruction and more individual parent communication when they have less students. Our SBDM is a governing body of elected teachers and parents who meet monthly to discuss and make decisions for the school.

At all grade levels, teachers have core instruction time aligned to the state standards in reading, math, science, social studies, practical living/careers, and character education all of which are Tier 1 instruction that all students receive. Every day, our students participate in flex reading and flex math groups. During this time, teachers provide Tier 2 remediation and interventions. Students who need extra support have Tier 3 instruction daily in addition to Tier 1 and 2. These Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are part of our RTI Response to Intervention Plan. High flex groups provide enrichment and challenge students who are above grade level. Students' individual needs are met with these differentiated groups. Our school is assessment driven. We use many forms of data to analyze our students' skills and our instruction. If students are not learning, we want to know and be able to work to help them. Our MAP data shows students' growth from the Fall to the Spring. This data is vital in continuing our goals that every child grows. It is very important to our school and families that all students learn.

In the last three years, our school has focused on building student leaders. A few years ago, a group of teachers visited a school to learn new ideas and programs. They returned and created a book study on the Leader in Me program. We want our students to strengthen their leadership skills starting in Kindergarten. Our students are able to take on more responsibilities and lead our school when given the opportunities. Our third graders have jobs including greeting students, helping in the cafeteria, monitoring the halls, and producing our news program each morning. They are also our school ambassadors and run our school store. Our school is continuously teaching our students how to be leaders in our school and in our community. We promote extra-curricular activities and celebrate their successes outside of school, too. Our students are well rounded citizens.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The core of our reading curriculum involves addressing the five areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Our teachers follow the Kentucky Academic Standards and have aligned their instruction with these standards. Teachers use Pearson's Reading Street Program as their core curriculum and incorporate many other reading activities to reinforce the standards. We start in kindergarten working to form a foundation for reading and developing an initial understanding for what is read. Reading instruction involves interpreting, reflecting, and responding to the text. Our students have individual goals and teachers provide direct instruction to help students build their skills. During flex reading, above benchmark flex group teachers enrich students' literacy skills by engaging in high level reading activities. Teachers with benchmark and Tier 2 below benchmark groups re-teach fundamental skills. In kindergarten and first grade, assistants monitor and guide class instruction allowing the teacher time to meet with all of the small groups daily. In second and third grades, we utilize our resource teachers, Extended School Services assistant and our principal to have small below grade level groups with large above grade level groups for flex time. The teachers, along with administrators, school counselor, and Read to Achieve RTA grant teacher have RTI meetings to discuss MAP, STAR, AIMSweb assessments and classroom data to make the best instructional decisions for all students. Progress monitoring for our Tier 2 and 3 students is used to inform instruction and to allow teachers to make modifications to ensure student success. Parents/families are encouraged to give input on their child's RTI plan. Letters are sent after each RTI meeting to inform families about their child's progress and interventions.

Writing is another major part of our core curriculum. Our school has a Writing Plan which incorporates the writing standards. Students write for many purposes and publish their work for others to read and enjoy. We have communication folders that contain seven different forms of writing from different content areas each year. These communication folders travel with the students. We also have school Writers of the Week. We enjoy recognizing the thoughts, communication, and publishing of students' ideas each week.

1b. Mathematics:

The core of our math curriculum includes operation and algebraic thinking, number operations, geometry, and measurement and data. In first - third grades, we use the Every Day Math Curriculum which is aligned with the Kentucky Academic Standards as a basis for our instruction. In order to make sure our students fully understand and can apply all standards, teachers incorporate a wide range of activities into their daily instruction. These activities include, but are not limited to, hands on activities using manipulatives, vocabulary games, group work, short answer questions with real world applications, and computer based programs. Just like in reading, each student receives additional math instruction during Flex Time, which focuses on differentiating for all students. The classroom and resource teachers, along with administrators and the school counselor, have RTI meetings to discuss MAP, AIMSweb, and classroom data to make the best instructional decisions for all students. Progress monitoring for our Tier 2 and 3 students is used to inform instruction and to allow teachers to make modifications to ensure student success. The same RTI family communication is used for Math as in Reading. Our school math PLC is continuously discussing the standards and how we are teaching math to be consistent across grade levels. Teachers share with their school colleagues from each grade level vocabulary and techniques they are teaching the students. Our school has been fortunate to participate in math grants with Murray State University. We have had teams of teachers attend weeks of summer math trainings. The grants continued into the school year with classroom visits, observations and feedback from the Murray State professors and math grant instructors. Our teachers shared all of the lessons and feedback with our entire faculty. We have seen increased student math achievement because of opportunities like these.

1c. Science:

The science curriculum follows the state Next Generation Science Standards NGSS. Students are actively engaged in learning content through inquiry based instruction. Students participate in demonstrations and conduct experiments. Students regularly work in cooperative groups to enhance learning. Our teachers offer a variety of science activities that promote success in content units. Examples of Kindergarten units include Simple Machines, Life Cycles consisting of animals and plants, and STEAM Leprechaun traps, first grade students study Objects in the Sky, Animals and their offspring, Sound and light, Push Pull/Simple Machines, Magnets, and Plants/Animals/Habitats and how they work together. Second and third grade students combine science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas, and crosscutting concepts. Units and activities include Forces and Interactions, Interdependence of Ecosystems and Engineering and Design are interwoven throughout all units. Students are assessed using shared research, experiments, and classroom assessments incorporating reading and writing standards with Science content.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Our Social Studies curriculum follows the state standards. Students are engaged in authentic learning activities for the five parts of Social Studies: history, geography, civics and government, economics, and culture. Kindergarten students study American symbols and use music and art while discussing content in different parts of the world and in different times in history. Kindergarten through third grade students' study of economics includes selling items during grade level economic fairs and establishing a school store. This helps them experience the benefits and cost of running a business, including marketing and merchandise purchasing and pricing. Students also study production, consumption, & distribution of goods and services while understanding daily economic decisions have consequences. Government and Civics units for grades K-3 include understanding the nature of government (local, state, national) & democracy, including the role of the citizen (rights, responsibilities, traits), and historical figures and timelines. Our school spends time throughout the year celebrating cultures and learning about similarities and differences. Examples of this include learning dances and music of various cultural groups, utilizing guest speakers from nationalities represented in our school, and celebrating holidays around the world. Our music teacher teaches social studies and history through music. In some cases, it is a primary source. For example, students learn the route to the Underground Railroad that was passed on through the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd". Citizenship is very important to our school and we use every opportunity we have to promote it through recycling, building leadership, building communities within our classrooms, respecting others, and teaching the Seven Habits of Leadership. Geography units include the study of maps and globes, and taking field trips to sites such as Land Between the Lakes. We are very fortunate to have a supportive community including Murray State University that collaborates with our teachers and students while studying careers, community helpers, and exploring 21st Century vocations.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

Our preschool program enables each child to receive high quality instruction focusing on skills to improve school readiness using The Creative Curriculum. This is based on thirty-eight objectives for development and learning, which identifies student progress and meeting outcome goals. The objectives for development and learning span from birth through third grade. The curriculum summarizes research foundations and addresses five key areas of the curriculum; how children develop/learn, learning environment, what children learn, caring and teaching, and partnering with families. Kindergarten readiness is determined through Brigance screening with seventy percent of our kindergarten students deemed ready this year. With all of our transition activities to kindergarten, we have seen a significant decrease in the amount of novice students starting Kindergarten according to our MAP data. In 2016, 23% of our incoming Kindergarten students scored novice in reading while only 9% were novice in 2018. The math scores also reflected this improvement with 26% novice in 2016 decreasing to 17% in 2018.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Murray Elementary has a strong and rich arts program for our students. All arts & humanities areas are aligned to state standards. All of our K-3 students attend one hour each day of music, visual art, drama/library, physical education/health/dance, or technology. We have a certified music, art, and PE teacher to provide students with detailed and effective instruction to strengthen their content knowledge and ability to create. The Arts program is grounded on the National Visual Arts Standards. The program balances process-based art making and product-focused art making to ensure that students are being exposed to a variety of art processes. The Art program incorporates the Studio Habits of Mind, created by a Harvard research team, into the curriculum. Grade level Art Galleries hang in each hall showcasing the students' artistic talents.

Health and Physical Education at Murray Elementary School collaborates with other curriculum areas by incorporating reading, math, and social skills into the PE daily instruction. Students are provided written directions each day before entering the gym to supplement reading skills and following directions. Math skills are also incorporated into PE classes. Students use counting skills and other math concepts for team building, score keeping, and setting personal goals. Students are provided a wide array of activities and sports that helps build long term interest. Over the course of the year, they are introduced to life time activities such as bowling, Frisbee, tennis, walking/running, dance, and yoga. The students learn fundamentals and participate in team sports such as baseball/softball, soccer, basketball, football, and hockey. This is essential because it allows the students to find an interest that will positively reinforce the importance of living a healthy lifestyle by staying physically active.

The Music curriculum at Murray Elementary School is based on the National Music Standards. Students at all grade levels create music for various purposes and contexts. These compositions embody the elements of music that students have learned. Other content is embedded in Music. Students use math concepts when establishing the beat and rhythm of the musical piece. Rhythm is taught, for example, using fraction bars and Smart Board activities where students move bars to find out two half note bars equal one whole note bar. Students enjoy finding combinations like one quarter rest, two eighth notes, and one half note. Music supplements kindergarten skills by beginning their pattern work by finding songs that are in ABA form. As students grow, they begin to use patterns in their musical compositions. Students enjoy units on instruments (including voice) and how they make sound. This sound unit includes the science concepts of vibration and how sounds can be high or low, loud or soft.

Arts/Humanities teachers along with general education teachers incorporate Drama into classroom instruction as well. Students practice writing and speaking skills and perform in class through a variety of ways. For the Spring Music Performance, students audition for their respective classes and a representative is chosen for the school wide performance. Our Arts/Humanities teachers plan and work with other content teachers in professional development and learning opportunities to ensure cross curricular instruction. Students are also provided technology both in the classrooms and in Technology Class. Teachers provide instruction and engaging opportunities for students using a variety of computer games, Google applications, robotics, and STEAM activities. Our media center is well stocked with books, technology, and opportunities for students to participate in the morning news program. Each student gets character building each week in their general education class. Second Steps is a program that enhances social skills and character building. Teachers and students spend time discussing scenarios and best practices to decision making. It is also our goal to promote secondary education and careers at all ages. We celebrate college days and have guest speakers share about careers.

3. Special Populations:

Our focus and goal is to meet the needs of all students and help them see success. We are very intentional in studying data and classroom performance to make sure we have students placed in correct core and flex classes in both reading and math. Response to Intervention meetings, made up of administrators, school counselor, general education teachers, special education teachers, Read to Achieve Reading grant teacher, and Speech/Language Pathologist meet every six to eight weeks to analyze student data and place students in the most appropriate flex grouping. Our intent is for students below benchmark, in Tier 2 and 3, to be in

flex groups with a low teacher/student ratio. Students in Tier 2 and 3 groups are progress monitored either weekly or bi-weekly and that data is analyzed to ensure instruction is appropriate and gains are being made.

Our school has four Special Education teachers and one Speech Language Pathologist meeting the needs of our students with disabilities. Each of these teachers collaborates with general education teachers to meet the needs of their respective group of students. This special population of students are included in general education classes as much as their individual plans allow. We work closely with an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a vision outreach consultant through the Kentucky School for the Blind, and a hearing outreach consultant from the Kentucky School for the Deaf. Our district provides a school psychologist who leads our school in behavior analysis, special education testing, and trauma informed care. Last year the district hired a sign language interpreter to support the instruction of a hearing impaired student. We also collaborate with and allow ABA therapists to work with students throughout the school day. Murray State University Speech and Hearing Clinic also provides reading camps over the summer for a small group of students who are below benchmark in Reading. Our Speech Language Pathologist participates in an autism and assistive technology cadre to better serve our special needs population.

Murray Elementary has thirty-nine EL students who are served additionally by an EL teacher. This teacher comes daily and provides both pull-out and collaborative services to these students. She also acts as an interpreter for meetings with the parents of EL students. This specialized instruction helps not only the students but the families to be involved.

We continuously work to eliminate our achievement gaps in reading and math. In the past few years, our free and reduced lunch students have scored below our non-gap students. We work to provide in depth instruction and reduce the barriers that cause this achievement gap. Teachers offer after school tutoring and target our free and reduced lunch students during this extra instruction. Our Family Resource Center teams with our school to help students and their families with their basic needs. We want all students to have the same advantages to succeed.

Our school identifies students for the Primary Talent Pool. These students have higher level academic skills and are challenged daily in core and flex instruction. Students are learning above grade level content to continue their learning and skills.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our school is both a team and a family working to develop tomorrow's leaders. The teachers and staff strive to make every child feel loved and supported. It starts with our bus drivers greeting students in the morning and continues with teachers, assistants, office staff, administrators, our custodian, and our cafeteria workers greeting our students as they get out of cars, walk into our school, walk the halls and go to breakfast. We believe positive relationships with our students are crucial to their development and success. Each day starts with a live news program with students as anchors, pledge leaders, and weather reporters. Our principal recognizes students who have earned their gold Tiger tags, clip all the way to her or need special recognition. We love starting our day with these student leaders and enjoy praising our students. During the school day, each child has a clothespin on a color incentive chart. Students are rewarded for their great choices and move their clips up a color each time a teacher recognizes this behavior. If a child clips up five times, his/her clip is taken to the principal for her to wear and recognize on the news.

Many families come to watch the news live or watch it each day on their computers. Our school wants students to love school and believes in rewarding our students both extrinsically and intrinsically. Students earn Tiger Tags, small paper certificates for following one or more of our Tiger Guidelines and/or going above and beyond. When students earn ten Tiger Tags, they earn Gold Tags, gold medals. The first Tiger Tag is awarded on the Tiger News program and the second Tiger Tag earns them their pictures in the hall way in addition to the gold medal. All students also have clips on classroom colored charts. Their clips start on green each day and move up as they make great choices. Students love clipping all the way to their teachers and then principal. Students who clip to the principal are recognized on the Tiger News the following day. This is very motivating and positive for our students.

In order to have a positive school environment for students, the teachers and staff must also love coming to school. Our school works very hard to support teachers and provides uninterrupted instructional time for them. Administrators make the schedule to have large teaching blocks and wants teachers to focus on teaching and their students, not unnecessary paperwork or meetings. Teachers are also given the freedom to try new strategies and are encouraged to share their work with others. Teachers are asked to lead Professional Learning Communities and each grade level has a teacher leader in each content area. Teachers are also asked to assist new teachers.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our teachers, staff, and administrators believe the key to student success is building relationships with the families. Parents, grandparents, and guardians will support the school and encourage their children to work hard if they feel the teachers are genuine and care about their children and family.

For incoming Kindergarten families, relationship building starts in November the year before Kindergarten. We have a Future Tiger Night. Families come to experience our school, meet all of our teachers, and learn how they can help their children get ready for kindergarten. Then in February, we have kindergarten registration. Again, children and their families spend time in kindergarten classrooms and have meaningful conversations with our teachers and staff. Kindergarten students come and experience kindergarten for one hour visits in March and April. Before school starts in August, we have Kindergarten and New Family Orientations. These meetings allow families to hear details and ask questions about our school. Our PTO also hosts a Kindergarten Family Social to help children and families meet each other.

Before school starts, all of our families are invited to sign up for home visits to meet their teachers in the comfort of their own homes and without the interruptions of school. Families meet their K-3 teachers for the first time and are able to share the needs and interests of their children. Home visits are very popular among our families. Parents love the undivided attention and teachers value this great relationship building activity.

Families are invited to be members of our four SBDM Sub-Committees. Their input is valuable. We personally ask parents and community leaders to serve on our committees: Learning Environment, Efficiency, Academic Performance, and Wellness. Families are also invited each month to a school activity. These include Back to School Night, fall and spring parent teacher conferences, and family nights. Parents must come in person to receive their child's report card. We want to meet in person and have in-depth conversations with our families as often as possible. Our families know that we need and want them involved in their children's education.

3. Professional Development:

Our school professional development strengthens the productivity of our teachers, causing our student achievement to increase and stay at high levels. Our teachers know that their learning influences the success of their students. The best part of our professional development activities is that we use our own teachers to share and teach their colleagues. We have Rank I teachers, National Board Teachers, RTA trained teachers, experienced teachers who are continuously learning and adding to their repertoire of strategies and very passionate teachers whose personalities and love for children inspire everyone around them. Teachers present their best practices, how they engage students, classroom management strategies, and technology integration.

Our School and District's Professional Development Plans allow teachers to choose one or two days of trainings/workshops that fit their instructional needs. Teachers select content areas and instructional techniques that they want to improve. They also work with teammates to share all the different strategies. We have school professional development days that meet our needs assessment results. Two years ago, we participated in a valuable two day training workshop with all of our teachers, learning experiments and science activities to implement with our students and to improve their science skills.

Professional learning happens all year long at our weekly professional learning meetings. At some of these meetings, our school content professional learning communities (PLCs) meet to share successes and discuss vertical content issues. We have one teacher leader who guides the work of the PLC and five grade level teacher leaders on each PLC who present and share the PLC work with their grade level teammates. These PLCs analyze data, make decisions and work to improve our overall school achievement. Teachers in our building read books about instruction and have book study groups that reflect on the practices and ideas. We also have teachers observing other teachers. This is one of the best professional learning activities a teacher can do. Teacher professional learning is vital to our school's success.

4. School Leadership:

Our school leaders are teammates and supporters who work with the teachers and staff in all aspects of the school. The principal and assistant principal teach daily flex groups and guide and teach weekly third grade reading and math lessons giving personal feedback to students. Teachers are able to assist students individually and immediately meet their needs while the principal and assistant principal teach. The teachers appreciate this support and the administrators stay connected to instructional struggles and successes. The assistant principal and counselor run the Tier 2 check and connect daily ROAR program. They discuss, encourage, monitor, and celebrate students' daily behaviors. This involvement decreases behavior problems in the classrooms and increases student achievement.

Our three administrators also lead the school's assessment and RTI work. For example, the administrators make goal sheets for every student in the fall, spring, and winter to encourage hard work and recognize growth. All data for RTI meetings is constructed by the administrators and given to the teachers to analyze in RTI meetings. These two things alone give teachers more time to focus on instruction. The administrators have very high expectations for themselves and believe they model passion and love for students at all times. They would not ask anything of teachers that they do not do themselves. For example, they have daily cafeteria duty to allow staff to be working with students in the classrooms and are outside greeting students each morning to provide extra planning for teachers.

Doing what is best for students is the focus for all weekly professional learning/faculty meetings, PLCs, SBDM committees, and team meetings. Administrators value teacher time and try to be efficient using email and google for announcements and management issues. This allows meetings to be student centered with importance given to teacher input on all policies and programs. Teachers are leaders in the building and are frequently asked to help make grade level and school decisions. This shared leadership proves the administrators trust and respect the teachers and staff, therefore, teachers and staff feel valued and work harder to have a successful school.

The administrators take full responsibility of the school culture and climate. They know their attitudes and work ethic drive the learning environment of the school and this is something they take very seriously.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Murray Elementary School, success begins with Relationships. Before a child can grow through instruction, they must believe that they are loved and trust the teachers and staff who care for them. Teachers and school personnel make it a top priority to ensure every child feels loved here at school. Each morning before the bell rings, teachers and staff line the sidewalks and hallways. Every child is greeted by name with a hug or high five. As they enter their classrooms, their teachers greet them at the doors with more smiles, hugs, high fives, and conversations about their lives. It is not rare to find teachers in the audience of sporting events, concerts, or other extracurricular activities of their students. Teachers celebrate with their students, mourn and cry with their students, and invest in the lives of each and every student on a personal level. Teachers acknowledge the importance of fulfilling a child's emotional needs before placing high expectations on academic progress.

Not only do teachers and school staff make relationships with children a priority, they also take time to form successful relationships with families. Daily emails celebrate each days' success and communicate information about academics and upcoming events. Teachers post videos explaining how to help their students learn academic skills and work through homework. Teachers call to check on absent students and work with families to make up the missed instruction. They are also in constant communication with families about academic progress and behavior needs. Families are vital parts of each child's school team. When families reach out, the school ensures their needs are met, whether that be including children in the backpack program which provides food over the weekends, supplying warm winter coats, or making sure there are Christmas presents under their trees. When children have an especially outstanding day, they visit the office for a hug from the principal and smile as their name is called on the news the next morning. The assistant principal circulates through the building and texts pictures to parents to give them a glimpse of their child's day. The school counselor invites students to her office for a special lunch bunch where they can talk about their day, good and bad, and feel a sense of community among their peers. Relationships are the key to success at Murray Elementary. Relationships first, everything else comes second. Relationships make the difference.