

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 209 Commonwealth Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Oxford State MS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 38655-4451

County Lafayette County

Telephone (662) 236-4870 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.oxfordsd.org/Domain/326 E-mail mherrington@oxfordsd.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* Mr. Bradley Roberson E-mail wbroberson@oxfordsd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Oxford School District Tel. (662) 234-3541

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. Carter Myers
(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

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

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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	177	151	328
4	166	153	319
5	0	0	0
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
Total Students	343	304	647

*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):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4.3 % Asian
 - 34.5 % Black or African American
 - 7.9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 48.7 % White
 - 4.3 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 7%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	27
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	46
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	636
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %
70 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 38 %

Total number students who qualify: 243

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %

101 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>4</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>7</u> Developmental Delay	<u>29</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>45</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</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: 4

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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	16
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.	5

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 22:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	94%	94%	94%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
 Yes No

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

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

Our mission is to empower all students to become confident and creative builders of the future.

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.

Della Davidson Elementary School students/parents were given the choice in July 2020 to choose in-person learning or virtual learning. Both forms of instruction have been taking place all year long. Online students were also given the choice to return to in-person learning as needed. In August 2020, we had approximately 30% of our students choose virtual instruction. We had 8 teachers (4 in each grade) that were chosen to teach online instruction. Currently, in April of 2021, we have 10% of our student population remaining in virtual instruction. Therefore, with the large number of students that have returned to school, these 8 teachers are currently teaching in a hybrid format, meaning that they are educating online students and in-person students simultaneously.

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

Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES) is one of six schools in the Oxford School District (OSD) in Oxford, Mississippi. We serve students in third and fourth grades in departmentalized, differentiated classrooms. We are a Title One school with approximately 50 percent of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The teaching staff at DDES has an average of 12 years of teaching experience. The general-education curriculum is provided by 28 classroom teachers with approximately 22 students per classroom. Full-time music, librarian, art, and physical education teachers are employed. Our school also has an EL teacher paid by Title funds, along with remedial reading and math teachers. Approximately 30 percent of our student population is gifted, so we have three teachers for our gifted program. We also have five special education teachers to support our students with disabilities.

The community of Oxford, Mississippi, is unique. It is the home of the University of Mississippi, so DDES has many students whose parents work at the University. Oxford also has a booming EL population, with almost 10 percent of our student body that identifies their first language as other than English. DDES has a strong culture of prioritizing student academic success. Our main priority is meeting students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs through a variety of resources and supports. The academic culture is founded on using assessment data to determine students' academic needs and addressing those needs through individualized instruction. We also analyze behavioral data and social-emotional needs through various student screeners, known as Panorama, and use this information to support the whole child.

DDES uses diverse strategies to challenge students to meet their full potential. One strategy is Charger Time. Charger Time is a 50-minute block built into the instructional day, specifically designed to remediate or challenge students. Students are assigned to a variety of teachers during Charger Time to ensure their individual academic needs are met. The students are assigned to gifted teachers, special education teachers, EL teachers, remedial teachers, or content area teachers during this time. Teachers collaborate weekly to ensure all student needs are being met. The school also has a strong support system in place for struggling learners. Students are first identified by teachers and then a team of teachers collaborates to design and implement supports for the struggling students. We have full-time reading and math interventionists who work with students in small group settings to identify and close learning gaps students may have.

We have implemented Standards-Based Learning (SBL) at the elementary level in our district. SBL is designed to identify students' areas of strength as well as areas for improvement in order to challenge students to master each grade-level standard and meet their full potential. SBL has been a first-order change for parents and for teachers, but we truly believe that the SBL principles and instructional strategies best meet the needs of all of our students. With SBL, the score a student receives is a true reflection of their standards mastery. It also helps promote a growth mindset in students because grades and mastery are not determined by a pacing guide. Students have all year to master their grade-level standards and are given multiple opportunities to do so. Also, with SBL, when students are promoted, teachers at the next grade level know exactly what standards and skills each student has mastered and which standards need more practice.

We have also implemented a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum called Second Step. This is a scripted curriculum that teaches students how to identify and address their emotions. It helps them resolve conflict and think through consequences.

This year has been a challenging year for teachers, students, and parents in regards to Covid-19. Our district offered the students the option of participating in online instruction or in-person instruction. We started the year with approximately 70 percent of our student body participating via in-person instruction. Our school policies and procedures changed drastically to limit students' exposure and contact. If students were sick or exposed, they were allowed to learn virtually via Zoom while they were quarantined. Our district also used a digital learning platform called Seesaw to help with virtual instruction. Our staff was flexible and resilient in terms of the policies, procedures, and modes of instruction that were approved. While all of these changes were challenging, our biggest challenge was the lack of student participation via online instruction. We noticed quickly that students were falling behind in online instruction and were not able to meet the

expectations. School administrators and teachers worked together with parents to provide extra virtual support for struggling students, while also providing them with an option to send the student back to in-person instruction.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES) engages students in core curricula outlined in the Mississippi College-and Career-Readiness Standards, which is developed by the Mississippi Department of Education. Core content areas include English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The scope of the English Language Arts curriculum includes reading literature, reading informational text, and reading foundational skills, which are all aligned with specific priority standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The scope of the mathematics curriculum includes the mathematical domains of operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations in base ten, number and operations for fractions, measurement and data, and geometry. The scope of the science curriculum includes the overarching content strands of life science, physical science, and earth and space science, and are all subdivided into 10 disciplinary core ideas. The scope of the social studies curriculum consists of five essential content strands: civics, civil rights, economics, geography, and history.

The third grade's focus theme is citizenship in local government, and the fourth grade's focus theme is Mississippi studies and regions. The sequence for each core content area includes engaged learning that invites students to experience multiple learning opportunities that will support them at various levels of development. Teachers scaffold students' learning and development to meet the needs of each student through the use of whole-group instructional strategies, small-group instructional strategies, one-on-one instruction, and collaborative grouping strategies. Teachers then track student progress through Standards-based learning (SBL) system designed to intentionally track student progress and achievement, while allowing teachers to focus on helping students learn at their own pace. The SBL process increases the likelihood of students mastering the curriculum standards by the end of the school year because students have until May to master grade-level content.

Before any instruction begins, teachers guide students as they unpack new standards. First, they write the original standard. Next, they highlight key action words (verbs) and classify keywords (nouns). Then, they rewrite the standard in student-friendly language to help students understand what they are learning and why they are learning it. Finally, they all agree on what needs to happen before students can master a standard. Once students know and understand what they are expected to be able to do, teachers implement a series of instructional strategies and provide a variety of instructional resources to track student progress. Teachers use a mix of formative and summative assessments to collect evidence of student learning to determine student mastery. Depending on student progress, ample opportunities are provided for students to be retaught and reassessed. Also, support and opportunities are provided for students to extend their content knowledge in new and challenging ways.

In response to an unprecedented global pandemic, schools around the world were prompted to charter new territory in the realm of virtual learning. While there were no changes to the curriculum at Della Davidson Elementary School, processes for instruction and assessments were altered to meet the needs of students who chose to participate in virtual learning. To support students in an online learning environment, DDES selected Seesaw as its digital learning platform and Zoom as its virtual learning environment. Seesaw is a platform with which students were already familiar, and Zoom is the virtual space DDES needed to foster successful student-teacher interactions. Teachers use Seesaw to assign and assess student work since the platform allows them to give feedback and provide student journals to document evidence of work. Teachers use the many useful features in Zoom to provide the most authentic classroom environment possible for online students. They use features such as the break out rooms for collaborative groups, the poll feature to make informal observations, the screen share feature to allow students to share their work in the virtual setting, and the chat feature to send quick links for students to visit during instruction or to discreetly manage the virtual learning environment. To accommodate for assessments in a secure testing environment, the Oxford School District (OSD) offers students two options for summative assessments. To assure the validity of assessment results, online students may schedule test sessions at the OSD testing center, which is a secure environment designed with social distancing in mind. Once the sessions have been scheduled, students can arrive at their assigned times to take the test in a proctored setting and to be picked up as soon as they are finished. For parents who do not feel comfortable bringing

students to the testing center, sealed test envelopes are placed in the front entrance of the school so that parents can collect and return the tests before and after a secured virtual test session with the classroom teacher.

Teachers use the data collected from formal and informal observations and formative and summative assessments to guide their instructional strategies and identify areas of common misconceptions and meet students' academic needs. The data is further analyzed by content area teams to evaluate overall student growth and achievement and to determine any supports needed for students to be successful.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES) has a variety of curriculum areas where third and fourth-grade students acquire essential skills and knowledge daily. Students attend art, music, library, and PE each week. Also, the guidance counselor and the behavior coach visit classrooms each month, teaching character building, problem-solving, and social skills. Through the counselor/behavior coach team, students are given an outlet to identify their feelings during the difficult time of the pandemic.

Art is a special area in which all DDES students participate on a weekly basis. DDES is a one-to-one school with each student and teacher being assigned an iPad to use for instruction. The art teacher, who is technologically adept, has had a positive impact on how students are able to create and share art with parents and with each other during the Covid-19 pandemic. The art teacher has taught students how to use Artsonia, which is one of the world's largest online collections of student art. It is published by teachers and students from around the world. Through Artsonia, students and parents can view and comment on art created during art class. Students recently created green screen videos of what they wanted to be when they grew up. Virtual learners have access to art class via Seesaw, our online learning management software, and they are provided a weekly art packet parents may pick up in the front office. The art teacher has impacted the way all students view and create art in today's technologically advanced world.

Library special is another weekly class for students. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the librarian visits each classroom once a week instead of students going into the library. Students are not allowed to browse the books in the library, so she brings the books to them. She teaches a short lesson with an emphasis on literacy. She then allows students to check out books on her rolling library cart. Knowing all students have access to an iPad, she has also utilized technology to make things easier for students to read and check out a variety of books. Students are able to read books using EPIC, the world's leading online children's book subscription service, which offers students access to over 40,000 books. Destiny Discover is also used by students to view all the books the school library has to offer. By using the online reservation system, students can reserve books, and the librarian delivers them to the classroom.

Music is another way students have acquired essential skills and knowledge of the arts each week. The music teacher teaches rhythmic dances, music notes, and has recently taught them how to drum using buckets from Home Depot and drum sticks. Technology is utilized through iPads to help them learn to read music, and the teacher often incorporates technology through a music program called Quaver.

Physical Education is another weekly curriculum area in which students participate. Students learn valuable lessons such as why an active lifestyle is important and how physical exercise is good for the body. Students also learn about collaboration, competition, and teamwork in PE.

Even with covid-19 restrictions in place, teachers continue to impress upon students how the arts and physical education impact their day-to-day learning.

3. Academic Supports:

Della Davidson Elementary School's (DDES) mission is to empower all students to become confident and creative builders of the future. Our priority is to focus our instruction to best support and challenge students academically while encouraging students to be resilient in the pursuit of academic success.

One of the ways DDES implements academic support is through a session called Charger Time, a daily 50-minute block of time during the school day for academic interventions. During Charger Time, students receive academic support in small groups. Since a specific time is allocated during the day for interventions, students are not missing vital instructional time in the general education classroom. Charger Time not only benefits the students but is also helpful to the teachers. All teachers (general education, special education, gifted, English Learners, and interventionists) are able to utilize that time to focus on assisting students who may have gaps in learning; thereby, helping meet the academic needs of all students.

Charger Time focuses on a diversity of student needs. During Charger Time, students who receive academic support through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) work with a special education teacher on goals pertaining to their IEP. These students work with two programs: the S.P.I.R.E reading program, which is a multisensory reading intervention program, and the STAR reading program for progress monitoring. Also, students who are English Learners (EL) work with an EL teacher who implements the Lexia program to assist students with reading and language skills. They also use the STAR reading program for progress monitoring. In the general education classroom, the general education teachers help all students by remediating academic standards that students may be struggling to master.

Students who are performing below grade level are referred to our intervention program. During Charger Time, tier 3 students go to the reading or math specialist to help address foundational gaps in learning. With tier 3 reading students, the reading specialist utilizes the S.P.I.R.E and STAR programs. With tier 3 math students, the math specialist utilizes Freckle Math for instruction and STAR math for progress monitoring. Tier 2 students remain in the general education classroom during Charger Time, but they work in small groups with their teacher on academic standard remediation and progress monitor growth using Moby Max, an online program. Tier 1 students also remain in the general education classroom and work on skills they may not have mastered. They have time to practice for future assessments and/or work on enrichment activities. Students who are above grade level receive enrichment activities either in the general education classroom or they can go to the gifted classroom if they have tested into the gifted program.

In addition to Charger time, DDES offers two after-school tutoring programs for dedicated intervention with students. The first program is funded through a McKinney/Vento grant for students who are homeless, in the bottom 25%, or are identified as needing tier 2 or tier 3 level supports. This after-school tutoring program is an opportunity to help students receive additional academic support beyond the school day. DDES also works with an after-school tutoring program called LeapFrog, which assists students by closing learning gaps in reading. Students are selected for the program based on their benchmark scores and STAR scores as well as teacher recommendations. LeapFrog tutors use a phonics program to address these gaps in reading.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Walking into a classroom at Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES), you will see students exhibiting genuine curiosity and interest, actively listening and participating, interacting with passion in the learning process.

The teachers at DDES offer high engagement opportunities for students through creating meaningful experiences that connect to the real world. On any given day, you may see a fourth-grade math classroom that has been transformed into a diner, allowing students to refine their skills with adding and subtracting decimals. You might see another teacher providing an opportunity to practice equivalent fractions and following procedures through a recipe to make a trail mix snack. You might even see students performing a drama while furthering their knowledge on elements of fiction. The teachers do not only create meaningful learning experiences, they also involve students in those experiences thereby utilizing student interests, current events, and trends to make learning relevant.

Take a peek into a classroom, and you will find students working in small groups using the collaboration process, taking on active roles, responsibilities, and ownership in their learning. Students may be up and moving around the room, connecting skills to movements.

Once students are hooked on learning and engaged in the process, they can be found digging deep into the standards and skills needed to be successful. The deep dive into each standard and the learning continuum provides students with the opportunity to set their own growth goals and track their progress. Teachers create learning pathways for each standard, setting a clear path to mastery and allowing for self-paced instruction. The visual representation of the pathway provides students with motivation to improve. In addition to pathways, teachers provide choices within students' learning by presenting and executing the workshop model, choice boards, and must do/may do lists, allowing students to have a voice in their learning. When students feel connected to the process and their growth, they are motivated to work harder.

Academic growth is not our only goal at DDES, students' emotional and social growth is equally important. Teachers are diligent about teaching the whole child. As part of a school-wide initiative, teachers utilize the Second Step program for holistic social-emotional learning. Students learn conflict resolution, how to be assertive, and how to manage emotions and feelings through activities, role-playing, and consistent modeling.

Students are shown and taught about life beyond K-12 for college and career readiness. They learn to maneuver and use technology for creative outputs, using iPads on a one-to-one basis. Teachers provide opportunities for critical thinking through deep questioning and through presenting math problems requiring evaluation and analysis. In addition to the teachers, our school counselor also helps students recognize potential career paths, helps to foster good work habits, conducts interest surveys, and lets them see what opportunities they could potentially have in the future.

Motivation and engagement are not new to students and teachers at DDES, but when closures happened last year due to Covid-19 and remote learning was on the horizon, everyone adapted and the students were just as excited and hooked on the learning process as before. Teachers quickly found, and continue to find, ways for students to produce creative products to demonstrate their learning. They also provide break-out rooms for students to peer teach, have autonomy, and engage in meaningful collaboration with their peers via Zoom.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

To build relationships with families, we communicate early and often. One of the first communication events is in the spring of the school year when we host Safari Night during which rising third graders and their families are invited to visit Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES) to tour the school and meet the

teachers. At the beginning of every school year, we also host an Open House for families so that students are able to meet their teachers and locate their classrooms prior to the first day of school. Other parental involvement events included data nights, where teachers meet with parents about individual student achievement and progress.

During the pandemic, we have continued to utilize two programs frequently: SchoolStatus helps us engage families in conversation, and PowerSchool helps families stay informed about their student's grades. Our learning management system is SeeSaw, and families are encouraged to view and comment on student work. In addition, teachers share graded work, newsletters, and other pertinent information with families brought home weekly in a folder by students. Parents are asked to sign the folder to ensure receipt and leave comments for the teacher if needed. The administrators ensure parents are informed of student progress periodically during the year as well. Progress calls may be calls of concern and/or praise. Parents of students who receive intervention or accommodations are invited to attend meetings to discuss their child's progress. Meetings are held when times are convenient for both the parents and the teachers. Parents who are not comfortable attending in-person meetings are given the option of attending Zoom meetings.

During the pandemic, the school district created a Family Resource Center. DDES utilizes the Family Resource Center by conducting home visits to ensure students' needs are met. During the pandemic, we offered in-person and virtual learning options. The resource center helped parents navigate the school year and understand academic expectations.

In March 2020, the Oxford School District pivoted to virtual learning for the remainder of the school year. During that time, DDES provided breakfast and lunch to children of the community through buses driven to different locations around town. Also, the Charger Health and Wellness Clinic (CHW) was created to assist families with medical needs. The CHW, which is free for students, takes insurance and provides the same services as an urgent care clinic. In addition, every student at DDES has been provided an iPad, so if they have to be quarantined, everyone will be prepared to pivot to virtual learning.

Additional community partnerships during Covid-19 have helped students. Junior Auxiliary of Oxford has provided students with items such as clothes and food. Love Packs provides students with food for the weekend, and several community members created and hosted a Christmas Drive for families in need. From that effort, over 60 students were provided with gifts on Christmas morning. The Oxford School District Foundation also awarded over \$30,000 worth of grants to teachers to fund various teaching and learning projects, and the University of Mississippi has provided tutors to support student achievement.

DDES students participate in community service with a nearby retirement home to visit and offer company to the residents. Students also organize and collect coats for a Native American reservation, host a supply drive for the local humane society, and raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society through Pennies for Patients. They also raise funds for LeBonheur Children's hospital by supporting Go Jim Go. By connecting students to the outside world, DDES works to prepare students to become builders of the future.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We strive to build a culture of continuous improvement at Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES). Through professional learning communities (PLCs), we prioritize collaboration among teachers to make sure that teachers are heard, valued, and supported. This year has been especially challenging due to Covid-19. It has been important for teachers to balance self-care with the pursuit of excellence. Teachers have displayed a growth mindset this year in regard to their instructional methods and strategies. They have balanced in-person instruction with online instruction to best meet the needs of all students. This year our teachers have been challenged to switch modes of instruction, as needed, for quarantined or sick students. While we always strive to meet student needs, it has been a year that has required grace for students and teachers alike.

In creating a culture of continuous improvement, it has been important for teachers to collaborate and share ideas as well as areas for improvement. We have focused our professional development on the teachers' needs. The district distributes a professional needs survey, which the administration takes into consideration

when planning professional development. However, the administration promotes the idea that learning does not only happen during professional development days. We can learn from our colleagues each week in PLC meetings by sharing ideas and strategies that were successful in our own classrooms. The administrators meet with each teacher individually to identify areas of strength and areas for growth. During this meeting, teachers work together to establish professional goals for teachers and to discuss which strategies they would feel comfortable leading during professional development sessions with their colleagues. Identifying these strengths help empower the teachers to share with others, creating a culture of continuous improvement.

The administration and our parent-teacher organization have been intentional about celebrating success this year. Due to the year's challenges, the leadership team, which consists of administrators and PLC leaders, has focused on both teacher and student support. Because it is important to view continuous improvement and growth from an individual perspective, we speak often about meeting students where they are in order to achieve growth. We believe that the same is true for culture. Establishing a culture of continuous improvement requires meeting teachers where they are and seeking to provide what they need in order to feel supported and valued while encouraging them to continue to grow.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES) is that a culture of excellence is established and maintained when the administration is able to support teachers and students in their efforts to achieve. The principal works alongside the assistant principal and teachers to make sure that they all cultivate an environment in which students can be challenged to become confident and creative learners. Parental involvement and support are crucial to the success of our culture. Our Parent Teacher Organization is very active and is a great resource for encouraging parents and teachers to get involved as a team to promote student achievement.

We continue to work to maintain a culture that facilitates student success. Through professional learning communities (PLCs) in each content area and grade level, we are able to focus on facilitating the collaboration of teachers. This is essential for developing a culture to focus on student success. In PLCs, teachers discuss how to best support students and how to most effectively facilitate student learning and growth. We discuss data and instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Along with the instructional focus, we also make sure instructional programs are implemented well in every classroom. Our administration is adamant that when teachers are working together collaboratively, all of our students will reap the rewards of our self-reflection and efforts.

This school year has been challenging due to Covid-19. When we returned to school in August of 2020, our students were given the option to choose in-person or virtual learning. Also, we changed multiple policies within the school to limit exposure of Covid-19 and minimize contact for students and teachers. We have worked together to ensure that while policies in the building have changed, we are still maintaining our priorities to push and support students to become confident and creative learners.

At one point, we had to work together and adapt quickly as we discovered several of our online learners were falling behind on their work. The administrators' role shifted during this time to a more supportive role with parents and teachers. Administrators worked with teachers and parents to ensure the expectations for learning were clear and that the in-school environment was safe, so perhaps parents would feel comfortable sending their children back to in-person learning. The uncertainty parents faced in the midst of Covid-19 was real. They wanted to make the best decision for their children, and we needed to listen and hear their concerns and make sure we addressed those concerns. Administrators also had to be very supportive of teachers. They were struggling to balance online learning with in-person learning and needed a lot of support, emotionally and instructionally.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Della Davidson Elementary School (DDES) promotes culturally responsive teaching and learning to ensure equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom and throughout the school.

Various support measures are provided to students, staff, and families.

Along with teachers who determine to get to know individual students and develop relationships with them, help for students includes the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), a program that takes a proactive approach in identifying students who need academic and/or behavioral support. DDES employs both an academic intervention coordinator and a behavior interventionist. Both positions are under the umbrella of Oxford School District's Department of Equity, and they identify students for MTSS. The coordinator and interventionist work with teachers and families to ensure students receive the appropriate level of academic and behavioral support right for their children.

Many DDES personnel are dedicated to helping with the diverse needs of the student population. Five special education teachers serve students with disabilities. Also, the English Learner (EL) program employs two EL teachers who work with the EL population in small groups and/or one-on-one meetings to meet the needs of each individual learner. Gifted education for enrichment is provided in a pull-out program for students who have been tested and identified as academically gifted. Two speech-language pathologists (SLP) work with students, parents, and teachers to ensure students who need speech or language help receive the needed support at home, in the classroom, and during their hands-on speech sessions. The school also has a school counselor who leads small-group counseling sessions. Students are identified for small groups based on parent and/or teacher requests. During small-group sessions, the counselor works with students on specific strategies to apply to real-world situations. In a partnership with the local counseling organization, *Communicare*, services are also provided for students in the school who qualify.

DDES also houses the elementary Day Treatment Program, which is a therapeutic behavior intervention program replacing the "punitive alternative school program" (B. Harvey, personal communication, June 14, 2020). A smaller class setting, individualized teaching, and family and individual counseling are provided to students in Day Treatment. In addition to Day Treatment, the Department of Equity has created an Equity Task Force. Teachers, administrators, and parents of students attending DDES serve on the task force. The goal of this group is to serve as a sounding board for issues and policy changes to ensure a quality education for everyone. In addition, DDES implements Second Step, which is a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. On a weekly basis, teachers teach and review the SEL curriculum with students. The program promotes academic achievement, situational awareness, and emotional management. Teachers also host morning meetings in their classrooms to build community, nurture relationships, and engage students emotionally and academically.

Another important method to help students is standards-based learning in which students' individual academic needs are addressed. Based on data from formative and summative assessments, teachers are able to determine specific standards the students have not yet mastered. After reteaching and remediation during small group time or with individualized instruction, students are able to retest. This process gives each student multiple opportunities for success. Communication between home and school is important at DDES; therefore, teachers keep parents informed, and together they form partnerships ensuring student success.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Della Davidson Elementary School's (DDES) most instrumental practice to ensure academic success for all students is the blocked Charger Time period in which students participate every day. Every teacher has a scheduled 50 minutes per day where all individual student needs are met. During this time, students who receive special education services are serviced by the special education teacher, gifted students work with the gifted teachers, Tier 3 students meet in a small group with interventionists, while the remaining Tier 2 and Tier 1 students continue to work with the classroom teacher to meet their individual needs.

When faced with school closures last spring and having to shift to virtual teaching within a two-week time span, we knew using the scheduled Charger Time was going to be even more important than before. In efforts to continue learning and growth for all of our students, teachers would schedule virtual small group meetings with students who were struggling academically. Teachers were intentional in their planning for these sessions. Our focus was on ensuring all students continued to grow and learn the "non-negotiable" standards. These non-negotiable standards are a list of priority standards that are ranked in order of importance for student mastery. The non-negotiables help all building teachers (classroom, SPED, and interventionists) to be on the same page in regards to meeting all student needs. The practice ensures minimum struggle for students who are promoted to the next grade.

Upon returning to school in late August, students soon took our district-wide benchmark assessment, the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). After not receiving face-to-face instruction for almost six months, students showed a small regression in reading, which was not much different than the normal summer slide. However, math showed a larger discrepancy. As a school, we used the NWEA data to focus on the gaps each individual student was showing. During Charger Time, teachers assigned students to individualized learning pathways that were designed and developed by the specific subject-area and grade-level team. This ensured all students were building knowledge and gains in their needed areas. Charger Time allowed for everyone to be involved to ensure small group instruction was possible and individual needs were met. This became a more intentional and targeted instructional time for each student. As we continue to work through the trials of this unique year, Charger Time has allowed our students to make significant gains, our teachers to have the needed time to work with the students in small groups on individual needed instruction, and for us to see our students' confidence rise.