



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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

1. 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

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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):
- 7 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 10 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	39	40	79
1	38	34	72
2	46	28	74
3	38	44	82
4	41	40	81
5	41	35	76
6	30	40	70
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>	273	261	534

\*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
  - 4 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 17 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 71 % White
  - 5 % 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: 16%

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

McMillan's mobility rate is over 15% as nearly 30% of our population is considered economically disadvantaged. This includes a pocket of housing for a few refugees that attend the school.

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	37
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	41
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	78
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	496
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.16
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16

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

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Arabic, Spanish, Karen, Acoli, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Russian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 28%  
Total number students who qualify: 148

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %  
49 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>5</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>6</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>27</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</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: 6
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	20
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 27:1

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	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

Children are our future! McMillan is a community of learners dedicated to the success of the whole child.

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

McMillan Elementary is a neighborhood school which also houses Murray School District's elementary gifted/talented program. These students comprise approximately 16% of the total student population, with 84% of the population being general education students. Students were identified for the gifted/talented program using CogAT, Iowa and SAGES assessments. Teacher and parent surveys are also utilized. Students scoring near or above the 93 percentile on CogAT with well above average scores on the Iowa and/or SAGES assessment are offered placement in our Magnet gifted/talented program as space permits.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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McMillan Elementary School is a highly esteemed school with a vibrant student body and staff in the Murray City School District (MCSD) in Murray, Utah which is centrally located in the Salt Lake Valley. McMillan Elementary was built in 1952 and was originally named Hillcrest Elementary. In 1960, the name was changed to McMillan Elementary to honor the McMillan family who formerly owned the property around the school and is the only school in the district to be named after a local family. The school's current custodian is a descendent of that family. Murray is a fairly small city where many of its families are life-long residents. There is a small-town feeling, where residents come together to make their community great.

An energetic school, McMillan Elementary has always had an extremely involved and supportive PTA and parent community. Many traditions and activities take place each year, including The Nutcracker, which has been performed by 1st graders for guests for over 20 years. The school Fit Fun Run takes place each spring and is a popular community event. For the past five years McMillan has held a family STEM Night in coordination with their annual Science Fair, supported by the PTA. Teachers and local business professionals provide hands on science, engineering, technology and math activities to students and their families. Other school activities the students enjoy include: Principal Read alouds, Move-It Activities, Reading Counts, Principal's 200 Club, and Mighty Mite Mondays, to name just a few. For the past five years one of our favorite programs is our Veteran's Day program. Each grade level learns a specific military song. Students invite parents and grandparents who have served in the military to be their guests while they sing and present to these important members of the military.

Our school community has an ever-changing population with students in kindergarten through sixth grade. We provide a district magnet gifted/talented program for students throughout the District as well as a general education program for neighborhood students. While most of our students come from within our neighborhood, we also welcome students from within the district and various locations around the valley as space permits. McMillan often has a waiting list as it is esteemed throughout the community.

McMillan celebrates individual strengths and progress of every student. This is important as the population of our students and families vary from some of the wealthiest families in Murray, to approximately 30% who are economically disadvantaged. Given this contrast in our student population and the fact that there are two programs at this school, we come together united in purpose and expectations. As noted in our mission, the education of the whole child is a vital part of McMillan's beliefs.

McMillan's mascot is a "Mighty Mite," a "mini-spartan" who will later become a Murray High Spartan. A spartan is noted to be a person with great courage and self-discipline. McMillan students work hard to embrace these same traits. Students are encouraged to take part and stand up for what they believe to be right and create their own success, not only through academics, but also through character, and self-confidence.

Faculty, staff, parents and the entire McMillan community believe that we are collectively accountable for creating an environment in which students find success academically and emotionally. For example, it's common to see our custodian visiting with and allowing a child to help when they need special attention, or a teacher to work with the kitchen to ensure a child gets breakfast after coming late to school without breakfast, or all teachers providing weekly dinners for a family of eight in which the mother was receiving treatments for advanced stages of colon cancer. There is rarely a day you don't see this support and care throughout our community, through good times and bad.

Based on these values, McMillan's Building Leadership Team (BLT) creates, and monitors school initiatives designed to build upon social skills, behavioral supports, the emotional well-being of every child, as well as academic rigor. As this nurturing learning environment is created and maintained, students are also engaged in rigorous learning. To achieve growth in every child, a multi-tiered system of supports framework is in place, grounded in high quality academic and behavioral instruction and intervention, data-based decision making, and team-based problem solving. PLCs are held weekly in order to analyze data and plan instruction based on the needs of all students. Teachers, with the support of paraprofessionals, provide

research-based instruction, interventions, and enrichment to curricula. Teachers are supported in the constant learning of changing standards, technologies, and teaching strategies by the instructional coach, principal, and district. The orchestration of these essential components along with the commitment of the entire community makes McMillan the exceptional community it is.



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

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

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

Teachers provide effective Tier 1 instruction in all core subjects with a goal for 80-90% of their students to reach proficiency. Teachers work together to create, use and compare CFAs, exit tickets, and various other formative assessments to key in on specific skills and concepts to best meet Utah Core Standards. Other resources such as Scholastic News, Newsela, Readworks, E-Reading, and Scholastic Reading Counts are utilized to enhance reading and writing skills.

Literature Circles, small group instruction, and DYAD reading are a few strategies used to support reading comprehension and fluency. These strategies have a positive influence on reading skills as they allow students to receive more time with text, reading and discussing books with peers. These are effective strategies for all children and will be especially influential in showing progress for our English Language Learners (ELLs). In addition to Tier 1 instruction, 30-45 minutes is set aside for interventions and differentiation of basic skills.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is used throughout the grades to screen for students who may be at-risk in reading. Progress monitoring is provided to assess growth of all students, but especially those not meeting proficiency levels in DIBELS, 95% group, Benchmark assessments, and/or CFAs.

Reading intervention programs such as Early and Next Steps are provided by trained paraprofessionals. Training and coaching are provided for teachers and paras specifically in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics Instruction, and Vocabulary. We have recently begun using 95% group material in addition to other reading resources to enhance specific skills throughout the grades in order to create a continuous and consistent course of instruction for all grades K-6.

Identified at-risk kindergarten students participate in an additional 40-50 minutes of reading instruction four days a week before or after their scheduled half-day kindergarten time. Online intervention programs such as Waterford as well as instruction with the Early Reading Intervention program are provided.

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

McMillan is committed to providing best practices for instruction of the Utah State Core Curriculum. Teachers engage in planning, instructing, and assessing techniques based on strategies that are most effective. This allows us to provide effective connections between concepts, skills, standards, curricula, and assessments which ensure equitable access to the core standards for all students. Teachers, the instructional coach, with the support of the principal hold weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to coordinate goals, analyze data and to discuss and coordinate instruction based on the needs of students. These PLCs foster dialogue to provide a scaffolded classroom where all students receive the support necessary to grow and achieve mastery of the core standards in all subject areas. J. Hattie instructional priorities are also applied to ensure best practices are being followed.

In Tier 1 instruction, a variety of mathematical resources such as EveryDay Math, Ready Math, Engage NY, Achieve the Core, and NCTM are used. Teachers also practice the “10 Instructional Shifts” in math practice as described in Steve Leinwand’s book, Accessible Mathematics.

In addition to Tier 1 instruction, a specific time (30 minutes), as laid out in the Master Schedule, is used to differentiate instruction in order to provide for the various needs of all students. Instructional aides are used in grades 4-6 classrooms during this time to facilitate instruction for small groups. Students needing extra support are supported and re-taught by teachers. The use of technology instruction is also used to differentiate and provide extra practice in mathematical concepts and fluency.

BrainPop and Reflex Math subscriptions are purchased for all students. These resources, in addition to iReady and Waterford are used for additional practice of math facts and skills. These resources are also available for students to use at home for additional practice.

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

McMillan's science curriculum provides students experiences in the Utah Science Core Standards. These practices include inquiry-based learning, making connections to real-life problem solving, and hands-on exploration. Resources such as Utah's Open Education Resource (OER) books and website, Readworks, SEEd StoryLines, SEEd Utah, and DefinedStem are used.

The science curriculum is regularly integrated into the language arts state standards through reading and writing of informational text, as part of the school's interdisciplinary focus. Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) methods are used throughout the day. The use of technology has increased significantly over the past few years with an increased number of computers. Last year, MCSD dedicated funds to purchase nearly all students' computers. Next year McMillan will be complete with 1:1 computer to student ratio. Current instructional practices with an increase of technology for both teacher and students has changed the practice of technology use. Students not only use these tools for research, but for producing products in all subject areas.

An annual family STEM night has been held for the past five years to inform and build understanding for parents and families about STEM. Students and their families are given time to rotate to three or four stations chosen out of approximately twelve events where they can participate in hands on inquiry-based activities. We believe this also encourages and supports learning in the home.

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

The social studies curriculum in kindergarten through second grade focuses on expanding social themes from self to community. Students are also introduced to citizenship, geography, and culture. Students in third through sixth grade engage in learning geared to expand content knowledge and making connections through reading and writing of informational texts. The curriculum moves students from understanding their local communities to that of Utah specific content, the study of the United States, and world studies.

Teachers integrate this curriculum into their reading and writing standards in order to make use of time and build connections while understanding of Utah State Core Standards in Social Studies. Identified reading and writing standards are integrated to build on these skills, assess comprehension and vocabulary, and measure intended learning outcomes.

Students also learn basic concepts of economics and business through the Junior Achievement Program implemented by parent volunteers. Connections are made between education and skills necessary in the workplace. The learning tasks build on concepts from the preceding grade to build real-life connections.

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

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

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

McMillan Elementary implements a "rotation" system to include specialized curriculum such as PE, library, music, and computers. During this time, trained paraprofessionals provide instruction and activities specifically aligned to the Utah Core Standards in these areas while teachers use the time to collaborate in

PLCs.

The music curriculum includes Utah Core Music Standards such as pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre dynamics and textures. Students sing, create, and play music. Depending on the grade, students learn to play various instruments such as ukuleles and recorders. The works of prominent musicians are also introduced, and connections are made to literature and math.

The school has a school choir for second through sixth grade, organized by parent volunteers. Dedicated students come once a week, 45 minutes before school starts. Other means to promote an appreciation of the arts include performances by A.R.T.S. Inc., Ballet West, and Murray City Arts Foundation.

Physical Education Standards are embedded during recess, breaks in class, and weekly PE time. Students learn social and emotional skills along with physical fitness skills in weekly classes directed by our PE coach. Playworks instruction is designed and used to engage students physically while promoting safety, engagement, and student empowerment. These skills are promoted and embed into recess to encourage appropriate and productive play. This play has also resulted in decreased office referrals during recess. Jr. Coaches, a few chosen upper grade students, are trained in leadership skills and support younger students in active play at recess.

Library skills including writing and storytelling are taught in weekly library/media classes that support learning throughout the school and develops a culture that promotes a love of reading and an ability to acquire knowledge. Students participate in learning through stories, small group activities, writing, and independent work. The media aide uses materials containing a wide range of information in order to enhance the practice of critical thinking, reading, and writing, reinforcing and enhancing core standards. Lessons correlate with the curriculum and provide collections of materials for classroom use.

The use of technology at McMillan and throughout our MCS D has increased significantly in the past five years. At McMillan, the number of student computers has grown from having two labs, with a total of 56 computers, to 1:1 computer to student ratio. Perhaps even more significant, K-6 grade students have gone from using computers in the lab with a few simple programs, to constant use of technology throughout the school. Our lab aide has introduced students to a variety of technology resources including coding/programming activities.

A variety of instructional strategies and tools are being used in most classes. Technology is integrated throughout all subjects. As technology has increased and grown so rapidly, so has the need for teacher training, in order to ensure blended learning can occur. During the past year, our Fellows (school technology team), have focused on introducing new programs to our faculty. Our goal has been to make technology accessible and as stress free as possible as there are a variety of computer-based comfort levels within our faculty. The Fellows have facilitated this by presenting the information in whole faculty settings, smaller training classes, and individual training sessions within the classroom. District technology coaches have also been utilized and have made a huge impact in our use of technology instruction in the classroom. Teachers' interests grew the more involved they were and the more programs they were exposed to. A few of the programs presented to various groups of the faculty include Google Classroom, Google slides and forms, Google Drive organization, Adobe Spark, Office 365, Prodigy, and Reflex Math. Other technological instructional strategies and tools shown and being used are Plickers, Excel Spreadsheets, NewsELA, ReadWorks, ThingLink, Pear Deck, Nearpod, and Kahoot. Typing Agent and Utah Compose programs are also used to improve writing skills.

Character Education is embedded throughout the school every day. Teachers have high expectations for behavior and respect in everything they do. We also have a Principal's Book of the Month in which the principal reads to every classroom approximately every six weeks. We discuss the book which revolves around ideas such as improving self-confidence, respecting self and others, community service, and bullying. These books are left in the classroom for students to take home and share with their families. These take-home books include ways students and families can discuss these ideas at home to support the values being shared at school.

### 3. Special Populations:

Steadfast Tier 1 instruction is among one of our highest expectations of teachers. McMillan uses evidence-based instruction. This begins with purposeful planning to establish clear learning targets and identified success criteria. Explicit instruction, meaningful high-quality engagement tasks such as feedback, multiple and varied opportunities to respond, and questioning strategies, are implemented to maximize the effect of instruction on student learning.

Based on identification from various assessments and discussions in PLCs, students needing additional support are provided with Tier II interventions that focus on specific skill-based instruction. Small groups and additional scaffolding are used to meet the needs of students who assess below proficiency levels, as well as those needing extended learning opportunities. District and State Land Trust funding is dedicated to providing reading and math interventionists to build an added layer of instructional service for identified students. This may include small group instruction, tutoring, and/or practice with specific technology programs. This may also mean enrichment activities for those who are proficient, which includes our Gifted Talented population, but need another dimension of learning experience. A school support group is used to track student concerns and monitor the influence of the intervention, analyze growth, and adjust as needed.

PLCs are at the center of collaborating on student learning, growth, and/or lack thereof. Teachers, with the support of the coach and principal, work for 50 minutes weekly in PLCs. They use this time to create and align concept maps, create targeted goals, and analyze CFAs and benchmark data. Based on the outcome of these assessments, the team creates targeted action plans to improve skills of below proficiency levels and enrich those above proficiency levels.

Populations such as English Language Learners (ELLs) have additional needs. We strive to place ELLs with teachers who are English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsed. They also have an additional 30 minutes with an ESL paraprofessional where they learn skills specific to their goals and needs, according to their annual WIDA English Language Proficiency Assessment.

Our G/T students are in self-contained classrooms with teachers who are G/T endorsed. Although these students are typically proficient in most areas, they too have individual needs and skills that must be met. We work on various social skills as well as provide enhanced academic experiences. These students have the opportunity to dive deeper into content areas with additional expectations to ensure they continue to show significant growth each year.

In analyzing data, the achievement gap most noticeable was with students with disabilities. In the past couple of years, we have created a PLC we call the iSpEd Team. This includes our Special Education Teacher, Coach, School Counselor, Speech and Language Itinerant, and Principal. The school counselor takes the lead to ensure students are not being left behind. This team works together, in coordination with the student's teacher, to discuss and ensure specialized instruction is coordinated between General Education and Special Education teachers. The team works together to analyze data, discuss possible adjustments to interventions, and monitor progress. Although we have more work to do in this area, over the past 3 years, our students with disabilities have improved in each subject area.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Perhaps more important than the various resources, curricula, and technology, is how people feel when they enter the school. More often than we can count, people have commented on how comfortable and welcoming McMillan is. The care, understanding, acceptance, and respect that exists at McMillan help create this environment.

At McMillan, school means much more than just academics, which we believe will come if a child's basic needs are met. As stated in our mission statement, "Children are our future...[we are] dedicated to the success of the whole child." This means something different for every child, every teacher, every staff member, and every parent, grandparent, or guardian. McMillan works hard to ensure all who enter our school get what they need. This starts with teachers getting to know and understand what a child is learning, not learning, why or why not? They ask themselves, is it a personal, family, physical, emotional, or academic skill that is needed? Sometimes it may be all of these things. A couple of strategies teachers use to build emotional strength is to hold class community meetings daily, talking to individuals, parents, and various groups as needs arise, and most importantly getting to know each child, their strengths, their weaknesses, and their interests. We have also found that behaviors and difficult children respond much better when the environment is positive. This means positive reinforcements which come in many forms, from as simple as a positive comment to earning an extra fifteen-minute recess or class party. It is vital that we make school a safe and loving place for our children, some of whom may only have this feeling while they are there.

Teachers can make the biggest impression of a child's life and learning than any other factor. Our teachers are incredible and extremely valuable to our success. It's vital that teachers know and believe this. Teachers can be very hard on themselves as many are perfectionists and have extremely high expectations. That's what makes them great! However, it's important we provide them with time to breath and to enjoy what they are doing. The balance is difficult at times, but with the support we give each other and the closeness we feel as a faculty, it makes everything else possible.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

An important factor in our school culture is the amazing parent support that exists. McMillan has a highly involved group of parents and grandparents. Volunteers help teachers in and out of the classroom, show appreciation for faculty and staff through treats, notes, and dinners, as well as support for many extra activities for our students that include field-trips, assemblies, popcorn Fridays, birthday treats for students and staff, parents and pastries, family nights, etc. They also work with the school to support service for the community such as food drives, fundraising, sending care packages to veterans, as well as organize our Veterans Day Program where students present a special program to our local Veterans.

Our School Community Council is also central to involving parents. The school community council has a combination of parents and faculty. It is required that more parents than faculty members are on the council. Using school-wide data, this council helps to create and support the school improvement plan and make decision as to how State Land Trust Funds are to be used to achieve designated goals.

McMillan has also had the opportunity to extend our community into Mexico. We were able to help a school that received some major damages during an earthquake last year. This came about through one of our paraprofessionals going to the principal and sharing her story about how her mother was killed in an earthquake in Mexico over 30 years ago, with her father passing away from cancer a few months later. Her and her three siblings were taken in by an American family and she was now at the point in her life she wanted to return the favor by helping these children in Mexico through this recent earthquake. Through her contacts we were able to connect with a school and raise funds for recess equipment, to help rebuild an outdoor lunch area as well as provide funds for them to rebuild a stairway to ensure its safety. The most exciting part of this experience was connecting the two schools through Skype and having their children

(those learning English) and our children (those who spoke Spanish) communicate with one another. This was an experience we will never forget.

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

With all the changes happening in education, technology, and student population needs, professional learning has become a fundamental necessity. Our school district has also had many changes from within, causing changes in overall goals, expectations, and curriculum adjustments. Again, making professional learning necessary. Finding the balance in allowing teachers to “teach” and adding more to their plates can be difficult. We have found that systemic changes are best done if they are gradual and allow teachers to be part of the process. We also try to ensure the time spent in professional learning is spent effectively and efficiently. This means most of our faculty meetings involve professional learning. If announcements can be made on paper, that is what is done. The principal creates a weekly newsletter, laying out the week and sharing reminders and possible articles or resources relating to what we are learning that teachers can reference.

Other means of professional learning may include half day substitutes while teachers spend the time focusing on a specific learning/instructional concepts that are needed. Substitutes and/or teacher stipends are provided through budgeted district and state funds. Following are a couple of examples as to how these funds have benefitted our students. In looking at our 2014-2017 end of year data, we could see our scores were good but fairly stagnant. In diving deeper into the data and various assessments, we realized two things, 1) we needed more rigor in our math instruction, and 2) we needed to understand more about how we needed to do to improve our writing.

With our math rigor, we analyzed what was being asked and how the questions were being presented through a program that has shown to correlate with our end of year testing. With that information teachers saw they needed to adjust their instruction to be more concept-based and questions needed to be more rigorous. Basically, the depth of knowledge (DOK) needed adjusting. In regard to our second concern, the principal and instructional coach had gone to a couple of state trainings in writing. The coach then shared this information with teachers, while they were provided half day substitutes. Grades K-2 participated in professional learning in the morning while 3-6 grade teachers came together in the afternoon. There were specific ideas and adjustments teams of teachers noticed they could make in their instruction; they were then assigned to go back and use what they had learned to see if they could get better results. Teachers were excited to see the changes that took place in both areas. Results show our stagnant scores improved in all subject areas.

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

Leadership is a critical part of having a successful school. Certainly, the principal is considered a leader, but at McMillan we are all leaders. Teachers are leaders and examples to their students and colleagues as students are leaders to their school and classmates.

A Building Leadership Team (BLT) was a new idea to McMillan six years ago. However, the new principal came in knowing it was a necessary tool to increase leadership capacity and make important decisions. Teachers were asked to be part of this team in the beginning based on their talents, the influence they had on others, and their willingness to take a leadership role. Every year, part of this team rotates out to allow others to rotate in and be part of the team. As of next year, all teachers will have had the opportunity to be an important member of the BLT. The BLT meets at least monthly as a group to analyze and problem-solve the academic (reviewing school-wide data), behavioral, and emotional status within the school and develop solutions that may be best for all. For example, in the beginning it was noted by teachers that they wanted a consistent school-wide behavior plan. As the principal had previous experience with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) we used this as a starting point. The BLT developed a behavior system and then presented it to the other teachers. Each year, we take a half day when each grade rotates to various areas of the building and playground to review appropriate actions and behaviors. These expectations are also posted throughout the building and supported by all faculty and staff.

Students are also leaders at McMillan. Interested 5th and 6th grade students apply for both our safety patrol as well as our student council. The safety patrol members are trained and then rotate every couple of weeks to stay a few minutes after school to ensure students get to their pick-up locations safely.

In addition to our student council leaders, students are chosen from each class and given the opportunity to be part of the student council. They make decisions and lead out on activities such as spirit days, fundraisers, and giving “heart attacks” (secretly placed heart-shaped notes all over a secretary’s desk, or around the principal’s, custodian’s, and kitchen doors) to thank them for all they do.

Students also take on leadership roles as they team with younger classes and help train and mentor these student as they learn more about technology. These students also provide support in areas of reading and math. New friendships and school unity are additional benefits that come from this practice.

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

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Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) can be defined as many things. At McMillan, we realize PLCs is not a noun but a way of “being.” Richard DuFour states, “To create a professional learning community, focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively, and hold yourself accountable for results.” This is what McMillan tries to do each and every day.

PLCs encompass academics, assessments, socio-emotional needs, as well as the culture of the school. Six years ago, when the teachers were asked by the new Principal about PLCs, she saw everything from tears to steam. Creating an environment of effective and collaborative learning through the core principles of PLCs became the Principal’s biggest priority.

PLCs were renamed, redefined, and renewed to create an environment conducive to learning from each other, collaborate effectively, and most importantly, to ensure ALL students were learning to the best of their abilities. In order to allow them the opportunity to truly learn what PLCs are, a few teachers are invited each year to attend a PLC Conference. All of our teachers have now had that experience.

As the first BLT was trained at the PLC conference, they got excited and began training the other teachers on the true concepts of a PLC. The BLT presented trust building and personality type activities along with creating ways to review data and understand what was needed to ensure all students were learning.

Each year, as a new group of teachers attends the conference, they get rejuvenated about the difference they can make. They bring back many new ideas to share with teachers. Together, we have developed our own ways of keeping and sharing data, created agendas to enable us to use our fifty-minute collaboration time wisely, and realized the importance of creating and keeping norms. PLCs are taking place between class periods, before and after school, during lunch and of course at specified times allocated to discuss the four important questions mentioned previously, as laid out by DuFour. Teachers have learned, and continue to learn how to review data, what to look for in the way of ensuring specific skills have been met, and the “now what” when children struggle or need to go beyond the basic understanding and move deeper into their understanding and apply what they know. Every faculty member with their individual talents, from our Special Ed, Regular Ed, and Gifted/Talented teachers, play a vital part in ensuring growth and success for every child.

PLCs are now a treasured time, as we have learned the value of creating goals, sharing data, and collaborating for the purpose of student growth. We truly believe in our children and will do all we can to help them succeed.