

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name James Monroe Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 42-100 Yucca Lane  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Bermuda Dunes State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 92203-8100

County Riverside

Telephone (760) 772-4130 Fax (760) 772-4135

Web site/URL  
<https://sites.google.com/desertsands.us/jamesmonroe>  
E-mail kristie.joiner@desertsands.us

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. Scott Bailey E-mail sbailey@desertsands.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Desert Sands Unified School District Tel. (760) 777-4200

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 Mrs. Linda Porras  
(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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	10	9	19
K	62	41	103
1	62	58	120
2	61	49	110
3	71	61	132
4	44	59	103
5	48	50	98
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>	358	327	685

\*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):
- 0.6 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2.3 % Asian
  - 2.5 % Black or African American
  - 58 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 32 % White
  - 4.1 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 2%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	17
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	698
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Tagalog, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Arabic, Hindi, Russian, Burmese, Spanish, German, Hebrew

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %  
81 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 57 %  
 Total number students who qualify: 390

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %

72 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>7</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>34</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>28</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</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: 2

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the 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.	28
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.	4
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 25:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	96%	94%
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 2019.

<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.

James Monroe Elementary building leaders through creativity, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration. Teachers and staff takes a hand, opens a mind, and touches a heart.

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**

---

James Monroe Elementary School is a learning community where all students, staff, and parents collaborate to seize daily opportunities to achieve the highest results. An unwavering commitment to educational equity for all students, an unprecedented level of teamwork, a relentless focus that places the needs of students first, and the understanding that the social-emotional health of our students precedes all, has propelled our school to academic achievement far above the state, county, and local districts.

Built-in 1990 within the small community of Bermuda Dunes, an unincorporated area in the Coachella Valley, James Monroe Elementary School is a Title I school serving a diverse population, where 48% of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged and 10% are English Learners. The diversity includes 55% Hispanic, 32% Caucasian, and with the remaining 11.9% comprising more than seven other ethnicities. Our students come from a variety of family structures, some living with an extended family member or from multiple families living within one dwelling, some being raised by grandparents, both parents, or a single parent. This diversity serves as the inspiration and foundation of a caring school culture that is a tightly-woven tapestry comprised of individuals from vastly different cultures, ethnicities, communities, and parental educational backgrounds who have chosen Monroe because of the excellence in achievement and student outcomes that are a direct result of programs Monroe offers and the reputation of its dynamic and caring staff. In fact, Monroe's student population has increased by 17% over the past three years. Its reputation of excellence has remained consistent: 29% of the student population have transferred in from other schools and districts.

Monroe Elementary School consistently ranks as one of the top-performing schools in Desert Sand Unified School District. Other factors distinguish Monroe, including its highly qualified and dedicated teachers, a dynamic system of support and professional development from our district, along with an active and supportive parent-teacher organization that regularly contributes both time and finances to enhance the educational experience of all students. The staff believes that high achievement is sustained by a relentless focus on all students, their needs, building professional capacity, and ensuring that each member fosters a school culture that remains positive and kind at all times.

James Monroe Elementary had the honor of being recognized as a California Distinguished School in 2018 and 2020. We have been recognized for outstanding achievement multiple years by the California Business Education Excellence Honor Roll School awards. Monroe's unique instructional delivery model has been observed and replicated at other district schools. It has also been recognized as a model school practice by our supporting county office of education. Monroe staff and administration host teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators from other schools who seek to learn about our instructional delivery model.

One aspect of school culture that has changed since its initial California Distinguished School in 2018 recognition, has been a focus on social-emotional learning. With district support, coaching and professional development Monroe has implemented a comprehensive, multi-tiered system of support. Under the MTSS framework, Monroe employs a collaborative team approach that includes shared decision making and the addition of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), including a schoolwide system of rewards and cultural values that support student success. PBIS is the foundation we build student skill and independence in the attainment of self-regulation and positive behaviors. These behavioral attributes are built on the foundations of our school's mustang family values. These values include: we work together to get better - I achieve more by cooperating, we aim high and always try - I become my best when I try everything and try hard, we are polite and do what is right - I show respect and treat others how they want to be treated, we all belong, we are Mustang strong - I value all members of my Mustang Family.

Professional development and support in the area of social-emotional learning, has included a focus on daily "connect time" in classrooms, a designated time supporting students in relational connections, social engagement, emotional health and regulation, and academic engagement. Monroe embraces the urgency for the success of our at-risk students within our subgroup populations. These students include students with disabilities, English Language Learners and socio-economic disadvantaged students.

The saying it takes a village is reflective of our success at James Monroe. Our village includes strong support from all departments at our district office. The educational services, business, personnel services and student support departments play an integral role in strengthening our ability to serve our students. Their support enables our staff to provide an outstanding educational experience in a safe and orderly environment. Our village also includes our staff and parents who prioritize the needs of our students first and foremost. This relentless focus on our students puts aside traditional barriers and has resulted in Monroe's success and high achievement.

Monroe staff commits to providing a nurturing and inspiring educational experience so that ALL students realize their potential. As the school values state, "We all belong, we are Mustang STRONG!"



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

---

### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

All teachers, transitional kindergarten through fifth, embrace vertical articulation with the philosophy that all Mustangs are all of our students and we seek to create an equitable learning journey across grade levels wherein teachers use explicit instruction with a common language, gestures, procedures, strategies, and social-emotional learning experiences to teach the whole child across all grade levels.

Unique to Monroe is our “team teaching model” with content specialists in grades 3-5, soon to expand to grade 2. This model strengthens vertical alignment in our school. Specialized content teachers collaborate both vertically and horizontally to ensure curriculum and skill coherence, first-best instructional practices, and instructional equity. This exceptional model of collaboration solidifies an exceptional learning experience for all children.

Our guiding coalition meets to analyze SMART goal data and to ensure common first best tier 1 practices that align across grade levels. Monthly vertical and horizontal articulation during the protected time for professional learning communities ensures that teams of teachers examine essential standards with formative data, adjust and plan instruction for tier II intervention, and share the best tier-one practices. Our schoolwide implementation of AVID Elementary, achieving via individual determination, focuses on organization and collaboration. Another major area of focus is first-best instructional practice, early literacy, writing, inquiry, and critical reading across all subject areas. Our staff has been trained in Kagan cooperative learning structures that are designed to promote cooperation and communication in the classroom and engage students in their learning. Both AVID strategies and Kagan structures serve as the foundation for classroom management.

Our tight-knit community of teachers forms the firm foundation necessary for planning rigorous instruction. Teachers share a keen level of trust, making it possible to leverage data, share technology-based solutions, and support each other with the implementation of district professional development to its fullest potential.

### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

California Common Core Standards serve as our foundation for what is taught in the area of Reading/English Language Arts. Using CAASPP, California Assessment for Student Performance and Progress claims data and DIBELS, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills data is used to inform instructional plan and design rigorous learning experiences in our two areas of focus are early literacy and process writing.

Monroe’s unique success in our district lies in vertical alignment of common first best practices within process writing and reading foundations instruction. Because teams align strategies vertically, students are familiar with terms and procedures year after year so instruction becomes very efficient. For example, classrooms use common close reading annotation posters K - 5, all primary grades follow the same format for explicit phonics instruction using “reading foundations” planners developed at our district. The critical piece is that teachers use the planners, sitting together, to intentionally select words, sentences, and every other part of each day’s reading foundation lesson. Another example is that all classrooms, transitional kindergarten through fifth grade, use the same structure, and gradual release model for teaching process writing. We use the “Step up to Writing” structure across all grade levels and have developed standards-based writing rubrics to set clear learning goals for students and provide useful feedback for students about their writing. Three times yearly, vertical teams meet to examine student writing assessments and to use that data to address student needs and to share best practices across grade levels.

Tiered instructional practices, MTSS, multi-tiered systems of support within ELA, and formative assessments guide our instructional approach. Teams plan tier I reading foundations instruction horizontally

across each grade level. Each team uses the district-provided “reading foundations planner” as the skeleton for planning the foundations' block, but the power of instruction lies in the teams' skillful common planning of which specific words and sentences, and other components would be beneficial for each lesson. Tier two instruction and small group support are informed by common formative assessments called DIBELS progress monitoring assessments. These are given frequently and regularly, and tracked in a school-wide spreadsheet, to inform teams about the growth of students in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency.

The incorporation of technology-based support is an important part of our instruction. We have leveraged our district's adopted curriculum, Benchmark Advance, given its strong technology component. In addition to guiding students in the close reading process, using paper-based annotations, teachers also use the digital format of the curriculum to allow students to annotate text digitally and access digital resources. All classrooms at Monroe employ a one to one device program in which student has their own device checked out to them. Teachers “push” out content and assignments to aid in whole-group and small group instruction. Grades second through fifth frequently uses Google Classroom to create quick formative assessments via Google forms to check for understanding in language arts.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Using CAASPP claims and target data to inform instructional focus and essential standards for the year, our school selected problem-solving as our schoolwide focus for our SMART goal. Teachers also engage in crucial vertical articulation to ensure that prerequisite, essential math standards are mastered in each grade level before students are faced with new standards in the next school year. Teachers frequently analyze data with the grade level “above” to discover which standards were a “strength” for this year's incoming students, and which standards could have used more focus for that cohort of students.

Teachers use common routines, such as Number Talks, to encourage students to think critically, collaborate, and articulate their reasoning, in alignment with our schoolwide AVID focus on collaboration. Teachers also use a combination of explicit instruction and inquiry-based math instruction. For example, at times teachers' model and then guide students through the process of a mathematical procedure, and at other times students are given time and space to cognitively struggle with a mathematical situation or problem and are encouraged to seek multiple strategies for arriving at a solution. We recognize the importance of encouraging critical thinking in mathematics, especially during problem-solving. Teachers use the “three read protocol” to promote the critical reading process and inquiry when students encounter a word problem. The three read protocol is one way to close read complex math word problems. When teachers deploy the same protocols at each grade level, it provides students with continuity of strategies helping to organize their learning.

While teachers use common tier one best practices, such as Number Talks and the three-read protocol, they also recognize the need for small groups and differentiated math instruction. Many teachers customize lessons pushed out digitally through a program called Dreambox. Dreambox software is adaptive in nature and scaffolds context according to the user's answers. It also provides our teachers with formative progress data to the teacher which is used to inform teaching and learning offline. While students are independently engaged in Dreambox, teachers meet with small groups to reteach and pre-teach mathematical concepts. Common formative assessments drive teachers' decisions about who and what to teach during tier two instruction. A quick “ticket out the door” or the use of whiteboards tells teachers on the spot if a student needs additional support after the lesson. Technology-based supports are incorporated into the mathematics curriculum. In addition to Dreambox, teachers leverage the use of ThinkCentral, a digital and customizable platform is part of our GoMath curriculum. Students excel when teachers assign customized lessons through ThinkCentral in specific standards.

An important part of our success in math with upper-grade students is the incorporation of project-based learning in which students use content to solve real-life problems. Students are engaged not only in the learning of mathematical concepts but are compelled to use their learning in the DOK, depth of knowledge, level four's application level. In this extended thinking realm learning, students are posed with a problem or situation then design and develop a solution using the application of their skills. These projects are a great source of pride for our students! These projects include shark tank where students develop, design, and

make a product to simplify their life and the School to School Water Project where they raise money to have clean water well installed at schools in third world countries. These projects make learning relevant and ensure rigor for our students.

#### **1d. Science**

At James Monroe, we use state standards known as the Next Generation Science Standards. The use of our state's common core standards in science is important to us because we want our students exposed to the most rigorous standards possible. The NGSS guides our approach as we immerse our students in the rigors of multiple areas of practice. This includes the practices that describe the behaviors in which scientists and engineers engage. The standards also include the disciplinary core ideas, the science disciplines, and crosscutting concepts that describe concepts linking the different domains of science. At James Monroe, we use an online curriculum called Mystery Science that enables us to engage students in the physical, life, earth, and space sciences along with engineering and technology.

James Monroe engages students in Mystery Science calibrated with the “Next Generation Science Standards”. This highly engaging program includes embedded assessments that include multiple choice answers, both short and long student responses. Another expression of understanding in assessment practices through nonlinguistic concept representation. These types of responses students draw diagrams of other types of labeled responses. Also embedded, are hands-on activities that enable students to build and test their hypotheses and give valuable opportunities for critical thinking. Assessment data analyzed by teachers in the classroom and discussed during professional learning community team time. Collaborative teams vary and contain vertical and horizontal, or content-specific colleagues. Assessment data guides the next steps in concept development, instructional design, and tiered strategies to meet the needs of our students.

Students at Monroe are also exposed to activities within the engineering and technology standards. These learning experiences include the areas of coding, robotics, virtual reality, and building. These experiences provide essential practice in the areas of problem-solving, critical thinking, organization, persistence, and perseverance.

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

At James Monroe, the California Common Core Standards for history-social science are fully implemented. The curriculum we use is Studies Weekly that aligns with the standards and framework set forth. English language arts units within our curriculum called Benchmark Advance, include themes that align with concepts and units within social studies. Lesson plans contain the concepts of rigor and relevance that enable students to relate to and take an interest in the content. The subject of social studies is also integrated with our school’s emphasis on writing. One way students express their understanding of concepts is in the form of process writing they have learned from their writing teacher.

Studies Weekly offers a unique digital experience including interviews, videos, and primary sources. Teachers guide critical thinking and inquiry-based approach that enables students to better relate to the subject. Alignment and coherence with our ELA curriculum enable teachers and students to integrate the building and development of essential skills. Teachers use rigor and relevance to engage students in real-life content via discussions and problem-solving opportunities. Learning experiences take place in a larger group, small group, and individual learning formats. The content and materials presented by teachers are engaging and excites students, sustains interest, and compels students to engage in project-based learning.

The social studies curriculum provides embedded tools of assessment. Unit assessments include a variety of student feedback types that includes multiple-choice and written short or long answers. In written responses, students learn to express reasoning and support of their theories by citing evidence from within the text. Student writing is a valuable tool for assessment. Classroom teachers, teams of teachers, including both horizontal and vertical teams, collaborate, discuss, and analyze data that enables us to plan future instruction and meet the diverse needs of our learners.

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

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

James Monroe Elementary School proudly offers a comprehensive transitional kindergarten program. The California Department of Education funds this program and it is open to children who are four years of age and who turn five between September second and December second. Transitional kindergarten is a two-year program that prepares participants for kindergarten. Transitional kindergarten is fully aligned with our entire K-5 program. Alignment provides coherence with curricular concepts that spiral up in all grade levels. California content standards guide instruction and are modified for developmental appropriateness.

We take time to nurture and develop areas of behavior shaping and social-emotional skills. The instructional deliver model includes academics, behavior, and social-emotional development taking into account developmentally appropriate strategies for transitional kindergarten students. Curricular supports contain student assessment tools used by the teacher and the district provides other tools such as Dibels. Teachers analyze assessment data and collaborate with kindergarten colleagues. Collaboration provides feedback and guides the planning of instruction and implementation of differentiated strategies to meet the diverse needs of our students.

Program instruction works to build skills in the areas of sustained attention, sustained time on task, success at routines, following one and two-step directions, successful socialization, independence within the school environment, and self-expression. Transitional kindergarten is a full day of instruction. Program participants take part in opportunities enjoyed by all Monroe students. This includes weekly art, physical education, and time in our library-media center.

Due to the rigorous cognitive demand of our full-day program, we understand individual development varies, therefore, differentiated pacing ensures we meet the needs of our students. Within research-based developmental milestones, maturity within the spectrum of development varies greatly. We take pride in meeting the diverse needs of our students while sustaining rigor and scaffolding to make sure learning continues on an upward trajectory.

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

While some may think that “other curriculum areas” are simply extras, we believe that these areas have incredible value for our school culture, helping a student feel excited to be a Monroe Mustang, and making rigorous instruction possible. Our school counselor counted no less than seventy “extra” opportunities for involvement offered to our students each year.

For example, our notable performing arts team, headed by our school counselor and PE teacher, with the support of a volunteer crew of teachers, stages a large school musical yearly and several upper-grade choir performances, including a veteran’s day performance for veterans in our community, performed by all grade’s transitional kindergarten through fifth. This year, our upper graders performed “James and the Giant Peach” with a double cast, including seventy members in the cast and crew. Our counselor leverages this opportunity to include students who would benefit from involvement in something special. Many students “come alive” with excitement while preparing for performances, and acquire essential listening, speaking, and self-management skills while performing in front of an audience. Our students also gain valuable confidence from our visual arts teacher, who is supported wholly by our PTO funds, as she teaches weekly art lessons to each and every child in addition to planning a yearly “art auction” and gallery, showcasing pieces from all students.

Our student’s physical education experience also enhances student social-emotional and physical health. As our PE teacher is a key member of our MTSS team, and as one person who knows the names of all students, he helps our team make decisions about what is best for students to create emotional and physical safety at recess, in hallways, and during PE. For example, he wrote and helped direct a skit, performed by teachers from each grade level at split assemblies, to teach students our core “Mustang Values.” He teaches these values during PE instruction, so students understand that schoolwide expectations are consistent inside and outside the classroom. In addition, he facilitates “Fitness Friday” soon after the start bell rings every Friday, attended by all first through fifth grade students. “Fitness Friday” alternates between 20 minutes of walking

laps around the campus and fitness rotations, manned by a volunteer team of teachers that plan with our PE teacher. He also coaches both after school basketball and soccer teams for district-wide tournaments.

All students benefit from the gradual transformation of our library into a “media and technology center.” This year, our librarian has acquired and introduced many STEM components for our students. For example, primary grades are exploring bee bots during weekly library visits, while other grades enjoy learning about ozo bots. Finally, upper-grade students learn about coding with dash and dot as they program robots to complete various tasks. The library boasts a set of Chromebooks so that students have one to one computer device during their visit to the library, and are able to access our district’s eBooks as well as search engines for research. In addition, our librarian has taught special after school classes to intentionally selected students who have not been able to participate in other extracurricular activities due to behavior or learning struggles. She teaches them about robotics, and they are so excited about these weekly opportunities.

In addition, our schoolwide implementation of AVID intentionally supports life skills through the organization of time, thought, and materials. Our teachers meet vertically to examine how students at each grade level are organizing their materials, from simple folders in Kindergarten to large 2-inch binders in upper grades, building students’ abilities to manage and organize their learning before entering Middle school. Our AVID focus ensures that students are explicitly taught about the opportunity of college in the future, and students are able to set life-goals, write daily reflections in their agendas, and learn about possible future colleges.

Finally, students are offered additional opportunities for involvement. Our student council, with thirty plus members, facilitates a number of community-building events such as before-school muffins with mom, donuts with dad, Grandparents’ Day, “I CAN” food drive, school spirit weeks for Red Ribbon awareness, Dr. Seuss Spirit week, and the golf cart parade. Also, students can participate in “spy school,” an after-school enrichment program for GATE students, Math Field Day for 2nd- 5th-grade students, Battle of the Books for 4th and 5th-grade students, and several other community-building opportunities. Fifth grade culminates with the opportunity for service-learning projects solely available for 5th graders, such as the Water Project to fund wells, and Graduate School, an online enrichment class offered through google classroom in the areas of Entrepreneurship, Coding and Game Design, and Creative Writing.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

Monroe teachers and staff use a variety of assessment that includes in part observational data, formative and summative assessment to determine what level a student is performing in each subject matter. This data informs instruction and differentiated approaches for students. In the classroom teachers at all grade levels deploy the use of small groups to enable scaffolding and differentiation. Small group instruction is the most effective way to address the variance of levels of understanding. Other ways teachers address supporting gaps in skills and skill-building is through one on one instruction, before and after school tutoring, the use of technology within Benchmark Advance to select leveled readers at the appropriate level and let passages/ texts be read aloud to students so they participate in comprehension even if decoding skills are lagging, the use of technology, such as Seesaw, to give meaningful independent activities and opportunities for students to demonstrate learning visually or orally and the use of parent volunteers to read with students in the primary grades.

Students who don’t progress in skill development as expected are referred to our student study team process. The team meets to advise, plan and implement higher levels of academic interventions. After a period of higher levels of intervention, the team meets again to examine student work and assessment data to determine the next steps. Advice and expertise from team members include special education, speech therapist, the school psychologist and school administration. This collective of advice propels team members to implement even higher levels of support. At Monroe, all students are valued and we work hard to provide differentiated interventions so that all students make progress in their learning. We do this in partnership with our parents and a comprehensive team.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

Monroe teachers and staff use a variety of assessment that includes in part observational data, formative and summative assessment to determine what level a student is performing in each subject matter. This data informs instruction and differentiated approaches for their students. In the classroom teachers at all grade levels deploy the use of small groups to enable scaffolding and differentiation. Small group instruction is the most effective way to address the variance of levels of understanding for those students performing above grade level.

Students are given the opportunity to extend their learning and apply it in many ways. The strategic pairing of students during instructional activities enables students who understand concepts easily, time to work on the application phase of learning with an extension activity. Teachers also use project-based learning to enable students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. One such project is our Wax Museum. Students choose a famous historical person and work on a project that includes a variety of modalities such as research, writing, problem-solving then culminates in the Wax Museum event. Students dress up like the person they chose and stand next to their self-created poster board and talk in the first person to people visiting their display.

Another approach in meeting the needs of our students performing at grade level may include formulating "must do" and "may do" activities that enrich, build and extend thinking. Students identified as gifted and talented are given the opportunity to participate in specialized academic activities that include "spy school". Another exciting learning experience offered to our fifth-grade high achievers is an opportunity called Graduate School. These specialized extended learning opportunity is offered online via Google Classroom and includes activities in the areas of Entrepreneurship (learning to manage a small business and budget), Creative Writing (publishing a short story and having a book signing in front of peers), and Coding and Game Design, culminating in a mini E3 convention for students in the multipurpose room.

### **3c. Special education**

Students who qualify for special education services are full participants in our regular education environment and receive the same delivery of rigorous core curriculum at their grade level. Special education teachers provide specialized academic instruction and differentiated strategic supports to meet student goals. Resource teachers engage students via a push-in model of support. Students receiving special education services stay in their classroom and their service provider comes into their classroom to provide support. This model is extremely successful and provides students with assistance on rigorous academic work in context to their regular education classroom. Strategic pull out-groups are provided for students who need a different environment and level of support. While concentrating on student goals, the resource teachers provide assistance to students in the completion of their grade-level work.

Special education teachers have a high level of collaboration with their regular education colleagues in order to assure student success. They had a high level of collaboration with their regular education colleagues. Also, their presence and support provided in the regular education classrooms enable students to build skills in the context of their classrooms. Our students never miss rigorous content in their regular education classrooms and benefit from the tremendous support their providers give. As a result, special education scores have risen three years in a row! While we have more growth to make, we are proud of the work by our staff and the resulting rise in student achievement demonstrated by our students with special education services.

At Monroe students receiving special education services are not seen by their peers, nor associated via their level of participation as any different than any other students. They are valued as seen as equals amongst all students at our school. Their abilities, participation, and contributions play a valuable role at our school and enrich the lives of our students and staff!

**3d.** ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

All teachers at Monroe implement daily Integrated and Designated English Language Development (ELD) instruction. This is done through our focus on our first best instructional strategies that provide students opportunities to be successful through the use of sentence frames, academic vocabulary, and student structured collaborative conversations. Teachers are provided supported by our onsite instructional coach that is trained and guided by district leadership. Our instructional coach supports teachers with modeling on an effective delivery model that includes co-teaching and feedback focused on strategies to support English Learner success across all core academic areas

In the classroom, the use of AVID strategies and Kagan cooperative learning strategies provided during instruction benefits English learners by facilitating skill development and engagement. In the classroom English learners are placed strategically with students who are helpful in modeling academic language. Long term English language learners, meet individually with our instructional coach and our EL Lead to set and write yearly goals and action steps to achieve those goals. Progress monitoring of our English language learners is a priority and an important part of student success.

**3e.** Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

While Monroe is known for outstanding achievement, the staff understands that the success of the academic program is predicated on meeting the social-emotional needs of our students. Students at Monroe come from a variety of ethnicities, cultures, and life experiences. The life experiences of our students impact their daily engagement in their learning in diverse ways. We understand that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a vital understanding that our work in the provision of a rigorous learning experience is preceded by meeting the needs of our children. This includes their psychological needs, their need to feel safe, loved, belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization.

A multiple-tier system of supports has been organized and developed by our district and refined at our school via a committee. Through an extensive and collaborative process, our school's committee has designed a comprehensive proactive approach for meeting the needs of children. This includes many levels of support and interventions available to our staff in addressing the needs of our students. Professional development and coaching have been provided by our district in the area of positive behavior interventions and supports. We have a schoolwide approach to student support that includes teachers, counselors, psychologists, and other specialists who work as a team to meet the needs of our students. Teachers and other staff members provide a frequent system of monitoring and refer students. The team will analyze data and collaborate on interventions and timelines for monitoring the effectiveness of strategies and implement, when necessary, an integrated plan that would address anyone or a multiple of needs including social, emotional, behavioral, or academic. The student study team and individual educational plan processes are formal structures that incorporate these practices.

Monroe's culture of meeting the social-emotional needs of our students is woven into every part of our school educational delivery model. This includes over seventy activities that take place either daily, weekly, monthly, and annually. Every day students are enthusiastically greeted six times - three times each morning and three times at the end of their day. Other daily activities include announcements that are student-focused, strategically assigned supervision that enables adults to get to know the students and lunchtime clubs. During the week, teachers provide "Connect Time" which are activities in the classroom that are meant to build relationships with others.

While academic achievement is important, our mustang family values guide the recognition of behaviors that lead to achievement. This allows for the recognition of all students to be recognized who are progressing in their behavior, social-emotional development, and learning.

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

Family and community are valued in our school and are engaged at Monroe in many ways. One of the most important aspects of engagement is the establishment of ongoing communication in our partnership with parents/guardians in their child's education. Teachers and staff use a variety of tools to provide ongoing communication. Events hosted for our families involve students to ensure learning within the context of the experience. Students play a role in these events and directly experience what it means to value family via their participation.

These events include grandparent's day, muffins for moms, donuts for dads, father-daughter dance, and mother-son event. Families are also invited to attend monthly award assemblies to share the celebration of their student's accomplishments. More traditional opportunities for our families to be engaged at Monroe include student conferences, open house, and back to school nights. Parents also partner with our school in providing leadership through participation in the school site council and our parent-teacher organization.

The concept of community is very important at Monroe. Community engagement enables our students to be involved, understand their context to their communities, and understand the concept of community. Teaching students that they move in and out of multiple communities throughout their experience at Monroe



enables them to understand their context and role within those communities. One of those communities is our own school community, another is the community in which they live and another is the greater community of which they have no context. Through project-based learning, teachers employ service-learning to the classroom by teaching perspective through the lens outside their own understanding. One project encompasses the world community through the “School to School Water Project”. In this service-learning project, students study the global water crisis in relation to our own desert community. Students are empowered through homegrown fundraising and initiating substantive real change by having financed clean water wells for school in Lima Peru and New Delhi India. Students are also taught that they can contribute to their school community by being involved in projects like cocoa loco and a student shark tank. In these local community projects, students are empowered by their planning, labor, and efforts in raising money for their classroom activities.

Monroe also partners with a variety of community organizations to enrich the educational experiences of our students. This includes partners to provide after school experiences for our students that include experiences in sports, homework help, and a Spanish language immersion program. Monroe participates in community-based events like the family color run and gives annually to our surrounding community through participating in food and toy drives.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Professional development at Monroe fosters a strong sense of teacher efficacy, improved teacher practice, and has resulted in a foundation of collective efficacy that is a strong part of the resulting high level of student achievement at our Title one school.

All means all at Monroe and that also includes our classified employees when it comes to professional development. The district office provides strategic professional development for our classified staff. Content is most often delivered by respective departments such as clerical, food service, paraprofessionals and other classified staff including our lunchtime supervisors. Classified employees are also included in site-based meetings and professional development when deemed appropriate. This instills our genuine value of the contribution that every employee contributes to a safe and orderly school environment.

Desert Sands Unified School District has a focus, robust and strategic approach to professional development ensuring the continuous development of teacher practice and student achievement. At the beginning of the school year, district personnel met with school administration to strategize, discuss and map out professional development that is tailored to the needs of our school. Collaboration with our district’s professional development leader ensures that all content is based on our school site plans and goals for instruction and learning. These areas include core academic areas; early literacy, writing and mathematics. The district pays for teachers to be out of their classrooms for professional development. The district’s approach to professional development includes many superior aspects that take content into immediate action. This is planned in advanced and tailored to our school with extensive collaboration with our site prior to the delivery. Professional development is done in small groups and delivery is always by content specialists and includes the use of data to inform instruction. Teachers engage in collegial discourse in a safe learning environment and the provision of invaluable planning time enables the teachers to put their learning into action. Professional development is delivered both by the site administration and by content area specialists from the district’s educational services department.

Professional development happens frequently and is a strong part of our professional culture. Adult learning and a collegiality are woven into the fabric of our culture and is valued by all educators on our campus. The resulting culture has impacted both our teachers and students resulting in high levels of achievement at Monroe. This laser-like focus on rigorous instruction with supporting professional development, has impacted our staff and students significantly. Monroe’s culture is proudly steeped in high expectations for performance, supported by professional development which instills confidence in our teachers, ensures rigorous and relevant content, the delivery of research-based strategies, and most importantly, ensures instructional equity for our students.

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

Shared and collaborative leadership for learning has a positive impact on student achievement at Monroe. Collaborative relationships are strong thus our collective capacity is maximized due to a shared commitment and collective focus on teaching, learning, and the provision of equitable instruction for all students.

Administratively it is a philosophy of servant leadership that is employed whose desire it is to serve and develop the capacity of all constituents. The collective capacity of all provides a powerful school culture focused on teaching and learning whose outcome is high achievement. The focus of administration on building relationships, the provision of resources, the removal of barriers, and orchestrating the collective decision making perpetuates the independent functioning of school systems. It further develops the capacity of all contributors to a collective commitment to the provision of educational excellence.

There are a plethora of opportunities by which we foster shared decision making at Monroe. The most prolific are the committees that staff serves on by which decisions are made regarding all programs at our school. The guiding coalition at Monroe serves to guide, unite, and support staff through the school's journey of instructional excellence. Its purpose is to foster a collaborative culture that employs best practices and encourages staff to work collectively to ensure learning for all students. The guiding coalition is composed of a teacher leader from each grade level. This group of leaders collaborates with the school administration to set instructional goals and priorities for the school's instructional priorities. Grade level leaders take back information to their teams for feedback and implementation of school-led change and priorities for major initiatives. Other leadership teams on campus include our positive behavioral interventions system team, the multi-tiered layers system of support, safety committee, curriculum council, gifted and talented, science fair, performing arts, yearbook, fitness, social committee and academic committees for math night and field day. All these teams work to contribute input and expertise for decision making on our campus. This collective of shared decision-making opportunities acts to vest our staff in a personal commitment to contribute to a culture of continuous improvement. The decisions made in our committees directly influences the success of our students.

Students are provided leadership opportunities through the student council outside the classroom. Inside the classroom teachers share a collective emphasis on teaching and fostering personal responsibility for student learning. Parents are also encouraged to be a part of school leadership via our school's site council and parent-teacher organization. These opportunities give parents avenues to contribute to the enrichment of the educational experience we provide at Monroe.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

The one instructional practice that has propelled Monroe's achievement is the insistence of instructional equity through the provision of departmentalization of subject matter teaching. Not unlike the middle and high schools, Monroe employs an instructional delivery model in which students in grades third, fourth, and fifth rotate to content specialists within a grade-level team. Students have academic rotations including the subject matters of reading, writing, mathematics, and science/social studies.

While this instructional delivery model is not different from that of a traditional middle and high school, it is unique to be found running successfully at an elementary school. There are many different ways it benefits our students and their academic achievement. A system of academic rotations ensures equitable instruction for all students at a grade level. No longer does success dependent upon whose homeroom you are in. All students in a grade level benefit from specific content instruction delivered by a teacher who receives ongoing professional development in that specific content area. This instructional delivery model also includes horizontal and vertical collaboration for teachers. Professional learning community collaboration involves teachers collaborating across grade levels with like subject matter peers. Grade level colleagues also discuss and plan for the support of students falling behind academically, behaviorally, and emotionally. Content teachers collaborate on strategies and skill progression across grade levels.

What makes it special is that it is pervasive in our upper-grade levels. It also gives the teachers to get to know all students at their grade level. Furthermore, it provides our students with a strong sense of community and support they get from a team of teachers, much different from the traditional elementary school experience.

All systems of support are built around this unique instructional delivery model. This includes ongoing, strategic professional development for teachers focused on the content area of which they teach at their grade level. It is invigorating to see the high level of content support by which teachers from different grade levels come together for professional development. This benefits our students as they are being taught by a teacher who has substantial training in a specific content area. It also benefits our students to have teachers from different grade levels collaborating on a coherent, progressive foundation of skills. This collaboration also allows teachers to understand the development continuum of foundational skills at other grade levels and how this information informs their own grade-level instruction.

As a designated Title 1 school, we are proud of the resulting in a consistent level of high academic achievement that is a direct result of the focused and rigorous instructional delivery model of departmentalization at upper grades.