

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name S.Y. Jackson Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4720 Cairo Drive NE  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Albuquerque State NM Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 87111-2617

County Bernalillo

Telephone (505) 296-9536 Fax (505) 292-2346

Web site/URL https://syjackson.aps.edu/ E-mail Vermillion@aps.edu

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 Elder E-mail Elder\_s@aps.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Albuquerque Public Schools Tel. (505) 880-3700

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 Dr. David Percy  
(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**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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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):
- 92 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 30 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 21 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 143 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	38	44	82
1	51	45	96
2	47	52	99
3	56	37	93
4	49	30	79
5	49	54	103
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>	290	262	552

\*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):
- 2.6 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2.6 % Asian
  - 0.9 % Black or African American
  - 29.4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.4 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 60.6 % White
  - 3.5 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

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

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	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	28
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	556
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Arabic, Keres, Navajo, Russian, Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %

13 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21 %

Total number students who qualify: 115

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %

49 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>6</u> Autism                  | <u>7</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>6</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>27</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 18

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	2
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.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 16:1

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	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
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.

One School, One Goal: Student Success!

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**

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Our school is located in the far Northeast Heights of Albuquerque. It serves students in grades kindergarten through 5th and is right at the base of the Sandia Mountains. The school opened in 1972 and is getting close to celebrating its 50th anniversary. SY Jackson (SY) primarily feeds into Eisenhower Middle School and Eldorado High School. We also have several students who attend many of the private academies once they leave our school. There is a high success rate of students who apply for these academies and are accepted after rigorous testing as part of the admission process. SY Jackson has earned an “A Letter Grade” from the NM Public Education Department since the letter grade system was established many years ago. We were labeled as “Exemplary” prior to that. The school has also been listed as one of the Top 10 Schools in the state by the Albuquerque Business First Magazine for 6 years in a row. Our school is located in an area that is among the higher social economical sections of the city, but is not among the top 4 or 5 in the area. Nineteen percent of our students qualify for free or reduced lunches. We have very involved parents who volunteer on a regular basis around the school. Parent Teacher Conferences have an attendance rate of 99%. The primary ethnicities of the school are white and Hispanic, but we also serve many other races. Close to 25% of our students are at the school due to their parents asking for a transfer from other schools. We have a very stable population of students with the majority being at our school from kindergarten through the 5th grade. Our staff also has very little turnover. We seldom have openings at the school. Close to 75% of the teachers either currently have their children at our school or their children attended our school in the past. They really believe in what we are doing and want their children to be a part of it. The parents take a lot of pride in the school and we receive much praise from people throughout the city. The principal recently did a tour for a parent who had been accepted into the school on a transfer. The parent had never been to the school and wanted to see what it was like. When asked by the principal why she transferred to the school, the parent stated “Everyone I talked to said it was the best school and I should put my child there.” She went on to say that these were parents who did not currently have students at SY Jackson, but had heard so many good things.

Our school has the motto of “One Team, One Goal: Student Success.” It is something we feel encompasses our mission and how we work with the students and the community. We work as a team to meet the needs of all of the students. General education and special education work closely together. The parents are also willing to work with the school and volunteer to make sure their children are receiving an excellent education. Parents from around the city seek out the opportunity to be at the school and are willing to drive great distances to have their children attend. We are honored they feel this way and work to make sure that they are all included in the school community regardless of where they live. The teachers provide a well-rounded curriculum strengthening our lower performing students and enriching the higher performing. All of our students, gifted and those receiving support services, leave the general education classroom at the same time. This keeps the students from being stereotyped and provides a time for Tier II interventions for those who remain. We want to make certain we are meeting all of the students’ needs.

SY provides opportunities beyond the school day and this is a crucial component to our success. The students have opportunities to participate in band, chorus, chess club, math clubs, Gen Yes, Spanish, student council, and many academic-based competitions. These are activities they can participate in during elementary school and continue right on through high school and beyond. We also offer many family activities for the community to participate in. It builds a sense of community and helps the parents to get to know each other better. We want them to truly feel that they are part of the “SY Family.”

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

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

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

Our school motto is “One Team, One Goal: Student Success.” This is an overall philosophy guiding our school’s direction in multiple ways. We have very little staff turnover and most only leave because of retirement or moving out of state. The principal has been at the school for 18 years and it is an experienced staff which works very closely together. There is a weekly collaboration time on Wednesday afternoons where the grade level teachers analyze the student assessments, plan curriculum, and provide support for each other. All general education and special education teachers collaborate to best serve the needs of all students.

The school district follows the Common Core Standards and the textbooks are based on these standards. Due to the experience level of the teachers, they are good at utilizing the parts of the curriculum that meet the needs of our students and identify areas requiring supplementing. The district utilizes iReady and iStation to assess the students throughout the year. The results of these assessments, as well as the Unit Assessments in the math and ELA curricula, provide crucial data points in determining how well we meet the needs of both individual students and the entire student body.

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

The district adopted the Benchmark Curriculum this year that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. This program is more rigorous than the previous curricula we were using and our students’ and teachers have risen to the challenge. Our teachers are skilled at discerning elements that benefit our population and in differentiating and supplementing those that don’t meet our student’s needs. The teachers in grades K-2 supplement the phonics component with the FUNdations Program. They provide a strong foundation that the grades above them can build upon. The teachers do vertical articulation between the grade levels and look at the strengths and weakness of individual students as well as the entire group. We use Lexia Core 5, a differentiated, individualized, self-paced literacy software program, as one of our Tier II Interventions with the lower students. It can also be used for enrichment because it allows students to progress as they attain 80% mastery. Students can work on it at home and at school. Teachers also work on Tier II interventions with individual students during pull out times and during small groups.

Our school librarian is a great resource. She provides Classroom Libraries that can be utilized by the teachers. These can be organized to highlight a certain author, style of writing, or subject area. She teaches weekly lessons on selecting appropriate books and using the library as a resource. There is a Book Fair at the school twice a year featuring high interest books to encourage students to read for pleasure. Our school holds an annual “One School, One Book” event where every child in the school is given the same book to read. The PTA pays for the chapter books. The students read a chapter at home every day and one at school. There are trivia questions and prizes are given out. Many parents begin reading chapter books as a family during this event and continue it throughout the year. We also have “Book Buddies” throughout the school. The upper grade teachers team up with lower grade teachers and create book buddies among the students. The classes meet weekly. Peer models benefit the younger students and being the “expert” builds confidence in the older students.

#### **1c.** Mathematics

The district currently utilizes the Stepping Stones Math Program. It is a K-5 program. The teachers provide daily lessons and there are practice pages along with Unit Tests. The teachers at our school have a lot of experience and are good at using the daily lessons as well as the Unit Tests to determine the needs of the students. It heavily utilizes technology in many of the lessons. All of the lessons are available online. The teachers follow this up with the paper pencil piece to show understanding as well as supplement with manipulatives as needed for mastery. Also, the Stepping Stones curriculum teaches math in a non-traditional

way by focusing on mathematical concepts using a variety of mental math strategies, not the algorithm we all learned. During the weekly collaboration meetings, the grade level teachers review student work to identify gaps. When there are areas that the entire class or large numbers are struggling with, the teachers will go back and review the section with the students. If there are still individuals who need more assistance, the teachers address that need during Tier II/RTI periods. There are also a few students who benefit from pre-teaching a lesson before the lesson is given. This helps the child to be prepared and keeps them from getting lost during the instruction. This is especially helpful for some of our lower students and crucial for our ELL population.

Over the years, many of our teachers have used a variety of manipulatives to help the students better grasp the concepts. They have a wide variety of math games and activities the students can do together that build on the concepts that are being taught. The students are learning how to work together and to practice the skills that they have just learned. It also makes it a fun environment where they do not realize how much they are learning. Our PTA has paid for the Freckle Math Program that is available to all of our students. This is a self-paced computer program that the students can utilize at school or at home. The teacher can look at the reports at any time to see how the child is progressing and to look for areas of need. There are a variety of math skills available in this program and the teacher can individualize as needed for a student to practice certain skills.

Our school also has the School Wide Enrichment Model. This is provided by two of our Teachers of the Gifted. Students who are high in critical thinking and creativity in math, but do not qualify for the gifted program, can be served by them. This includes students in grades K-5. The students are recommended by their classroom teachers and come to the program for an hour a week over an eleven-week period. The teachers provide a wide variety of hands-on and critical thinking activities and the students have a chance to interact with their peers who are also in need of enrichment. It has been a very successful program at our school.

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

We are very fortunate as a school to have a lot of support for our science program. The Sandia National Laboratories are located in our city. They employ many of the top engineers and scientists in the state. Many of their employees live within our school boundaries, but we also have a high number who elect to have their children attend our school on a transfer. They provide classroom demonstrations, judge our annual Science Fair, and conduct a Family Science Night every fall. Our school developed a STEAM Lab last year that is available to all of our students. The students can go in and explore, work on robotics, utilize a model of a wind tunnel, and have access to a 3D Printer. We have a Gen Yes Club that meets before school and is sponsored by two of our classroom teachers. They are responsible for keeping the STEAM lab up and running and help come up with new ideas for the students to explore. The PTA generously supports the STEAM lab and provides funding for many new materials every semester. The district also provides hands-on science kits for the teachers to use with the students. Each supports different standards. During the current school year, the district purchased the Mystery Science Online Curriculum. This is available to all of the teachers and the students really enjoy it. There are a wide variety of videos on different subjects and in an engaging format. We assess students' science skills in a variety of ways: Mystery Science has end of unit assessments (linked to Next Gen Science standards) that encompass more than multiple choice; they include reasoning, applying concepts and facts, and are developed via the inquiry process embedded in the lessons.

Our school-wide science fair is assessed by adults (many of whom are scientists or engineers from nearby Sandia National Laboratory) using a comprehensive rubric. The finalists at the intermediate level are assessed extensively by a panel of judges. Different grade levels employ a variety of assessment methods: model making (landforms, habitats), game playing (branches of government, life science, rock cycle), projects (build your own country maps, group projects- researching and presenting regions of the US), and investigations or experiments. Performance tasks also feature prominently, especially in the lower grade levels. For example, kindergarteners are asked to sequence the life cycle of a pumpkin in October. Upper grades utilize project based learning assessments graded on a rubric (e.g., students design a working rollercoaster with a drop, at least two hills, a curve, and a loop and present noting the different laws of

physics along with the vocabulary and how the rollercoaster demonstrates each). Most assessments are performance-based, allowing students to demonstrate their competency in multiple ways.

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

The new reading series that was adopted by the school district has a strong social studies component linked to it. All of the grades from K-5 are working on the same concept at the same time. One of the first units for all of the grade levels talks about how government works. It starts as a very simple concept at the earlier grades and is more complex as the students progress through the grade levels. It provides the opportunity for families with multiple children to have multi-leveled discussions at home. Our library also has an excellent collection of books on a wide variety of topics. The librarian teaches a weekly lesson spanning research skills, historical events, and other topics identified by classroom teachers.

We enjoy a strong connection to the nearby high school and area businesses. A local bakery hosts field trips, teaching students where bread comes from. They start with the wheat berry, grinding the wheat berry into flour, and complete the cycle with students making bread sticks. A local pizza restaurant shows the students how to make pizza, and some of the other area businesses talk to them about how they make their products and about how the business works. Our students are able to walk to the high school on field trips to learn about cooking, chemistry, science, and many other areas. The high school has a program for their students planning on pursuing education degrees. Weekly, they work in classrooms with teachers and students. They make connections with our students and spark our students to think about what it is like to be a high school student, while inspiring the high school students to become teachers with this hands-on experience in the classroom. Community members who are part of the Junior Achievement Program come and work with our students. Others come in and talk about their careers and possibilities for the students that they may not even know exist. One teacher who is also a bee keeper provides interactive lessons for classes; she brings her bees with her! A parent employed by the New Mexico Game and Fish presented an interactive lesson on re-introducing the lobo (Mexican grey wolf) to the New Mexico wilderness as a conservation effort. It all helps our students to have a well-rounded education. Our neighborhood high school sends students to teach the Junior Achievement Economics program to 3rd graders. That program includes a pre- and post-test. In class, we assess through projects and presentations. Assessment practices include written reports regarding research-based assignments graded on a rubric (a country, a culture, an animal, or a scientific domain), oral presentations graded on a rubric and with peer reviews. Most assessments are performance-based, allowing students to demonstrate their competency in multiple ways, incorporating hands-on learning.

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

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

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

As a school, we try to provide a well-rounded experience for our students. The district provides all of the elementary schools with a rotation of music and art teachers. Each year, the school has one or the other. This is our year for art. Our students attend art class weekly, taught by a certified teacher. Our school counselor provides a strong social and emotional component for all of the students. They go to her classroom for team building skills, test taking strategies, and basic skills on how to be successful citizens of the school and community. They also go to PE weekly for a 45-minute block of time. The PE teacher incorporates nutrition into his health lessons while making use of technology in novel ways. This, along with one hour of recess a day, helps the students to obtain the necessary physical activity. The students go to the library weekly for a lesson and to check out books. Our school has an active student council that plans school spirit days, raises money for different organizations, and makes decisions for the students.

The school has many other activities encouraging students to expand their knowledge and to challenge them. We have Family Science Nights, the Spelling Bee, a Science Fair, and the Geography Bee. The winners of our Spelling Bee and Geography Bee move on to the district level and usually do very well. The PTA sponsors the Reflections Contest. This is a theme-based program where students compete using writing, composing music, dancing, photography, and art. Many of our students have gone on to win at the state and

even competed at the national level. We are fortunate to be able to provide so many different activities at our school so that students can develop skills that will make them successful in their future education.

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

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

As a school, we continually monitor the individual needs of the students. This is done through daily assignments, unit tests, and district assessments. Teachers review these assessments weekly at the Grade Level Collaboration Meetings. We possess a variety of interventions to aid struggling students. Differentiating the instruction in the classroom is one of the first interventions. Our teachers develop strategies to assist the students during a lesson or may meet with them later in small groups to reteach a skill. We have a designated time during the day for all students at each grade level to go to their intervention programs. This includes gifted, special education, speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and social work. The students who remain in the classroom work on reviewing the curriculum or work on Tier II Interventions. The Student Assistance Team meets weekly and when more assistance is needed for an individual student, they discuss strategies for the teacher and parents. They can also recommend further testing if they think that more interventions are needed. Some of our students who are struggling in reading will work on the Lexia Reading Program. It is a self-paced computer program that has helped a lot of our students. It can be accessed from home or school. Our Intervention Teacher works with students who are struggling and need extra instruction. She teaches small groups daily and helps with phonics, comprehension, and reading skills. The general education and special education teachers work to make sure that the IEP goals are being met and to help the special education students be prepared for when they enter the general education classroom during mainstreaming.

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

Seventeen percent of the students at our school are in the Gifted Programs. Part of the reason for this is that we receive many transfer students who have parents who work at the National Laboratories. We have a good reputation and many of these parents want their children to come to our school. SY Jackson employs four full time, certified gifted teachers to meet the needs of our GATE students. They provide a strong enrichment program for the students. We have the School Wide Enrichment Program mentioned earlier in the Mathematics section. This is an eleven-week intervention for students who are very talented at math, but do not meet the Gifted Program criteria. Our Intervention Teacher also serves the needs of high achieving students in need of enrichment. She provides challenging activities for them to further enhance the curriculum. For students who enjoy math, we have the Wampler Math Program before school (named after a former parent), Math Olympiads, and the Freckle Math Computer Based program that the students can work on at home or at school. The Math Olympiads team competes with teams from around the world and usually places as one of the top schools. Our team consistently places in the top 10%. The Gen Yes Club is available to students who really enjoy technology and they provide computer assistance to teachers throughout the school. The group meets before school twice a week and they enjoy working on our STEAM Lab, robotics, and the 3D printer. The Teachers of the Gifted Programs meet with the general education classrooms during the weekly collaboration block and discuss strategies to help the gifted students as well as all of the other students. The teachers discuss strategies to better meet the needs of all of the students as well as differentiating for the higher performing students.

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

Nine percent of SY's students are in special education classes. This includes speech, adaptive PE, and other ancillary services. We have three full time special education teachers and the students attend programs for various amounts of time. This is all determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These plans are developed with the general education teacher, the special education teacher, an administrative representative, the district IEP specialist, and the parents. We are very careful to make sure the services the child receives meets the needs of the individual child. The IEP team meets annually to re-evaluate each student's progress and needs. These IEPs are then shared with any general education teachers who work with the child. Most of our special education students attend science, social studies, library, PE, art, and

computers with their general education classrooms. Others spend even more time with the general education teachers according to the child's needs. The special education students sit with the general education classrooms in the cafeteria. Our general education and special education teachers work very closely and attend the weekly collaboration meetings together and have a common recess time. Our school is good about working as a team to meet the needs of all of the students, whether they are in general education, special education, or the gifted program.

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

Of 548 students, we have 14 identified as English Language Learners (ELL). When parents register their student, they are asked several questions about language proficiency: what language/s does the student speak? What language/s does the student understand? Does anyone in the home speak another language? Can the student read and/or write in another language? This screening identifies possible ELLs in need of services. When a student is identified as ELL, the district assesses the level of English proficiency using WIDA's ACCESS placement test. Because we do not have a very large ELL population and do not know the level of proficiency until the district assesses, we assign the students to a classroom TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Another Language) certified teacher. We have at least one TESOL-certified teacher at every grade level, allowing us to meet the needs of these students. These teachers employ TESOL strategies and build relationships with the families. Our TESOL teachers consider this particularly crucial; ELL families are often disenfranchised from the educational process of their children, due to language barriers and other factors. Our TESOL teachers make concerted efforts to bridge that divide and welcome the families into the school community. The TESOL teachers certified via university or district programs. Teachers employ best teaching practices for ELLs using language arts materials provided by the district. ELL students receive 45 minutes of TESOL services each day, either 1:1, small group, and/or whole group using hands-on, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and verbal/social styles. The focus is English language acquisition, so oral language and vocabulary are critical, as is permitting student:student interactions and providing peer models. The district assesses ELL students' English language proficiency levels yearly. Even as students are identified as fluent, we tend to place them in TESOL teachers' classrooms, ensuring they continue to receive support via TESOL strategies. Although it is a small population, we do serve them and serve them well. We are in a better position to service them precisely because we have so few. Kindergarten consistently enrolls the highest number of ELLs and the majority of them test out of services by the end of 2nd grade. That's in part because the Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade TESOL teachers are dedicated to serving their ELL students. The high proficiency rates of our ELLs is also due to those teachers' abilities to focus on the small population of ELLs who need help accessing the curriculum in English; they are able to devote much more time to them than if it were a huge population.

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

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

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

We actively cultivate a school climate that is very welcoming to the students and one where they feel comfortable. Most enter the school as kindergarten students and continue here until they leave the 5th grade. We consider the students and their families part of our extended family and we work hard to make them feel welcome and cared for. Because we have the families for so many years along with the siblings, we get to know the students well and often get to see them grow up around the school. We provide an hour of recess every day for the students. They have a 15-minute morning and afternoon recess as well as a 30-minute lunch recess. It provides them with the opportunity to exercise as well as to bond and create strong friendships. They also have a chance to practice compromise, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The students at the school get along well together and we have very few discipline problems for a school of this size. With most of our students, we gently have a conversation about what went wrong and how to better handle a situation and it is taken care of. We support the whole child and behavior correction is a conversation supporting the students' social and emotional learning. We have a strong Character Counts Program at the school and do a Bully Proofing Pledge on the morning announcements. It reminds students about the importance of treating everyone in a positive manner and getting adult help when it is needed. The Character Counts Program has a monthly luncheon where two students are selected from each classroom and come to a pizza lunch with the principal. They are students who display the featured Character Counts Trait for that month. Our school counselor meets with every class 12 times a year for class sessions. They work on team building skills, peer pressure intervention, and ways to resolve conflicts. Our Student Council meets monthly to address concerns the students may have and to provide positive school-wide spirit days. They also raise money for local charities and comes up with a way to give back to the school at the end of the year. They are sponsored by two of our fifth-grade teachers.

We also know that in order for students to be well rounded, they need to have interests and activities that help them to fit in and want to be part of the school. Being a member of the band, chorus, chess, Spanish club, or Gen Yes helps students develop friendships based on common interests. Many pursue these interests through high school. There is a lot of research that shows that students who are involved in activities in the school are less likely to get in trouble and will get better grades. We are creating a foundation that will often continue long after they leave our school. For the students who are interested in extending their math experience, we have a before-school math program and Math Olympiads during the lunch period. These enrichment programs are open to students in the upper grades. Our Math Olympiads club boasts students placing in the top percentage world-wide every year. We have a Chess Club that meets before school and competes with other teams from around the district. A Spanish teacher provides an excellent program on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons for those who wish to participate. We have a very strong music program. There is a beginning and intermediate band for students in grade 3-5. We have about 50 students who are involved in this program. There is another large group that belongs to our after-school choir program. They perform concerts and plays each year for the school and community. We have several students who are involved with the Gen Yes Program. They come in before school several days a week and work with the STEAM Lab and upgrading the technology around the school.

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

This is one of the huge factors in the success of our school. When the principal arrived at the school 18 years ago, there were some family activities, but not very many. One of the first things that he worked with the PTA on was to bring families together with activities. The parents are involved and active in the school. This often begins with a tour of the school. Parents can call and set up a time to walk around with the principal and learn about the school. Many of our kindergarten parents will take advantage of this, especially if they are considering a transfer to the school. Most leave the tour with a positive mindset and are excited to have their child join the school. Our PTA is very active and engages in only one fundraiser a year. Our school holds an annual Jog-A-Thon that brought in \$50,000 this year. This takes place on a morning in September and then we do not have to go to the community with any more fundraising during the year. This is greatly appreciated by the parents. The school also has a Family Science Night, Family Math Night,

Roller Skating events, a school carnival, family picnic, One School One Book event, Sock Hop for families, and attend a local professional baseball game together. We also hold Donuts with Dad, the Annual Thanksgiving Meal, Classroom Presentations, Grade Level Presentations, and Concerts. Our parents have many opportunities to come into the school and to be part of the "Family."

We have a large number of parents and grandparents as well as community members who come in and help at the school. Every classroom has a room parent that helps to coordinate activities for the individual classrooms and organizes the parents. These volunteers often help in the library with checking out and shelving books, tutoring in the classrooms, and chaperoning field trips. As parents are walking around the school on the tours, they often comment on how many parents are involved and active around the school. It helps to create a positive and active environment. The teachers are welcoming and appreciate the help that the parents provide.

Our school works closely with the neighborhood high school. They have a teacher cadet program for high school students who are interested in becoming classroom teachers. Many of these students are former students from our school. The high school students come to our school weekly and work in the classroom of a sponsor teacher. They work with the elementary students and develop strong relationships. Our students also go over to the high school for field trips and to attend plays and special events. It is a strong bond between the two schools and helps the elementary students to start thinking about their future and being high school students someday. Parents play a vital role on the school team. They help guide the school's direction via the PTA and Instructional Council. We have a strong community that values the education of their children. For many years, we have enjoyed an average of 99% attendance at the Parent/Teacher Conferences. Almost 25% of our students are at the school because they have requested a transfer from another school. Over 75% of our staff members either have their children attending the school currently or in the past. They have chosen our school based on academic performance and the family atmosphere that the school provides. We have monthly activities at the school with include family picnics, science nights, roller skating, math nights, a sock hop, and going to local sporting activities. We want the school to be part of their extended family and a place where we are all working together.

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

We are fortunate to be at a school where there is very little turnover and a huge buy-in. As stated earlier, almost 75% of our teachers either currently have their children at SY Jackson or their children attended in the past. The teachers believe in what is going on at the school and wanted their children to be part of it. Our grade levels collaborate together every Wednesday afternoon and most of the grade levels meet together at lunch at least once a week to further work together. We have seven teachers who are currently Nationally Board Certified and another who has recently begun the process. We have a strong network of these teachers who work to support teachers who decide to undergo this rigorous certification process. The principal publicly celebrates his teachers' professional accomplishments. Our PTA is very supportive and is working to create a non-profit to help the candidates pay the candidate fees. The staff members also work together in self-selected Vertical Teams. They meet about four times a year to look at current research and to help develop ideas for the school. We do have the advantage that we have very little turn-over of the staff. Unless a staff member retires or moves away, they do not leave. Our un-official motto is "The grass is greener at SYJ!" It provides a consistency to the grade levels and the instruction at the school. The consistency of the same principal for 18 years also helps to stabilize the school. The teachers know what the expectations are and know unconditional support is available from administration and staff.

Our staff is concerned about making sure that they do what is best for the students at our school. They are actively involved in the placement of the students for the next grade level. As we approach the end of a school year, the teachers at the current grade level sit down together and look at what will be the best placement of the students for the following year. They look at the academic needs, learning styles, and peers in the classroom. They work on this for many hours and try to place the students in the best learning environment. This takes trust by the staff to know that the teachers are going to divide the students fairly and look out for the interests of the students and the teachers. As a result of this careful planning, we very seldom have parents who are unhappy with their child's placement and want to move them. The teachers are strong advocates for the students and are good about getting help or advice from their peers when there is a

concern. Our Student Assistance Team is also a great support to the teachers.

Another strong component to our school is the willingness of the teachers to step up and support each other. We have had teachers with personal situations at home or health concerns and the staff is quick to reach out and support each other. They provide meal trains, gift cards, taking on bus/recess duties, and many other supports. We do believe that we are “One Team” and that it is important to take care of the needs of each member. It is a very unique group of teachers who genuinely care about each other and it is an upbeat staff. Several times a year, the staff go on adult field trips for team building, which strengthens the team spirit. This is reflected to the students and community and creates a school that people want to be a part of. We do not have openings very often, but when we do, we receive a large number of resumes. The school has a strong reputation and people want to come here.

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

The principal has been at the school for 18 years and was a parent at the school for seven years before becoming the principal. He lives in the neighborhood and is part of the school community. Since the principal arrived at the school, a large number of teachers have retired. Of the 62 current staff members, there are only four at the school whom the principal did not hire. He has been very careful about selecting staff members who are supportive of each other and good at collaborating together. He trusts the teachers to make decisions and supports them as professionals.

Our school Instructional Council meets every other week. It consists of a teacher from every grade level, a union representative, the administrative team, and a parent representative. They guide the curriculum and instructional issues at the school. One of our teachers has been at the school for 32 years and has been a teacher, Instructional Coach, and is now the Intervention Teacher. She is the leader of our staff development and also a very trusted voice for the teachers. We have a Head Special Education teacher who provides strong leadership for the special education team. She understands the intricacies of special education and ensures we abide by both the letter and the spirit of special education laws. Our school counselor is also a part of the leadership team. She is on our School Mental Health team and is there to support the teachers and students in many different ways.

The Assistant Principal was a teacher at the school for five years and has been the Assistant Principal for two years. He knows the staff and community well and is an important part of the administrative team. Both the Principal and the Assistant Principal are out on duty before school, during recess, and after school. The principal is in the cafeteria at every lunch duty and interacts with the students. He does this so that he gets to know all of the students and their personalities. If a student is upset and is usually a happy child, he knows to try to figure out what is going on. It also gives him a chance to see every child in the school every day. He also takes his computer to the classrooms to answer emails and do other tasks. He wants to be around the students and feels he can get it done just as well in the classroom as in the office. There is a trust that builds between the community and the principal after so many years. The principal sends out emails to the community almost daily to keep them informed about things at the school. He knows it is important to keep the parents informed, facilitating parents to become active participants in their children’s education. The high school that our students feed into has a Grad Night Party every year. The principal has been at the school long enough that he was the principal for many of these graduating students. He attends the Grad Night Party every year and is one of the chaperones. It closes the loop on the entire circle of education between the elementary school and the high school.

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

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Our principal synthesized our mission statement into "One Team. One Goal: Student Success." He genuinely believes in that message and demonstrates it in multiple ways. It drives every decision he makes, every question he asks, and every directive he considers. That philosophy encapsulates the school culture. Of a staff of 56, he hired all but four staff members. He carefully selects new hires by determining how well they will fit into the family-based culture he has created, one with a single shared goal of teamwork for student success. Because he implicitly trusts his teachers as people and as educators, he allows them the autonomy to practice the art of teaching. He supports, guides, and suggests, providing a global and balanced perspective, while respecting the expertise and professionalism of his teachers. The principal communicates his expectations, but allows his teachers to create instruction and make changes as needed. His actions empower teachers, dedicated to making curricula, teaching, and learning student-driven, to make instructional decisions based on student needs--not arbitrary pacing guides. The principal trusts his teachers, the teachers trust the principal, the parents trust the teachers and it creates a continuous loop of confidence in one another, which continues year to year, family to family. A school's reputation is primarily via word of mouth and this is how it spreads. Our administration, staff, and families have built a permanent reputation that reflects the efforts put into cultivating the community.

Since the principal believes the whole school is one team with a shared goal, he welcomes input from everyone. He sees the necessity for new voices to be heard and the advice of veterans to be taken. He creates an open-door policy that is welcoming to all staff members.

He embodies the open-door policy: he always has time to hear a concern, offer advice or support. He does all cafeteria duties every day, specifically to give his staff a lunch break but, more importantly, to touch base with every single student daily. He has 35 recess duties a week. Again, he chose this schedule so he is known and accessible to the students. He also really loves recess and has been known to shoot hoops or play a round or two of tetherball and pushes the little ones on the swings. He listens to the students, the families, and his staff before making any decisions. All decisions are viewed through the lens of "how will this help our students succeed?" The principal of SY Jackson created his school with his motto at the forefront: One Team. One Goal: Student Success. He hand-selected his staff to make his vision a reality and then entrusted them to carry it out. Our consistently high scores, parent and student satisfaction, and all other measures prove together, we all succeed.