

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2021 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 Mrs. Peggy Head  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 1300 North Nelson Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Olathe State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 66061-2746

County Johnson County

Telephone (913) 780-7530 Fax (913) 780-7537

Web site/URL https://www.olatheschools.org/mahaffie E-mail headp@olatheschools.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\* Dr. Brent Yeager E-mail byeagerec@olatheschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Olathe Unified School District 233 Tel. (913) 780-7000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Joe Beveridge  
(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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 36 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 5 High schools
  - 3 K-12 schools
- 54 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	14	11	25
K	31	25	56
1	39	30	69
2	38	30	68
3	38	28	66
4	35	24	59
5	33	27	60
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>	228	175	403

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 11 % Black or African American
  - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 56 % White
  - 10 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 9%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	403
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Amharic, Arabic, Berber, English, Kikuyu, Kinyamulenge, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese,

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 30 %  
120 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 23 %

Total number students who qualify: 93

8. Students receiving special education services: 22 %

88 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>7</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>13</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>18</u> Developmental Delay    | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>49</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 24

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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
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 12:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

<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.

To build an actively involved community of respectful and responsible leaders. Inspiring a passion for leadership and learning.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Families were given the option to choose in-person or distance learning. This option was available throughout the year. Distance learning participants had to commit for a semester with a reevaluation option in December. The school year was delayed by 3 weeks. In-person learners started in a hybrid model.

17. **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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Through an unprecedented year of change and upheaval, Mahaffie Elementary maintains a 30-year tradition of leadership and learning. Though many things have changed, especially this year, we are a partnership of students, parents, staff, and community working together to provide a safe and caring place where all students are preparing for a lifetime of contribution and success. Located in Johnson County Kansas, in the city of Olathe, Mahaffie sits in the middle of a large suburban community on the property of the first stop of the Oregon Trail. The community has grown rapidly, in large part due to the outstanding public education system. Our school is defined by an eclectic and diverse population. Our students come to us each day from single family homes, apartments, and duplexes. Over the past eight years there has been a noticeable change in family dynamics, including increases in students in foster care, students who are identified as homeless, students who are raised by relatives, and students from a variety of countries where English is not the primary language.

Guided by our school improvement plan (SIP), all staff play a vital role in the daily instruction of students. The SIP is divided into three areas: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and social emotional learning (SEL). To help accomplish our school improvement goals, Mahaffie aligns with a districtwide initiative known as “The Big Three,” which concentrates on three crucial areas: standards-based instruction, professional learning communities (PLCs), and student engagement. PLCs collaborate to analyze data, create common assessments, and design learning activities to meet students’ needs. At the forefront of our planning, we focus on student engagement strategies and standards-based instruction. A core belief of Mahaffie is that every staff member contributes and plays a role in the success of our students. Opportunities for small groups, including Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), are part of our culture that are managed not only by classroom teachers, but also paras, specialists, and aides. This teamwork is also evident when we support our kids socially, emotionally, culturally, and physically. Mahaffie’s team includes community support from outside the building, including a Johnson County mental health partnership, as well as many on-site supports: including a social worker, interpreter, school wellness advocate, and a team for our visually impaired students. Our whole team approach is a significant reason for our student success.

On February 26, 2020, Mahaffie made school history by having our first ever Leadership Day. Our Leader in Me (LIM) program has become instrumental in helping our kids socially and emotionally, as well as realizing their leadership potential. We started this program during the 2017-2018 school year with financial support through a grant from the Olathe Public Schools Foundation (OPSF) and our generous Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). Through this program, our students experience classroom and school wide leadership roles, goal setting, weekly lessons revolving around the Seven Habits of Healthy Kids, and tracking their leadership and learning with leadership notebooks. The LIM program has had powerful impacts on how students view themselves and others, and consequently, on their social emotional wellbeing. These changes have led to increases in leadership behaviors and actions students provide.

Following the recommendations of the Johnson County Health Department regarding COVID-19, the Olathe School District initiated stay at home learning opportunities for students during the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 school year. Without hesitation, classroom teachers quickly found ways to communicate, connect, and engage with all students and families. Many of our Mahaffie staff contributed to the creation of the district’s Continuous Learning Plan (CLP); this plan ensured that our high expectations of learning continued during this tenuous time. To ensure basic student needs were met, staff volunteered to serve daily lunches, distributed learning materials, and provided gift cards for personal necessities.

Over the summer, PLCs worked to design distance and hybrid learning curricula. Parents could choose learning modes for their children when returning for the 2020-2021 school year. Thirty-four percent of our students chose distance-learning, while 66 percent of our students chose in-person learning. Based on these decisions, Mahaffie needed one distance teacher in each grade level kindergarten through fifth grade. The first day of school was delayed until all systems were in place. Utilizing StudentVue, Google Classroom, or SeeSaw, each teacher worked to develop standards-based, engaging lessons. Mahaffie in-person and distance teachers continued to collaborate in order to build cohesive instruction, regardless of which learning mode families selected.

The mission of a rigorous, relevant, and connected curriculum provided the guidance for daily instruction for both learning modalities. Based upon recent academic and social emotional screenings, students are showing positive growth and expected grade level progression.



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

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

Mahaffie uses the district-adopted Kansas College and Career Ready State Standards (CCSS) from which priority and supporting standards are detailed for each curricular area. This is what drives our quarterly scope and sequence planning. CCSS conveys intellectual growth overtime and across disciplines. Due to the global pandemic, our focus and instructional approaches have remained consistent and rigorous. The key to success has been to teach new procedures and routines that match the changed learning modalities, while continuing to uphold high expectations for teaching and learning.

Our distance learners have worked diligently to navigate technology and motivate themselves to complete assignments without the familiar structure of the formal classroom. Distance learners' instruction in reading and math parallels in-person learning due to our ability to distribute needed physical materials. Science and social studies adaptations are more common due to the hands-on and cooperative learning approach within these content areas.

In grades K-2, phonics and phonemic awareness are the forefront of instruction. We utilize the 95% Group Inc. to meet the needs of students in whole group and small group phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. We use formative assessments to determine learning needs for each student to create new small groups every three weeks. In grades K-2, small group instruction concentrates on vowel focused concepts with an emphasis on decodable texts. In grades 3-5, small group instruction focuses on comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Groups are formed based on students' reading levels identified through summative and formative assessments. Teachers use a variety of texts to enhance and reteach standards that have been previously taught whole class. In writing, grades K-4 focus on different genres each quarter. We provide opportunities for students to write daily across curricular areas. For the last two years, fifth grade has been piloting a writer's workshop program through the Teacher's College of New York made available by a literacy grant awarded to our district. This program teaches five genres of writing including literary essays and memoirs. Our fifth-grade writers have grown immensely in their love and quality of writing. To measure our students' growth in writing, all grades write a beginning of the year personal narrative, graded with a district created rubric for a baseline score. In March, students write another personal narrative, graded with the same rubric, not only to show growth, but also to help teachers make decisions for which writing skills need improvement before the end of the year.

Our daily focus is to teach a deeper understanding of the "why" behind math, using multiple methods and allowing student choice in which method works best for them. We use the same methods from grade to grade to layer skills over time. Each lesson contains interactive fluency practice, a daily application problem to enhance problem solving skills, concept development of a targeted skill, and a problem set for independent practice. Every student is placed in a math group to meet their individual needs. In order to assess student understanding, we use an online assessment tool, Mastery Connect, which allows us to easily assess both our distance and in-person learners. Through this system, data is organized by standards for teachers to easily analyze student understanding in order to guide instruction and small groups.

In the fall and spring each year, grades 1-5 take a nationally normed Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test for both reading and math. Grades 3-5 also take the Kansas Math and Reading Assessments in the spring each year. Distance learners are required by the state of Kansas to come into the building to complete state assessments. In both English language arts and math, students who are two or more grade levels below the standard are eligible for small MTSS groups to help meet their needs. Groups focus on one standard at a time. Students are pre-tested and post-tested to show growth. Teachers utilize the district MTSS interventions and resources to help guide instruction.

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are taught with an emphasis on hands-on learning and engaging curiosity through experiments and a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) focus. Students engage in many inquiry-based investigations to ignite their curiosity when first being introduced to a new science concept. As they progress through the concept, they work towards an end goal where they can design and build investigations to test their own hypotheses. Our distance learning teachers model

investigations through live Zoom sessions or prerecorded videos and encourage students to replicate activities at home when possible. Student learning is assessed in a variety of ways including class projects, investigations, observations and one-on-one questioning. In April, our fifth-grade students participate in a state science assessment.

Students explore different parts of history, their community, and how to be a good citizen through our social studies curriculum. Social studies concepts are taught through a variety of methods including debates, role playing, cooperative learning, and creative projects. Social studies standards are assessed in all learning modes through visual observations, class discussion, projects, and written responses.

**1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

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

The Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classrooms provide services to both general education and special education preschoolers in cognitive, language, social emotional, behavior, motor, and self-help skills. The curriculum specifically targets language, science, social studies, and a wide range of pre-academic skills including math and literacy.

Our district follows the Kansas Early Learning Standards (KELS) which are aligned with the State of Kansas Standards for K-3. The Olathe ECSE program has developed a curriculum checklist based on power standards and key indicators from all areas of development on the KELS. This checklist is updated four times per year for each child. By using these power standards, we can monitor how well students are learning and mastering preschool standards. The other large component of the ECSE program is monitoring of Individualized Education Programs (IEP) goals and objectives. Each child with an IEP has individual goals which specifically target that student's delays. By embedding IEP objectives within the general education curriculum, special education students are receiving specialized instruction at the same time they are participating with their same aged peers. This leads to special education students making larger gains in not only academic areas, but also in social and emotional development. This often allows these students to transition into a general education kindergarten classroom with fewer supports.

The preschool classroom has made modifications to increase safety and sanitizing issues due to COVID-19. Some of those include requiring all students in attendance to wear a mask and to use assigned seating during snack time. Additionally, some fabric items such as puppets and stuffed animals are not being used for now. Toys used for centers are sprayed with sanitizer between classes, hand sanitizer is used more frequently, tables and chairs are sanitized between activity times, and there are no shared supplies such as crayons, markers, scissors, or Playdough.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Mahaffie provides special areas of instruction for students in kindergarten through fifth grade with weekly one-hour classes in art, computer skills, library media, music, and physical education (PE). Each of the five areas follows district-adopted curricula that directly aligns with Kansas standards. When COVID-19 guidelines halted the final quarter of the 2019-2020 school year, specialists immediately worked in groups to provide online lessons through the district's CLP. Lessons provided various opportunities for students to engage in all special areas.

Each of our specialist classes support classroom instruction and help develop well-rounded students. Computer classes provide students with essential skills in keyboarding, coding, internet safety, software programs, and digital citizenship. In PE, students are given instruction in sportsmanship and teamwork, with an emphasis on the importance of staying physically active to maintain a healthy lifestyle. PE also presents a third-grade family PE night, sponsors a fall running club, organizes Field Day, and sponsors a fifth grade-led healthy habits club for our school. Art and music classrooms provide students with opportunities for creative self-expression; students learn about and create connections between their art and the world. Music provides

students with additional opportunities including grade level music programs, special chorus for fourth and fifth grade, and exposure to a variety of music and instruments. Our fifth-grade students are given the opportunity to participate in band and orchestra. In library media classes our librarian provides direct instruction with culturally diverse texts while also providing project-based learning and incorporating technology. This class also supports our whole-school reading program, the annual young author's celebration, and a yearly book fair. The librarian worked collaboratively to launch a district website featuring resources that families could use to support learning and taught in-person and distance learning families how to access and use resources housed in a student portal program.

Changes brought about by newly-adopted COVID-19 guidelines have given us new ways to envision providing these classes to students. Art classes were structured to make the best use of available space and to limit shared materials. The librarian adopted new guidelines for student spacing for instructional purposes, quarantining materials, and limited shelf browsing. Music classes changed seating arrangements and the types of voice instruction to lessen chances for COVID-19 spread. Physical education classes were held outside when weather permitted, and activities requiring shared materials were suspended during the school year. Computer classes were reworked to provide spaced seating and frequent sanitization of shared computer hardware between class visits. With these necessary changes, students are still able to benefit and thrive from ongoing standards-based instruction and a variety of assessments. With the use of interactive technology tools, it is possible to create both group and individual assessments that keep students invested in their learning.

Students who are enrolled in distance learning also benefit from special areas of instruction online. Each special area teacher develops and publishes lessons and assessments in collaboration with content area peers. Lessons for most specials are provided in two sections: grades K-2 and grades 3-5. Past lessons are made available for students who want to re-learn concepts for their own personal growth.

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

Mahaffie provides many supports to help educate our large special education (SPED) population (24 percent), English language learners (ELL) (19 percent), and students performing below grade level. Diverse learners define our student population, and our innovative, collaborative team strives to meet their needs.

Students identified with exceptionalities are an integral part of our inclusive school environment. Team members complete extensive evaluations using standardized measures and create high quality, comprehensive IEPs based on student needs and current levels of performance. Teachers support SPED students to achieve developmentally appropriate goals and objectives in order to close the achievement gap. They also enrich our gifted students. SPED delivers instruction in the areas of ELA, math, social emotional, behavior, student independence, Braille, orientation and mobility, physical, occupational, and speech language therapy. Students are included in small groups and/or one-on-one instruction with pull-out or push-in time, gifted, speech and language, adaptive PE, fine and gross motor, and visually impaired services. All students' goals are assessed through quarterly progress monitoring. Throughout COVID-19, SPED distance learners have been served remotely via temporary learning plans that were created on an individual basis in order to meet their specific needs. Regardless of the challenges distance learning presents, SPED students continue to receive services virtually to address their learning needs.

Mahaffie also has many students who do not qualify for special education services, but still need strong and consistent academic support. Through PLCs, classroom teachers analyze data and use it to identify small MTSS groups who are not meeting grade level standards. These groups may be taught by the classroom teacher or other trained staff. Our distance learning teachers provide these same interventions virtually. Groups engage with activities that support one math or reading standard at a time, using district or teacher created materials. In order to monitor their progress, students are given a pre-test and post-test for each targeted skill. These results are tracked through

an online system called Synergy which allows teachers to easily track data from year to year, see current levels of performance, and set goals for the coming year.

In 2017, we had 42 students identified as ELL. The next year that number increased to 108 students. Due to this change, in 2018-2019, an ELL program was added to our school to provide our ELL population with additional instruction based on their needs. Students are engaged in small group learning opportunities with our ELL teachers to help them overcome achievement gaps. ELL teachers also support these students within their classrooms. Specialized technology programs have been purchased for use by our students to provide additional learning experiences. ELL students participate in a state assessment called the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) to check their understanding of English and guide individualized instruction. As our ELL population continues to increase, our staff has been given several professional development training opportunities to help guide our instructional strategies to best meet the needs of our ELL population. Our ELL teachers join the distance learning classes to aide in instruction and lead small groups.

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

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

Our school vision “Inspire a passion for leadership and learning” is the foundation for engaging our students daily. In response to our changing demographics, a behavior support system has been established to provide common language throughout the building to support a positive climate. This research-based system directly teaches the skills: be safe, be kind, and be ready. These skills are taught in all areas of the school, such as the lunchroom, hallways, and playground. By aligning these three skills, students can engage in a positive school environment. This system includes clear expectations, common lessons, teaching and reteaching, acknowledgement, and collecting data for decision making.

All staff believe to best engage kids, we must build strong personal relationships. At Mahaffie, we go above and beyond to personally connect with students, including bus drivers, food-service staff, and school aides. For example, our music teacher collaborates virtually with the Kansas School for the Deaf and Blind to teach Braille music to a second-grade student who is blind. A fifth grader who struggles with anxiety has built a special relationship with our preschool teacher. When she is feeling anxious, she visits her classroom. One of our food service staff became aware of a student who lost her father and befriended her in the lunchroom.

Teachers incorporate cooperative learning strategies and captivating learning experiences to ensure all students are engaged. Each grade level is known for several projects that students look forward to as they move from grade to grade. Kindergarteners create marble mazes as a culminating activity for the unit about force. You might see worms in first grade as students eagerly measure them and discuss living and nonliving traits. Second graders transform into famous people in a wax museum format, sharing their research and learning. Students in third grade are eager to tie-dye their class t-shirts, sporting their class name. Walking through fourth grade you may see students analyzing and organizing data that was collected about favorite pie flavors. Mini-Society is a favorite in fifth grade, where students learn about economics through creating their own businesses and selling their products or services. Through these learning opportunities students are given choice and ownership and are deeply engaged in their learning.

Our distance learners are engaged through teachers dressing up like elderly ladies for the hundredth day of school, throwing virtual parties, and a lunch bunch where they can grow socially. During lessons, students engage using tools such as writing on the screen to share ideas, playing interactive games and songs, and meeting in small groups through breakout rooms to learn from each other.

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

Mahaffie Elementary is a focal point of a transitioning neighborhood. Families have sent children and now grandchildren to Mahaffie over the past 30 years. Others are new to the community, and even the country.

Each year we welcome our families to Snoop Night, where they meet teachers, unpack supplies, and reconnect with classmates. Due to COVID-19, we changed this event to a Beep and Greet. Teachers stood outside and greeted cars as they pulled up and dropped off their materials. Additionally, teachers invite parents to a Parent Information Night, providing an overview of the school year. With the current restrictions, Parent Information Night was held virtually and continued to have high family attendance.

To connect home and school, parents and staff members collaborate on our family leadership team. They meet to discuss ways in which families can reinforce the work students are doing at school. Our PTO meets monthly to encourage family involvement, fundraising support, and school improvement. Annually, they provide \$1,000 in gift cards for families in need, school materials for our classrooms and money for our field trips. Through our WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads Of Great Students) program, fathers and father figures are provided the opportunity to volunteer at school.

Families come together for social events like the school carnival, family movie night, book swaps, and

costume exchanges. School sponsored events like fundraisers, musical programs, and parent teacher conferences are well attended. We continue to encourage family and community involvement even with COVID-19 providing many barriers. Teachers have offered distance learning nights for how families may provide help academically at home. Parents have been welcomed to class parties and our spelling bee via Zoom. Distance and in-person classes in kindergarten have joined together for presentations and read-alouds by community members. In second grade, veterans were invited to attend a virtual recognition where their service could be honored.

Mahaffie has three community partners consisting of two churches and a bank. The churches contribute needed school supplies and a variety of indoor recess games. Our bank partner gave a \$300 donation during the holidays to purchase gifts for a family of eight. Our staff provides gifts for families we adopt each year. A local food bank donates backpack snacks each week to families in need. We work closely with the Olathe Public Schools Foundation, which recently provided grant funding for a class set of ukuleles, drums, and special reading journals. Area colleges entrust Mahaffie for the placement of future educators.

Our strong family and community partnerships are a critical part of our students' success.

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

Not only do we inspire a passion for leadership and learning in our students, but these traits are also encouraged and embraced by all staff. Staff members are supported by each other and are encouraged to share their opinions. Building staff development is a shared leadership opportunity where a variety of staff contribute their expertise. Each staff development day begins with team building activities and celebrations and sharing. Together we work as a team to learn from each other while helping everyone feel valued, celebrated, and supported.

Professional development opportunities are provided throughout the year that are engaging and relevant. In past years, all district-level professional development sessions were provided in-person. Since March 2020, sessions have been formatted to be delivered in synchronous and asynchronous "chunks" to provide staff with a variety of ways to learn new content and to assure safety per COVID-19 guidelines. As an example, when the district provided training on dyslexia, content was provided through a live YouTube streamed video, and hosted through content-area coordinators who managed Zoom breakout rooms for rich, in-depth discussion of presented concepts.

Training sessions are determined through collaboration with Mahaffie's leadership team, using the SIP and student data to drive professional learning content. At Mahaffie, teachers attend district-provided professional development sessions from their classrooms and can collaborate with each other during session breaks. Building professional development is provided in whole-faculty and small-group settings. Other professional learning occurs weekly during time dedicated to PLCs, and the expectation is that staff are gathering, comparing, and evaluating student data and making instructional decisions that enrich student learning. PLCs apply their learning from the professional development sessions to improve teacher efficacy and student achievement.

When the new school year started amidst COVID-19, the district's Learning Services Department provided an open "Help Desk" to guide staff transition with new learning modes. Teachers at Mahaffie also collaborated with each other to begin publishing online content and to problem-solve technological issues. Additionally, the district offered after-school learning sessions dedicated to using interactive technology tools to keep students engaged with content. Two Mahaffie staff members were trained to present learning platform strategies to staff and serve as ongoing consultants for teachers.

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

Mahaffie's philosophy is that everyone is a leader. We each play a vital role and have our own unique talents and gifts to share. Our success comes from everyone committing to their roles. Our principal sets the tone of this culture by being a servant leader. Teachers are supported and given the opportunity for decision making, by showing everyone that they matter and are valued. The principal encourages not only teachers to

lead, but also students and their parents. She goes above and beyond to get to know all students and staff, modeling the importance of relationships to our school's success.

Our school leadership team is representative of all grade levels and a specialist that meet monthly. This group helps make school improvement related decisions. There are five highly trained specialized instructional coaches assigned to our school. Our leadership team and our instructional coaches work closely together to enhance teacher efficiency in areas such as student engagement, standards-based instruction, and student behavior. This leadership collaboration helps students to reach their highest academic success. There are many leadership opportunities outside of the leadership team, such as clubs, curriculum, technology, and other specialties, where all staff can lead. Teachers seek out each other based on known strengths and areas of expertise or previous experience.

In response to COVID-19, a committee was formed that included staff members who met over the summer to organize a document that restructured routines and procedures that pertained to the changes needed due to the pandemic. Team leaders shared this document with staff prior to the beginning of the new school year. Staff were encouraged to offer suggestions for the document to ensure all staff had input. As circumstances change, we stay open minded. In addition to our weekly staff meetings, our distance teachers meet in their own PLC to discuss strategies and problem solve ways to increase student learning.

This all-inclusive leadership style paves the way for our students to reach academic success by allowing teachers to have the freedom to try new approaches, while embracing mistakes as opportunities for growth. When we work together towards a common objective or goal and use each of our strengths, our students reap the greatest benefits. Working in isolation is not the model for Mahaffie; instead, we work consistently as a team to help students achieve the best results in learning and in their rich social and emotional lives.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Mahaffie has academically, culturally, and socially diverse groups. Our student population is becoming increasingly diverse with 11 different languages represented. At the beginning of the year, our staff participated in district-wide diversity training. This training was designed to help us as educators be more aware of what makes each person unique and how to value and help students have pride in who they are. It gave us the opportunity to explore our own personal biases, learn how to overcome them, and determine how our perspectives influence our relationships with students.

Prior to 2018, any student qualifying for ELL services attended a site-specific school designed to meet their needs. With the changing demographics in our community, we saw an increase in the number of students needing ELL services. Therefore, Mahaffie became designated as an ELL school. We now have an ELL teacher and paraprofessional on site to support our ELL students. This program offers pull-out and/or push-in service for students in various content areas. Classroom teachers and ELL teachers work together to intervene and focus on skills or discuss needed interventions at a given time to meet student needs with grade-level content. This collaboration specializes and scaffolds instruction to meet these learners at their zone of proximal development within an inclusive classroom. We use technology to help students engage with content and to interact socially with their peers. To build the bridge of communication between school and home, we utilize interpreter and translating services.

We expose our students to current events and daily critical thinking through a current event magazine subscription purchased for us by our PTO. Diverse literature is an impactful tool within all classrooms that provides exposure to different subgroups. Classroom teachers use a social emotional awareness program, Second Step, to teach students empathy and acceptance of differences. These skills will help them throughout school, work, and their lives. Our counselor teaches an anti-bullying curriculum to all students. All staff are trained each year to recognize

bullying and to implement techniques to prevent bullying and effectively address it when it happens. In third grade, students participate in Celebrate Cultures Day, where they learn about different cultures around the world. Prior to this culminating event, students are immersed in activities that expand their cultural awareness.

We celebrate the diversity in our school community and are increasing our teaching and learning in this area. Specific goals are being set to enhance the capacity of teachers to work effectively and equitably with all students, as we are mindful of current events and social movements.



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

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At Mahaffie, many students have experienced trauma and/or COVID-19 stressors. This year, especially, we have seen an increase in student behaviors, anxiety, and depression. It is critical that we address these social-emotional concerns before focusing on academics. The practice that has been most instrumental in our continued academic success is the way we empower our students through social emotional learning (SEL). Through all modes of learning, our mindset of supporting students socially and emotionally did not change. However, through reflection we became more creative about how this content is presented and taught. Our strong foundation in SEL allowed us to confidently navigate these challenges to ensure academic success.

Our most impactful strategy is our LIM program. In both distance and in-person learning, students receive weekly direct instruction, taught by teachers or students, that highlight specific leadership qualities. These lessons help students see themselves and each other as leaders, building their confidence and teamwork. Every student has a leadership role within their class. Examples include receptionist or morning greeter. Each grade level has designated schoolwide leadership roles, such as recording morning video announcements or recycling. Students are celebrated as Leader of the Quarter at a student-led assembly. To make connections across the building, we created families that meet monthly, known as Castle Crews, consisting of a mix of students from all grades. Our focus on leadership at Mahaffie has made a positive impact on their SEL. Students have a sense of belonging and know that they play an important role in our school, in turn increasing their social emotional health.

Another important strategy is increasing the capacity of a positive classroom culture. Teachers facilitate team building activities, such as shout-outs and creating class mission statements. Our students take ownership by developing class agreements as well as setting, tracking and celebrating goals. In weekly class meetings, teachers provide opportunities for student voice and teach SEL skills such as empathy, compassion, and self-regulation.

Although we could not see our students face-to-face every day when school closures began in March 2020, they still knew how much we cared about them and valued their well-being as we continued to provide social and emotional support. As we transitioned back into different modes of learning for the 2020-2021 school year, we knew our focus had to continue to be SEL. We did this by making students feel loved and safe, while providing as much normalcy as we could in a world that was nothing close to normal. Our dedication and approach to developing the whole child is the reason why our students have such high academic success.