

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

Official School Name Montecito Union Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 385 San Ysidro Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Santa Barbara State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 93108-2131

County Santa Barbara

Telephone (805) 969-3249 Fax (805) 969-9714

Web site/URL https://www.montecitou.org/ E-mail nbruski@montecitou.org

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* Anthony Ranii E-mail aranii@montecitou.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Montecito Union Elementary Tel. (805) 969-3249

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 Kate Murphy
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 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	0	0	0
K	18	26	44
1	23	25	48
2	17	27	44
3	28	33	61
4	29	30	59
5	30	29	59
6	29	27	56
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	174	197	371

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 0.5 % Black or African American
 - 10.7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 79.7 % White
 - 7.3 % 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: 6%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	11
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	23
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	394
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, Dutch, German, Portuguese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 15 %

Total number students who qualify: 57

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

48 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>10</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</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: 10

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:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 17:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	96%	95%
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.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

To launch inspired thinkers who positively impact the world.

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

Montecito Union School District, a historic cornerstone of the community, is dedicated to providing a comprehensive educational foundation, cultivating a passion for learning, honoring the unique qualities and strengths of our children, and challenging them to attain their full potential.

Montecito Union School is a one-school district serving the community of Montecito with transitional kindergarten through sixth grade. The district is comprised of a middle to upper socioeconomic population and has a current enrollment of approximately 360 students. It is governed by a five-member board of trustees and is administered by a superintendent, principal, assistant principal, and chief business official.

We strive to provide our students with the academic foundation to creatively solve complex problems, teaching them to apply interpersonal and collaborative skills, and to demonstrate a genuine sense of curiosity in a student-focused and supportive environment. Our students will be empowered thinkers who positively impact and adapt to our ever-changing and diverse world.

Guided by our strategic plan, MUS has embarked on a journey with Project Zero from Harvard University over the last ten years. Our staff is extensively trained in the tenets of Visible Thinking, and continues to collaborate around these topics and attend additional trainings. Visible Thinking is a flexible and systematic research-based approach to integrating the development of students' thinking with content learning across subject matters. Students are regularly asked to provide evidence for their answers, to engage in dialogue with each other, to connect to each other's thinking, to think deeply and abstractly, and to apply their understanding to novel situations.

Another key component of our curriculum is focused on the work of Lucy Calkins and the Reading and Writing Workshop Project. Through experiences at Columbia University in New York, summer institutes, and expert trainings on-site, our teachers have received extensive support in their literacy instruction in order to not only teach our students to read but to love reading. Readers Workshop focuses on the central role of curriculum development and planning in teaching reading, explicitly teaching comprehension strategies, the importance of assessment-based instruction, the role of the read-aloud book, methods of holding our students accountable for doing their best work, helping students grow ideas about literature, and classroom structures that support inquiry and collaboration.

Encompassing each academic area is our school-wide focus on implementing Costa and Kallick's 16 Habits of Mind. We were fortunate to be one of twelve schools in the United States named as an International Habits of Mind School of Excellence in working to develop those mental qualities, attitudes, and dispositions that all students need to be successful, such as demonstrating persistence, flexibility, empathy and more.

Our strategic plan focuses our learning community on ten aspirational goals that will continue to help our school evolve and grow. Four of these goals are exclusively academic and include 1) developing a multi-tiered system of support to meet the needs of all learners, 2) integration of subject matter and problem solving, 3) learning through student activism, and 4) enrichment. Other areas include character, environmental stewardship, safe facilities, supporting our staff, promoting sound financial practices, and supporting our community. There are action plans to support each of these goals, and we are always looking for opportunities to work on projects that combine many of these initiatives. As a single example, students recently created an art installation that used solar energy to light up a sign promoting the use of green energy. This supported at least five of our goals: integration, student activism, enrichment, environmental stewardship, and supporting our community.

All of these incredible attributes of Montecito Union help us to provide our students with our vision of a global standard of educational excellence. We prepare our students to think, to be good citizens, to appreciate and understand the arts, and ultimately to fulfill our mission by providing a comprehensive educational foundation, cultivating a passion for learning, honoring the unique qualities and strengths of our children, and challenging them to attain their full potential.

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

At Montecito Union School we value process over product and seek to build students' deep conceptual understanding of content by embracing Harvard Project Zero's Teaching for Understanding framework and Visible Thinking strategies. Students are taught to see connections across curricula through integrated lessons designed to be open-ended and exploratory when possible, encouraging natural curiosity and problem-solving skills. We regularly ask students to reason with evidence and our staff is in the habit of asking, "What makes you say that?" when students provide answers in class. MUS regularly uses both summative and formative assessment to guide instruction and plan for differentiation both in and out of the classroom. Teachers and their assistants are skilled in identifying individuals and small groups that need reteaching and enrichment, and a robust multi-tiered system of support is in place to guide work within the classroom as well as when more intensive tier II and tier III interventions are required.

MUS has a 1-to-1 device program where students in kindergarten through 2nd grade receive individual iPads and 3rd through 6th graders receive macbooks or chromebooks. Students are facile in a number of programs and applications, as well as navigating platforms like Google Classroom to manage their work or posting work to Seesaw to help make their thinking visible. MUS asks students to do the learning, not simply acting as passive receptors of information. We want students to be mathematicians, writers, readers, scientists, historians, and more. We seek to challenge students with what we refer to as "big-rich problems" that are complex and promote the development of successful Habits of Mind and thinking dispositions such as persistence, questioning, communicating with clarity and precision, and more.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The Reading and Writing Project is part of a comprehensive literacy program, which includes whole class instruction, small group work, and independent practice. Teachers are intentional when forming small groups and partnerships, knowing that the make-up of the group will directly influence the outcome. Data is analyzed and used to form groups so that the strengths and next steps of the students are documented and used to inform instruction. During this ninety minute block, students experience read alouds, shared reading, word study (phonics/spelling patterns), mini lessons, independent and partner reading, and interactive and independent writing. At times, emphasis is placed on whole group instruction, whereas other times, students can be found working at tables in small groups or as independent learners.

In the Workshop model, instruction begins with a mini-lesson where the teacher explicitly states the purpose of the lesson. Through discussion and demonstration, teachers guide students to apply essential questions or teaching points to their learning as they engage in the process of reading or writing. Developing engaged, self-motivated readers and writers requires providing students with a multitude of opportunities to access content. Teachers provide a short explanation, a demonstration, or create a chart, then "off they go" to utilize these skills during independent practice. Throughout the Workshop, children might be paired with partners having similar reading or writing abilities. During Readers Workshop, students have a shared experience, reading back-to-back from a bin of 'just right' books. For Writers Workshop, students are independently writing to a specific genre. At the same time, teachers work with small groups or individual students based on needs and goals derived from ongoing assessments. After that, partners share books or writing pieces and engage in dialogue focused on each other's work.

In reading, teachers regularly give running records using Fountas and Pinnell's reading levels. Students' reading errors and comprehension are evaluated so that teachers can plan for differentiated instruction that includes small group work and one-on-one coaching. While some students may be working to build reading fluency, others may be working thinking beyond the text, inferencing, and more. The data is tracked longitudinally to help identify students that are not progressing at the rate of their peers so that subsequent interventions can take place. In writing, students and teacher analyze work through the use of rubrics and exemplars provide in the writing workshop curriculum.

A major tenet of balanced literacy at MUS is that children have choice in what they read and write. Teachers understand that if the child has ownership, there will be greater motivation. Despite individual diversity in abilities, we believe the enthusiasm and delight for reading can be equal. Motivated students can become lifelong readers and writers. We strive to create a program where each child is met at their developmental level and then challenge them to move beyond it. A key component to this model's success is deliberate and ongoing professional development. In addition to 10-15 days per year of professional development from an outside trainer, teachers are provided with collaboration time on a regular basis, both through weekly grade level PLCs and weekly whole-staff PLCs. To further support implementation, MUS implemented a coaching cycle in which grade level spans (K-2, 3/4, and 5/6) worked in focused groups with the principal to continue deepening their understanding and implementation of the model.

1c. Mathematics

The teachers at Montecito Union School District believe strongly in the idea that we don't simply cover a math curriculum, but instead we uncover it. Each day, our classrooms become a place where students develop and practice the dispositions of inquiry, questioning, curiosity, confidence, and the value of seeing mistakes as opportunity for growth. Teachers plan and implement a program through a Thinking Curriculum where students are encouraged to solve real world tasks using multiple methods and strategies, engage in peer interaction, while also critiquing the reasoning and thinking of others. Students learn to think quantitatively and abstractly and develop an inquiry relationship with math as they build a foundation for rewarding work, and a means for comprehending and influencing the world in which they live. Simply put, it is about learning, not performing.

In order to meet students' needs in mathematics, we use a wide-variety of texts, tools, and materials. Students use a program named Bridges in kindergarten through 5th grade and College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) in 6th grade. They also encounter problem solving through Contexts For Learning, Exemplars, 3-Act Lessons, and more. Students have access to Dreambox, software that allows student to learn mathematics at their own pace and teachers use tools like Number Talks to develop conceptual understanding and fluency. This variety of diverse resources provides a rich a full curriculum to meet students where they are and challenge them appropriately.

The teaching of mathematics is complex. It begins with teachers that have a deep mathematical understanding of the content and strategies that they teach. Teachers place strong emphasis on developing lessons where the Standards of Mathematical Practice are at the forefront of math instruction, in order to guide and enrich students' learning experiences. Rich problems and tasks with room for learning allows for students to apply their mathematical knowledge to new and interesting situations, and to learn from their trials and errors. By conducting first hand investigations, working with physical materials, and expanding opportunities to interact with students and peers, students learn to solve real-world and complex problems. Daily Number Talks develops and strengthens mental computation with conceptual understanding and fluency. Technology is utilized to enhance and deepen the level of instruction and creates opportunities that may have been previously inaccessible.

Complex lessons which present problems for students to experience "Productive Struggle", fosters persistence, exploration, and that the idea of taking responsible risks allows for growth. Teachers pose purposeful questions that promote rich discourse and deeper thinking, asking students to make connections to prior learning and to the bigger world. Students make their thinking visible in order to learn from the thinking of others, and to discover diverse ways of solving tasks. Seeking the development of broader understanding and "sense-making" is valued over rote memorization of procedures. The adage of "less is more" comes to life as we ask our students to explore the Why? Why do we do this? Why does this work? Why does this make sense?

Every child can and should learn challenging mathematics. Differentiation is achieved through a thoughtfully rigorous and diverse program that allows for easy access to a wide range of abilities. We see math as a creative subject where a variety of approaches, tools and strategies, and thinking is encouraged and welcomed. The regular use of pre-assessments, formative assessments mid-unit, and post-tests helps students identify individuals and small groups that would benefit from reteaching and enrichment. Before

any unit is taught, a pre-test is given to assess what concepts the class as a whole needs more or less of, as well as identifying individual students and groups who can benefit both from additional challenge and support. Formative assessments are given throughout the unit to identify further interventions, and exit tickets are regularly used to assess learning on a daily basis. Finally, summative assessment data is analyzed so that students can be grouped and retaught areas that they have not mastered before moving on to the next unit. Throughout these assessments, teachers are analyzing not just procedural fluency, but also conceptual understanding, problem solving and the mathematical practices.

1d. Science

At MUS, Science/STEAM is not a separate class, but rather consistently integrated into the core curriculum. Students engage in hands-on, inquiry-based experiences that encourage students to think and behave like scientists. We look to the natural world for interesting phenomena to spark our curiosity, to ask questions, design experiments, gather and analyze data, and make claims. Using both digital and non-digital resources, students deepen their understanding to refine and support those claims with evidence. If we want students to think and act as engineers, scientists, etc, we have to provide them with consistent opportunities to engage in labs, challenges, and experiences that foster these dispositions in a connected, authentic way. MUS educators are responsible for creating learning experiences where the subject areas like literacy and mathematics are integrated, the expectations are rigorous, the content inspires curiosity, and students develop a bias towards taking action.

Allowing students the time and space to dream big, play with ideas, stretch their thinking, and truly think outside of the box is a priority at MUS. We want to give the students a repertoire of tools, skills, knowledge, and experiences to draw upon as they create, innovate, and design solutions to problems and challenges of all kinds. As engineers, students apply their scientific, mathematical, and technological knowledge to ideate potential solutions to problems large and small. Through collaboration students design, prototype, and test their ideas. Using failure as an opportunity for growth, students iterate to improve upon their designs and continue that cycle all while considering criteria, constraints, and empathy for the user. Students demonstrate mastery most often through assessments referred to as performances of understanding. Can they build a working electrical circuit? Can they demonstrate various principles of forces and motion? Students may make videos and presentation to show what they know, as well as traditional end of unit assessments.

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

MUS educators seek to seamlessly integrate non-fiction reading and writing with their social studies content, developing skills in research and analysis and helping students see connections, themes and systems to help them make sense of the world. Students “live” history by researching and becoming historical figures in 3rd grade, mining for gold in 4th grade, becoming colonial craftsmen in 5th grade, or building ancient tools and structures to live like early humans in 6th grade. Students engage in thinking routines to help them uncover essential learnings through a historical context. For example, rather than just memorizing names, dates and places in American History, 5th grade students “peel the fruit”, listing surface level details on an image of an apple, then describing some of the “meat” just underneath the surface, before diving into the “core” of why something like the Boston Massacre happened. Rather than focusing on covering a multitude of historical events, teachers go deep with fewer to develop skill sets where students are empowered to comprehend historical contexts and connections.

Through explicit connections to the Reading and Writing Workshop project, students connect their social studies learning to literacy in deep and meaningful ways. Students read and write in various structures of nonfiction writing. How is a biographical piece different from a cause and effect or timeline piece? What writing structures and formats communicate more clearly and persuasively than others? Students develop these lifelong skills through engaging content and hands-on experiences. Students often demonstrate mastery through performances of understanding. Our 5th graders become colonial craftsmen and are interviewed by classmates and teachers. Our 6th graders recreate aqueducts and experiment with tools to better understand how the pyramids were constructed. Traditional assessments are also used to demonstrate understanding of concepts like states and capitols.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to our strong focus on academics, we also believe that our students benefit from development in the arts, world language, and other areas. All students, kindergarten through sixth grade, participate in regularly scheduled specialist classes on a weekly basis.

In our music program, students receive lessons twice per week for 30 minutes. through instruction in the visual and performing arts standards, students sing, dance, play instruments and learn musical history and theory. Each second and third-grader is immersed in instruction with an individual violin for two years of strings study with our music specialist, learning to read music and perform as a group. After 3rd grade students have the option of enrolling in before and after school chorus, band and orchestra.

Students receive physical education instruction twice weekly for 30-45 minutes. The basic goal of the Montecito Union PE Program is to develop in our students an understanding of the positive impact an active lifestyle will have on their lives. Our developmentally appropriate program also provides a unique learning environment where affective, psychomotor and cognitive skills can be developed, as we practice the basic campus-wide expectations of students to “Be Kind, Be Respectful, Show Integrity, and Be Safe.” Good health practices, sportsmanship, self-control, self-expression and the opportunity for positive social interaction with peers are our focus as we continue to lead our students to develop the habits of the mind that will help them be successful in all of life.

Students receive Spanish instruction twice weekly for 30 minutes. Our program focuses on the development of listening and speaking skills and on cultural awareness. Grammar is not ignored, but is learned indirectly rather than through direct instruction. Students are exposed to and taught Spanish following the natural sequence of language learning: understanding, speaking, reading, then writing. The primary stress is on understanding and speaking. Physical activity and concrete experiences play an important role, as well as visuals, manipulatives, and realia. A typical lesson plan includes songs, rhymes, games, play-acting with puppets, and other physical activities that appeal to younger children.

Students visit the art studio for 45 minute per week and experience a Teaching for Artistic Behaviors centered in studio thinking. We ask students to think like artists as we explicitly instruct them in technique and various media and allow them the freedom to try new things and reflect on their art.

Our students also visit our library for 30 minutes weekly, where they receive literacy and media instruction from our credentialed librarian and have access to over 20,000 titles.

In addition to the regularly scheduled specialists listed above, students also benefit from specialists in the area of science, technology, math and reading. Our science specialist works with classroom teachers to help build meaningful and engaging curricula, while also delivering STEAM lessons directly to students as scheduled by the classroom teacher. Likewise, our technology teacher supports technology instruction in the general education classroom in addition to delivering lessons on things like digital literacy, digital citizenship and coding. In mathematics, our math specialist similarly supports general education instruction while also working together with the science and technology specialists to develop STEAM lessons with a focus on design thinking and the engineering process.

Finally, all staff members are trained in and implement planned and unplanned instruction in the Habits of Mind. The 16 Habits are embedded into our curriculum and utilized spontaneously in informal interactions across our campus throughout the day. Through a monthly habit focus, presentation and discussion at school-wide assemblies, and thoughtful monthly guides to habit-focused activities, students learn to persist, take responsible risks, listen with understanding and empathy, and much more through our commitment to supporting the Habits of Mind vision “To create a more thoughtful, cooperative, compassionate generation of people who skillfully work to resolve social, environmental, economic and political problems.”

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Small class sizes with a school-wide average of approximately 17 students per class, as well as having instructional assistants in each classroom help us ensure that we provide each of our students with the time and attention he or she needs. The school implements and continuously refines an organized and articulated set of common benchmark assessments to help us celebrate student successes, while also enabling us to quickly identify students who are struggling. Regular child study meetings are held where a committee of diverse stakeholders (special educators, classroom teachers, specialists, administration and parents) come together to create individualized plans for student intervention that support achievement. In addition to a resource teacher, speech therapist, counselor, and psychologist, we also employ reading and math specialists to provide individual or small group intervention when students are struggling to have their needs met in the regular classroom. We have spent the last year working collaboratively to develop a full and robust multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to identify assessments, resources, digital supports, and systems of intervention that can be implemented when students struggle. A full-time MTSS teacher on special assignment position was recently created that will work to coordinate our efforts, train teachers, and provide direct intervention to students. These structures and systems help ensure that no student falls through the cracks. In addition our reading and writing workshop model is designed to differentiate easily by matching students to “just-right” texts, provide meaningful and data-based interventions in small group and individual conferring, and bring students to where they need to be.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Montecito Union School strongly believes that every child should be appropriately challenged. We believe that challenge comes in a variety of ways and strive to include open-ended and complex problem solving situations throughout the curriculum through “big, rich problems” and project-based learning. We believe that challenge is best offered through providing depth and complexity. In literacy, our workshop model naturally differentiates by pairing students with their just right reading level as well as our focus on providing direct individualized instruction based on regular assessment. This model is uniquely suited to take each child where they are and bring them to where they need to be by matching formative and informal assessment to teaching moves and support. This includes challenging students on reading and writing with the mindset that students are never “done” and can always learn and grow as readers and writers.

In mathematics, teachers begin each unit with a pre-assessment to identify the strengths and needs of the whole class as well as individual students, so that lessons can be thoughtfully planned to challenge each child. At times whole lessons might be skipped when a class has shown mastery. Individual students might be provided alternate activities if they have shown particular content mastery from lesson to lesson as well. Our math specialist also works with small groups of advanced learners both within and beyond the school day, providing opportunities for challenge and collaboration with participation in our Math Superbowl practices and events.

3c. Special education

MUS seeks to provide individualized supports based on student need in the least restrictive environment, seeking full inclusion of all students in the general education classroom. Our team of professionals includes a resource learning specialist, two inclusion teachers, speech therapist, psychologist, occupational therapist, adaptive physical education specialist, and a cadre of instructional assistants to support student success. This team works collaboratively with the general education staff to planfully and successfully include students in one general education system for all students. We believe that all students remain “general” first and “special” second. Annual goals are written to reflect both age-appropriate common core standards from the general education curriculum, as well as overarching and foundational life skills. All staff that work closely with a particular student will have a strong sense of his/her unique IEP goals, as well as an awareness of logical next steps. In addition to appropriate supports that are provided within the classroom, individual students may also require and receive systematic social support and facilitation during less-structured times of the day (e.g., recess, snack/lunch, classroom choosing time). Students rely on as close to

natural supports as possible across their school day. These will include their peers, their classroom teacher, their class' (general education) instructional assistant, and any other MUS personnel with whom they have contact. We support and instruct students with the least amount of prompting necessary for individual activities, allowing first for independence, then natural cues, followed by gestural or visual cues, verbal cues and physical prompting when necessary.

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

Montecito Union School English Language Learner's Program is designed to create an interactive setting where students are taught strategies to help them master English as quickly as possible, develop appropriate academic and social skills, and progress in content areas without loss of achievement due to English proficiency level. Students experience pull-out and push in instruction that integrates skills and concepts of the mainstream curriculum in the belief that language learning best occurs when the content is meaningful and useful to students.

Students enter with a variety of experiences with learning English. While some students have been taught little or no English, others have been brought up in bilingual or multilingual homes where parents or other family members have instructed/supported them in learning English. These students bring a vast array of linguistic and cultural diversity to our school.

English language instruction is tailored to the individual linguistic, cultural, and educational needs of the student. In addition to regular instruction in the mainstream classroom, all English Language Learners receive instruction by specialized ESL teachers who are in constant communication with the regular classroom teacher. The goal of the ELL program is to ensure that all English learners access and master the core curriculum and meet grade level standards.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The Montecito Union School learning community believes in fostering the development of character dispositions that will allow students to experience lifelong success in an ever-changing world. Using the Habits of Mind as a framework, teachers and administrators provide multiple opportunities for students to develop mindsets that foster grit, empathy, responsible risk taking, clear communication, and a collaborative approach to solving complex problems. Our whole child approach ensures that students have a voice in the learning process, learn to take responsible risks, manage impulsivity, and foster a sense of community and mutual interdependence. We see mistakes and conflict as opportunities for learning and lasting growth. For this reason, our staff values restorative approaches to student discipline and a deep focus on proactive means of building community. The understanding and application of the sixteen Habits of Mind serve to provide the individual with skills to work through real life situations that equip that person to respond using awareness (cues), thought, and intentional strategy in order to gain a positive outcome.

Educators at Montecito Union School use the Habits of Mind as a core framework for character development. Proactive dialogue circles (Mustang Meetings) are utilized routinely in all classrooms as a vehicle for building Habits such as listening with empathy, thinking about thinking, managing impulsivity, thinking and communicating with clarity, and thinking interdependently. Dialogue circles can be utilized for daily check-ins, for establishing class norms, for celebrating successes, and for exploring solutions to ongoing conflicts and complex problems. This classroom routine supports students with vocalizing their needs and supporting others' needs in an effort to maintain a positive, safe, and productive school community. When conflict arises, administrators are trained in using dialogue circles as a vehicle for resolving issues and repairing the community.

Over the course of a student's tenure at MUS, they will learn that the Habits of Mind help develop the grit and persistence necessary for lifelong success in a world where content knowledge is vast, fast, and fleeting.

The circle structure becomes a key component in managing conflict. The school utilizes restorative approaches for managing student misbehavior. This high-accountability, high-support system focusses energy on students identifying the impacts of their behavior and strategies for helping to mitigate these impacts. In addition to circles, mindfulness practices are embedded into the classroom and into recess to give students skills to slow down, better manage impulsivity, and increase focus and attention.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent participation is widely encouraged in a variety of ways. Every year, two comprehensive surveys are sent to parents about a wide range of topics. This informs our Local Control Accountability Plan as well as our strategic plan. Parents also attend and participate in committees, board meetings, ELAC, School Site Council, the Montecito Union School Foundation Board, special education committees, performances, and parent education classes. The best way to ensure a child's success is in active partnerships with families.

MUS utilizes weekly school emails, regular social media posts and an updated website to inform parents of school-wide events and issues. Monthly coffees are offered to engage in two-way communication with our families and planned parent education series offerings inform our community of school priorities, instructional models and directions. Teachers send home weekly emails/newsletters to update parents on classroom events and activities. Individual staff members use email to communicate with parents regarding specific issues.

Teachers hold parent conferences in November and March to inform parents of their child's progress on report cards. Conferences with teachers or any staff member including administration can be scheduled upon request and staff commits to responding to parent communication within 24 hours. MUS finds that proactive and direct communication with families is critical in supporting student growth and success. Teachers regularly connect with individual families to keep them apprised of celebrations and concerns. Communication is differentiated by student needs, with some students having daily or weekly communication logs depending on their specific needs and circumstances.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Montecito Union School has a school-wide professional learning community (PLC) cycle of meetings that blends whole staff work, grade level and content area-based collaboration and the Teaching and Learning Collaborative (TLC), a leadership committee composed of grade level and content area representation. Led by the principal and other school leaders, educators practice what they preach, practicing thinking routines, developing common expectations, engaging in action research and book studies, and attacking “big picture” issues in teaching and learning. This thoughtful dialogue and collaboration between the teaching staff and administration leads to building momentum and alignment around common purposes, furthering school and curricular evolutions. In these collaborative sessions, teachers engage in professional growth opportunities and carry out work related to the Strategic Initiatives, the Local Control Accountability Plan, and specific action steps delineated by committees and other teams.

In addition to after school meetings, the work continues in robust grade-level professional learning committees that meet weekly during the school day and are attended by the principal. These grade-level team meetings develop common throughlines, activities, and assessments. They analyze students' work together and talk about their practice in order to grow professionally. Teachers also engage in a robust and thorough teacher evaluation process on a bi-annual. They set measurable goals and submit plans for professional growth. They meet regularly with peers to share progress and evidence of their growth, and submit written reflections in addition to formal observation. Furthermore, each staff member has access to significant professional development dollars to use at their discretion with the approval of a leadership committee, allowing for our teachers to explore areas of particular interest and need outside of our larger school initiatives.

Multiple structures and systems exist at Montecito Union to ensure teachers have ample opportunities to meet and continue to grow as professionals. Headed by the TLC, professional development opportunities are identified and prioritized. Resources are allocated and decisions are made at all levels to ensure we are analyzing student progress, identifying and refining curriculum, and reflecting on best practices for the MUS community.

4. School Leadership:

As a one-school school district, Montecito Union school is led by a superintendent who, in collaboration with the school board, brings the strategic plan to life through big picture thinking and visioning as well as serving as a steward for the school's finances and policies. The superintendent is supported by a principal who oversees teaching and learning and an assistant principal who manages school culture, discipline, and maintaining facilities.

At Montecito Union School, we believe in shared leadership, and much of our best thinking is done through committees and teams. We subscribe to the tenet that those most affected by a decision should have a part in making that decision if at all possible. Teams and committees change over time as the needs of our district change. Recent committees include: Safety, Character, Literacy, Facilities, Teaching and Learning Collaborative, Curriculum Council, and 21st Century Learning. These Committees include a broad range of perspectives and stakeholders and often include teachers, classified staff members, parents, board members, and community members. These teams and committees provide feedback on our LCAP goals and progress and direction about future goals. Whereas the strategic plan and Local Control Accountability Plan provides the “what and why” of our work, the work of these committees and teams provides the “how.”

Positive leadership is important at Montecito Union School. Administrators, teacher leaders, and parent leaders are encouraged to always start with gratitude and to conduct their work assuming the positive intentions of others. Feedback is welcomed and encouraged, and dissenting views are not only permitted, but considered necessary to sound decision-making.

Finally, we subscribe to the theory, “go slow to go fast.” That is, at the start of a new undertaking, we take the time to truly set our course, consider carefully the “why” of the work, and to define the issue/problem carefully before jumping into solutions. Building trust and understanding allows us to move much more quickly in the implementation phase.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Montecito Union School we believe children grow into the intellectual life around them. Because of this, we have become a "Thinking School" grounded in the core tenets of Project Zero's Visible Thinking (VT) at Harvard University. Our most vital charge is providing students with the skills and dispositions necessary to thrive during this time of constant change. We are intensely committed to developing students' intellectual character through meaningful interaction and participation. We strive to create classrooms where thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted.

Learning is a consequence of thinking. Students' understanding of and memory for content increases when they think through and with the concepts and information they are studying. Besides nurturing relevant skills and strong content knowledge, we feel our students' education needs to promote open-mindedness, curiosity, and a strong sense of metacognition and self-reflection.

Our students learn from those around them and through engagement with one another. Classroom culture sets the tone for learning. VT actively utilizes Thinking Moves as key fundamental skills for students. Teachers model and ask students to look closely across domains, be flexible and willing to consider and try out new ideas, generate alternative options and explanations, be active learners, and continuously search for ways to look beyond the obvious. At the heart of these moves is reflection or metacognition. MUS teachers understand that effective learners actively monitor, regulate, evaluate, and direct their thinking.

At the core of VT are practices that help make students' thinking visible. The consistent use of Thinking Routines across grade levels helps guide a learner's thought processes and encourages active engagement. These strategies deepen the cognitive value of the students' work and raise the discourse in classrooms to a more complex level. For example, in the thinking routine "See, Think, Wonder," students start by viewing an image. After that, small groups collaborate, generating ideas around what they see, think, and wonder about. This can take the form of a conversation, journaling, or dictation. Finally, ideas become platforms for deep exploration of a unit of study, or formative assessments to guide instruction.

Routines are applied across domains. On any given day, discourse that includes sayings such as "What makes you say that?", "I used to think, now I think...", and "What is the meaning behind that?" can be heard throughout our school. Students reason abstractly with challenging math concepts, compose and perform jazz pieces on xylophones, and participate in class meetings where "perspective-taking" becomes a vital component of compromise. Routines are not simply graphic organizers; they are springboards for deep, enriching conversations and opportunities for overcoming challenges, developing successful habits and dispositions, and seeing an idea from someone else's point of view. These strategies are the hallmark of a culture of deep understanding that the MUS teachers strive to consistently provide for all students.