

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2019 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 Dr. Clark Blair

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

Official School Name Mcfadden School Of Excellence

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 221 Bridge Avenue

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

Murfreesboro TN 37129-3503  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Rutherford

Telephone (615) 893-7251

Fax (615) 898-7724

Web site/URL https://mes.rcschools.net

E-mail blairc@rcschools.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\*Mr. Bill Spurlock

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail spurlockb@rcschools.net

District Name Rutherford County School District Tel. (615) 893-5812

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. Jim Estes

(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. 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):
  - 24 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 11 High schools
  - 1 K-12 schools

47 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	28	32	60
1	25	34	59
2	21	39	60
3	20	40	60
4	41	33	74
5	33	42	75
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
<b>Total Students</b>	168	220	388

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 5 % Asian
  - 5 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
- 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 1%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	376
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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: 14

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %  
1 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>1</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> Developmental Delay     | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</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: 14
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.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
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 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	97%	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 2018.

<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. 2013

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

Our mission is to provide students with a strong foundation for lifelong achievement through the promotion of high academic standards in a supportive environment.

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

Students apply in January for the following school year. All applicants are tested using a Brief Intelligence type test in a one on one setting. Test scores are then ranked from highest to lowest scores. Invitations are then sent to families based on those scores and available slots.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

---

In the late 1990s, Rutherford County faced the challenge of progress. As a quickly growing county, it needed to provide additional opportunities for its students and families - an environment that would foster critical thinking by specializing instruction. Centrally located near downtown Murfreesboro, the Elfie McFadden Elementary School prepared to make a transition. In 1999, McFadden School of Excellence opened its doors and became the first academic magnet school in Rutherford County.

McFadden was originally designed to serve as an elementary program serving kindergarten through 5th grades. Students traveled from all over Rutherford County to receive the researched based instruction, designed to grow a love for learning and fuel curiosity. Over the past two decades, McFadden has gone through several changes – for almost ten years, it also served as a middle school (K-8). In 2008, our middle school population was transferred to a magnet middle/high school. At that time, McFadden became a K-5 school that serves 390 students to this day.

Since the doors opened in 1999, McFadden has continued to be one of the top achieving schools in the state of Tennessee. Success of McFadden is derived from all stakeholders that maintain high standards. The shared mission is to provide students with a strong foundation for educational success. Our vision promotes individual growth through academic achievement, growth mindset, and enrichment through extensions. Together, with the commitment of all stakeholders, a safe nurturing environment is created that includes actively engaged students, data driven instruction, discoveries through technology, creative thinking, and problem solving. Effective communication between home and school, as well as clear expectations and procedures, enhance the safe environment so that learning can be the ultimate focus.

The culture of the school is established through various practices. One aspect of McFadden is that our grades K-2 participate in daily classes called Connections. These classes are designed to extend learning and develop academic growth. Students pursue various interest-based classes and create a product for presentation. Continuing with this non-traditional approach of learning, grades 3-5 begin to rotate classes through subjects with expert teachers in specific content areas. Third graders receive core instruction in homeroom and their daily schedule includes rotations for other subjects. Fourth and fifth grade classes are departmentalized to allow for more rigorous instructional content. This approach to instruction promotes critical thinking that emerges through projects, discussions, and results in academic gains. This is highlighted by all students who present their final products in a school wide Showcase. These Connection Showcases have become traditions over the years.

Other unique opportunities that are available to students include three full functioning computer labs, transportable iPad labs, and individual laptops for students in 3-5. Additionally, fifth graders can apply for an opportunity to serve on the daily broadcast team. Their responsibilities include morning announcements and leading the school in the Pledge of Allegiance and our school Pledge of Excellence. Another important component of our school is our “Mustang of the Month” initiative which aligns core values with student behaviors. Each month, one student who best exemplifies the characteristic in behavior and actions is selected from each homeroom and is recognized and celebrated school-wide.

The Leaves of Learning, an outdoor garden named and maintained by the students, is an extension of our specialized science department. Students share responsibilities for raising and caring for chickens. Students tend to the garden by planting, composting, and/or taking care of invasive plants. This type of hands on learning in the garden offers an enriched opportunity for our students. Accompanying our garden opportunity of observing bees, birds, and seed to vegetable, students may also elect to participate in some of our after-school extracurricular activities. These activities include 4-H, Junior Beta Club, chorus, Invention Convention, chess, and the Fun Run Marathon. These opportunities allow students to pursue interests and talents that develop a more well-rounded individual.

McFadden was a recipient of the National Blue Ribbon Award in 2013. As such, we promote that as a testimony to the strength of our program. We believe this attributes to the quality of families who seek to apply. Our school continues to be a strong National Blue Ribbon candidate because it incorporates a love of

learning with a passion for success. McFadden is a family. Each day begins with our administration greeting each child both physically and via morning announcements. Each staff member is eager to provide a safe and nurturing environment where students come to grow. Each child benefits by being loved and challenged to ensure the learning is prescribed to fit individual needs. Each family is welcomed and participates in a variety of ways throughout the year. The strong academic support is only part of us. At McFadden, education is about the whole child. Our biggest compliment is that our students love to enter our building every day. They look forward to being a Mustang and we tell them when they leave at the end of fifth grade, “once a Mustang, always a Mustang!” Every day the people in our building exemplify the name “McFadden School of Excellence.”

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

---

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

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

McFadden has an all-encompassing literacy approach in every subject area throughout each grade level. Literacy is the essence of our school-wide culture as evident in our three hundred books a day checkout rate in our school library. In conjunction with the love of reading our students share, the foundation is set for academic literacy success in our K-2 classes with integration of multiple curriculums focused on higher order thinking and reasoning approaches. Teachers offer in-depth instruction connecting strategies and synthesis of reading. Our K-2 teachers participate in and implement a combination of the Rigby PM Ultra Benchmark assessment program, Wilson Foundations phonics program, and Read to be Ready program to assess learning and drive future instruction. The combined implementation of these programs includes students analyzing and responding to high level text up to two grade levels above their current grade, defending opinions with text evidence, making text-to-self connections, and participating in student led discussions while the teacher works as a facilitator of learning.

With this firm foundation, our students in grades 3-5 continue to build knowledge and respond to high level and differentiated texts through paired texts analysis-both fiction and nonfiction, synthesizing comprehensive text-based responses, and interpreting and defending points of view and author's purpose. Student led learning and teacher facilitation is evident during interactive read aloud, open discussion and text-based debate. Reading, writing, and response to text is addressed in all content areas including science, social studies, and mathematics. Varied gifted education curriculum is utilized to reinforce TN State Standards. McFadden's current one-to-one technology ratio, in grades 3-5, provides each student ample blended learning opportunities. Learning activities and assessment are easily accessible to our students through this technology. Formative and summative assessment data is used to analyze student performance and determine learning needs in this grade band as well to meet the needs of students.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Students at McFadden boast a long record of high achievement on our state standardized assessment year after year. Not only do our students score within the top three schools in Tennessee, they also continue to make significant gains in achievement. Our teachers work diligently to instill a strong number sense, develop conceptual understanding, and provide strategies for procedural fluency to produce a mathematically prepared student.

Our curriculum follows the Tennessee Academic Standards for Mathematics. The Instructional Guides and Frameworks are developed in Professional Learning Communities to ensure that students are taught and assessed appropriately. Our faculty attends quarterly training to determine best practices in teaching mathematics. Across grade levels, students are engaged in number sense routines to help them develop appropriate strategies, error analysis, and mathematical fluency. Additionally, student led number talks are embedded into our lessons to sharpen mental math strategies.

Our school-wide pedagogical belief is that students learn best when they can relate their learning to the real world. As such, students are engaged in hands-on, experimental simulations. Compacting, teaching math at an accelerated pace, provides students the opportunity to explore and develop a solid understanding of mathematics, building conceptual understanding for the next grade level.

Technology plays an important role in addressing the students' diverse mathematical needs. Each student in 3rd-5th are equipped with a Cloudbook, and Kdg-1st has access to an iPad lab. Students in 2nd grade utilizes a Cloudbook mobile lab. This allows students to engage in programs to enhance and refine their learning: iReady Math, Study Island, Moby Max, and Prodigy. In addition to using data from Common Formative Assessments, our teachers enrich and re-mediate based on data from these programs mentioned.

By following the structures outlined above, McFadden students continue to show high achievement on state assessments along with significant gains in achievement.

### **1c. Science:**

Our science program is an exceptional one. Students in grades K-2 primarily receive science instruction as part of units within their language arts classes. The K-2 grade band also incorporates science standards into their connection classes that provide enrichment based activities that students rotate through three times per year. We also use a variety of Science and Technology cross cutting concepts, hands-on learning and working in a garden on site for deep experiences in all sciences. All grade levels have access and use a fenced in garden on our school campus that was developed to offer unique experiences to our students. The garden is used year-round to develop a global awareness of earth and its resources. Our students are caretakers of chickens, plant and harvest a winter and summer garden and are participating in composting of our cafeteria waste. Along with the garden, we use STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) activities for all levels of thinking and branches of science. A variety of projects have been developed to incorporate the Science, Engineering, Technology and Math throughout different grade levels. We use technology resources such as Study Island, Mystery Science and Moby Max to enrich and strengthen our students' ability to think on a three-dimensional level. We incorporate coding with robotics at Adventure Science Museum, working with circuits and energy at Schneider Electric, animal studies at the Nashville Zoo, and environmental awareness at the Cedar Glade. Our 5th grade students participate in an overnight experience at the Land Between the Lakes, focusing on life science and ecosystems. A key assessment tool as they are progressing is their science journal that we use to answer questions and develop thinking. The combined experiences listed above help build the foundation to their science knowledge.

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

A schoolwide belief in a strong background of social studies for our students is very evident. McFadden School of Excellence's fifth grade students earned the highest scores in the state of Tennessee and a level five growth score in social studies in 2018.

Critical thinking, self-assessment, reasoning, problem-solving, collaboration, research, and investigation are used by our students to make connections in new and innovative ways as they progress through social studies education. The Tennessee Social Studies Standards describe what all students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level. Teachers create intentional and purposeful learning experiences that present the content in a variety of ways to ensure we are reaching and challenging all types of learners. Choosing quality sources and best practices, our teachers carefully plan each standards-focused lesson to be engaging for each student by combining and utilizing 1:1 technology, historic videos, primary source analysis, fiction and non-fiction text, music, written reflections, art, Reader's Theater, plays, simulations, guest speakers, field trips, and civic engagement activities.

Evidence of learning is discussed in Professional Learning Communities and enrichment or reinforcement opportunities are planned based on the evidence. Evidence consists of common formative assessment data, teacher observation, examples of student work, and scored project rubrics. Social studies enrichment can be seen in plays, historical figure reenactments, and our living history museum that our students present to our families on Showcase nights.

Social studies is integrated in K-2 primarily with their language arts instruction and 3-5 students have a designated period of social studies instruction. This instruction is enriched with specific field trips to local historical areas including the Stones River Battlefield, the home of Andrew Jackson, Oaklands Mansion, and a walking tour of Nashville.

### **1e. For secondary schools:**

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

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

The related arts are a vital and dynamic part of the curriculum at MSE. Music, art and physical education classes are on a three-day rotation. Each class receives 45-90 minutes of instruction in these subjects every week. The media center offers open checkout to students and staff from 7:45-2:30 each day. The guidance counselor has open hours during the day and has classes for all grade levels. The technology specialist assists all teachers with lessons in technology and is also available for professional development and help in all areas of technology.

Music classes include basic instruction in the elements of music for all grade levels. Students are involved in playing, singing, reading, writing, movement, composition, improvisation, and creative play. The school has a Yamaha keyboard lab and a class set of guitars that is incorporated in the general music curriculum. The music specialist collaborates with grade levels to coordinate music for special programs, to teach and assist with a song-writing unit in conjunction with fifth grade language arts and the Country Music Hall of Fame, and to assist with units on sound. Extra-curricular activities sponsored by and/or coordinated by the music specialist include an after-school chorus for fourth & fifth graders which involves one-third of all fourth and fifth grade students, an after-school instrumental ensemble for approximately twenty fifth grade chorus members, and a choral festival which includes approximately five hundred county elementary students.

All students move with both confidence and competence from receiving quality physical education at McFadden. Students receive developmentally appropriate learning experiences that cover motor skills, dance, gymnastics, movement knowledge and application, fitness, personal and social responsibility, and cooperation. Each lesson is standards-based, and students are assessed on measurable learning outcomes. The physical education specialist provides unique opportunities for students to be exposed to new forms of physical activity such as karate, gymnastics, hockey, an Olympic Field Day, Football Friday, and Kids Heart Challenge. By exposing our students to new activities, they find value in physical activity and are challenged with new forms of movement.

School-wide art instruction is based on a combination of Disciplined Based Art Education and Teaching Artistic Behaviors theories. DBAE focuses on art history, aesthetics, art production and criticism of work. This is blended with the student-as-artist mindset of TAB allowing students to experiment and explore with art mediums while creating, reflecting, and revising their own artwork. A variety of media and processes in both two and three-dimensional forms (including drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, basic sculpture, and clay) are introduced and practiced throughout all grade levels.

The McFadden Media Center currently houses over fourteen thousand titles. Our emphasis is on nonfiction which is over half of our collection. The media center averages three hundred checkouts daily. Classes for kindergarten through second grade students include library skills, author studies and topics and skills requested by grade level teachers. Third grade students' lessons focus on genre studies, award winning books and teacher requested topics. Fourth and fifth grade students utilize the open checkout but classes are scheduled through the grade level teacher as needed. In coordination with our local library, the media specialist schedules guest speakers and visiting authors. Some past authors include Susan Bartoletti, Cynthia Lord and Michael White.

The school counselor has open hours during the day to allow for parent conferences, counseling sessions, teacher collaboration, and school-wide planning for various events and activities. Guidance curriculum focuses on character education, which also incorporates into daily activities and discussions school-wide through the Core Essentials curriculum. In addition, topics such as friendship, conflict resolution, personal safety, career awareness, college readiness, responsibility, organization, feelings and emotions, self-control, growth mindset and social skills are covered in Guidance class lessons.

An instructional technology coach (ITC) is assigned to McFadden on a part-time basis. The ITC works with teachers on integrating technology into daily lesson plans, as well as with students to utilize technology with

their learning. All K-5 classes can use the ITC in any capacity, specifically in integrating devices and online programs, as well as teaching digital citizenship lessons. The faculty and administration utilizes the ITC for one-on-one day trainings, after school professional development, model lessons and co-teaching with students, and analyzing assessment data. The ITC assists teachers and students in troubleshooting issues and designing projects.

### **3. Special Populations:**

Our school by design as an academic magnet is set to serve high achievers and gifted students. While we do not have students that fall into a subgroup such as migrant, English language learner, or below grade level, we operate under the idea of encouraging each student and staff member to work with a “plus one” mindset. Our students come to us with individual strengths and weakness even though they qualify to attend a magnet school program. As students enter our program in kindergarten, we begin the process of data collection which continues throughout their time at McFadden. Teachers in kindergarten start the process by utilizing a variety of data sources including our kindergarten entrance exam, EasyCBM, Rigby Reading, and other teacher made assessments created during our Professional Learning Community meetings to gather as much of a viewpoint into each child’s learning. As a child progresses through the program, on-line resources such as STAR Reading, iReady Math and iReady Reading, and AR360 add to the data that is collected on each individual child. State assessments begin in second grade in all subject areas. Since each data point is a piece of the learning puzzle, McFadden believes that data driven decisions allow us to work toward meeting each child’s individual needs. These decisions are made in collaboration with administration, teacher, student, and parent and helps us guide the student toward excelling in their academic abilities.

While data is important in the academic area, we must also differentiate the learning to address their social and emotional needs. At McFadden, teachers use pacing and compacting to aid students in challenging learning experiences. We collaborate in our Professional Learning Communities about ways to ensure that the task demands and assessments are content-rich for all students. While we do not offer gifted services at McFadden, we do approach grouping and classroom design as working in a gifted classroom. One way this can be best seen in our school is when we implement cross-curricular units that encompass a variety of standards where students can show mastery in a variety of formats.

One such format is the utilization of technology. While technology does not replace effective teaching, integrating technology plays a vital role in our students’ education. McFadden is a “Communication Arts Through Technology” school. As such, we believe technology enhances student learning through connecting students in all learning styles, collaborating to identify and solve real-world problems, preparing students to be college and career ready, and demonstrating digital citizenship skills. Utilizing digital tools such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, OneNote, Adobe Spark or Photo Story, students can submit projects and assignments. Meanwhile, the teacher can differentiate instruction and data collection using Microsoft Forms, PlayPosit, Kahoot, and Nearpod.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

The development of our school culture for students and their family starts before even school begins. In conjunction with our PTO, we host a back to school night at McFadden. Our students and their families are welcomed back in August to a carnival like event where families interact with staff and each other during a meet and greet with their new teacher. After meeting their teacher, families head outside to food, fellowship, and games that energize our students. As the new year begins, we start the first day of school with several of our staff members out front cheering and greeting students to welcome them back to McFadden. We also set up a photo area for families to record the first day which is very popular with kindergarten families that are starting school. Within the first few weeks, we kick off our student advocacy program that revolves around the book *The Energy Bus* by Jon Gordon. Each staff member has a small group of mixed aged students that they will meet with monthly to build relationships and promote our Energy Bus rules or reinforce our character word of the month. Our monthly character word allows us to build positive emotional growth and gives us opportunities to recognize students on morning announcements for displaying those characteristics in the building. Academically with our high achieving students, we build in lessons on topics such as grit, growth mindset, failure, and effort to encourage our students to reach their potential.

As far as staff, our administration feels that building a positive culture is probably the most important professional development that we can do together. For the past three years, we have done a book study during the summer that is the focus of our August in-service. They see this as a two-fold endeavor to help us as educators not only in the classroom, but in our interactions together as a staff. Books have included *The Energy Bus* by Jon Gordon, *The Way of the Shepherd* by Dr. Kevin Leman and William Pentak, and this year our book was *Culturize* by Jimmy Casas. This past summer saw our staff meet in small groups discussing our book to see how we can bring excellent effort into every day at school. One day during our learning, we were surprised with a fun team building trip and we continue to refer to the book throughout the year during faculty meetings.

Our parents are very happy with the educational opportunities at our school, but they would tell you that they love the family culture that we continue to build at McFadden.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our school's success in working with our families and community members starts with the development of McFadden's culture. In conjunction with our Parent Teacher Organization, we strive to keep the McFadden family a part of every aspect of our student's school experience. PTO connect events, field trips, curriculum showcase nights, grandparent's week, and our parent volunteer training all point our families to connectedness.

Our school consistently works to keep parents, students, and the school community informed of students' academic achievement. Classroom information is sent home to parents by weekly folders, progress reports, and quarterly report cards. Teachers provide additional information through individual emails, phone conferences, and classroom websites. Our third through fifth grade families can access the Jupiter grades program on-line to see their grades and missing assignments at any time. Parents are also given the option of setting up parameters in the program to receive text or email alerts when classroom performance is below their expectations. Rutherford County schedules two parent conferences a year, and we encourage parents to meet with us anytime they have concerns about their child. Parents are made aware of data that is released by the Tennessee Department of Education. Our principal sends out links to any on-line data that is released for review and has hosted sessions detailing school data for parents.

Community service is another positive way in which we engage our families and community. Throughout the year in conjunction with our guidance classes, our school collects for community organizations including a local clothing closet, a domestic violence shelter, an animal shelter, and a homeless shelter to

name a few. Additionally, our students and parents also work together to support agencies such as the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, and Books from Birth Foundation. We use these events and activities to build community and teach children that it is important to help and be a part of your local community.

In addition to supporting students and families in academics, our school counselor holds one to two parent seminars each year to educate parents on important educational topics and how they can best help their children. Topics of our parent seminars have included sessions on growth mindset, technology, giftedness, and student safety.

While parents cannot attend all the above events, we do feel that the variety allows everyone to find a place to be engaged and feel a part of our McFadden family.

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

We talk to our students about constantly improving and being lifelong learners, and we approach professional development with that same mindset. Professional Development at McFadden focuses on improving instruction through individual needs, as well as, identified grade level needs, and school wide objectives. Teachers working with administration set professional development goals from test score data, technology initiatives, and personal growth goals. Grade level teams review testing data as it becomes available and looks for gaps or weaknesses in instruction. Following identification of those weaknesses, teachers can then look at professional development offerings from Rutherford County Schools or seek outside opportunities. Rutherford County offers a variety of professional development throughout the school year starting with our annual summer conference. In 2018, our conference in conjunction with School Development for Educators (SDE) offered sessions that supported all areas of K-12 education titled Ensuring Every Student Succeeds. Our administration encourages all teachers to attend the Rutherford County summer professional development conference where teachers can choose PD based upon their interest and desire to improve. Throughout the year, Rutherford County hosts several educational and motivational speakers including Todd Whittaker to support teachers throughout the county. Additionally, RCS offers subject specific training and workshops facilitated by our county instructional specialists.

At the school level, our administration leads an annual book study for our faculty. For the past three years, our entire school has taken part in a book study that relates to improving the culture of our school. In 2017, we focused on *The Way of the Shepherd* by Dr. Kevin Leman and Bill Pentak. Our study for the 2018-2019 school year was *Culturize* by Jimmy Casas. We are in constant collaboration through our Professional Learning Communities to look for ways to improve every aspect of educating our students. To ensure our students receive rigorous, daily instruction using current best practices, our teachers have taken advantage of local PD opportunities including Blended Learning, Read to Be Ready, Math Grade Level Leads Workshops, new state Science standards training, and the State Social Studies Conference. This year our teachers have been given the task of recording one of their own lessons and using the TN TEAM Evaluation Rubric to score their instruction. Once completed, the teachers will sit down with administration to discuss areas of strength and areas of refinement to focus on for future development opportunities. We talk to our students about constantly improving and being lifelong learners, and we approach professional development with that same mindset.

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

Being a small school with a small staff, our administration philosophy focuses on a shared leadership approach that looks to take advantage of the collective strength of all staff members in our building. They believe that everyone must take ownership and lead not only in the classroom, but throughout the school. Our administration makes this happen starting with the formation of our leadership team which has representation from each grade band and includes our related arts team as well as our classified staff. Periodic meetings focus on topics that were gathered at the beginning of the year by an administration survey that sought to find out identified strengths and weaknesses of our program. For example, our staff wanted to have more team building time during our faculty meetings so our administration has structured activities and fellowship time at the beginning of our meetings to help everyone stay connected and

maintain our family atmosphere.

When the school day begins, you will find our administration team outside greeting students and parents to start the morning with a positive interaction. During the school day you can find our administrators visiting classrooms, interacting with students, and team-teaching with teachers. The question that you will hear from them most often is “How Can I Help You today?” They believe that relationships are one of the most important factors in staff, stakeholder, and student success. At the end of the day, you would find our administrative team back outside helping with dismissal and telling students to have a good evening.

Our leaders also look for ways to give staff members opportunities to show leadership by giving teachers various assigned roles in our Professional Learning Communities, grade level teams, and in our Response to Intervention/Enrichment meetings. They also encourage us to lead in-services, host teachers from other schools, and work with our local college and their student teachers.

Our administrators feel that leadership is also a strategy that we must encourage in the classroom with our students. Leadership opportunities include students rotating certain jobs to help the teacher and the class, offering leadership roles in our extra-curricular opportunities such as Beta Club or 4-H, having students run our morning announcements, and leading during small group instruction. The payoff for these opportunities can be seen in the ownership of the classroom which in turn improves student achievement.

Finally, our administration is always open to feedback from all stakeholders. They survey students, staff, and families concerning their feelings about our school as well as the effectiveness of their leadership here at McFadden. They share those results with everyone and set goals for themselves each year to try and improve their own leadership abilities.

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

---

Our one practice that has been the most instrumental to our school's success as a magnet school is our drive for excellent effort. Over the years with high achieving students, we have fought the battle of when things get difficult - a battle that these high achievers are often fearful to enter which unknowingly to them can cripple them academically in the future. The idea of not being smart is a detriment to their self-worth. Consequently, our school has made a conscious decision to work toward removing those thoughts from our students. We have gotten away from telling or reinforcing with students that they are smart and moved to encouraging effort, grit, and perseverance. We work with students to build a growth mindset that accepts failure as a learning opportunity. This strategy starts with allowing students to get into the learning pit. A place where productive struggle is expected and a place where teachers strive to place their students mentally in their classrooms. We continue to also work to build a safe classroom. A safe place to be wrong. A safe place where peers celebrate the willingness of others to speak up even if they are unsure. A safe place to ask questions and not feel judged.

We have made this endeavor a part of our student advocacy program which reinforces these beliefs. Our administration finds ways to incorporate it on morning announcements with videos and messages, with signs around the building, and relating that message with our parents starting in our parent orientations at the beginning of the school year. While this idea of a failure culture would seem counterproductive to most schools, we have found that our students have embraced it and it has freed them from fear.

As a result of these efforts, our school has been a Tennessee Reward School for the past seven years for being in the top five percent for student achievement as well as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2013. Our students were at the top or near the top in almost every tested academic area in 2018. As the time for state testing approaches for 2019, we will reinforce our drive for excellent effort to show what we know. Our ultimate goal is to instill into our students a practice that will serve them well not only in school but for the rest of their life.