

**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) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 265 Upper Brush Creek Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Marshall State NC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 28753-9599

County Madison County

Telephone (828) 649-1547 Fax (828) 649-1528

Web site/URL https://www.madisonk12.net/Domain/125 E-mail kdillon@madisonk12.net

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. William Hoffman E-mail whoffman@madisonk12.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Madison County School District Tel. (828) 649-9672

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Karen Blevins  
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 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	27	24	51
1	24	33	57
2	35	23	58
3	24	21	45
4	39	31	70
5	28	25	53
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>	177	157	334

\*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
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 94 % White
  - 1 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 13%

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	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	333
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish, Russian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %  
9 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 52 %

Total number students who qualify: 174

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %

66 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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>5</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>35</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>9</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>6</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. 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.	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

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	97%	96%	95%	96%	94%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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. 2009

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

BEARS! Believe, Educate to Achieve, Ready to Succeed

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.

Madison County Schools has been in a hybrid model during the 2020-21 school year. Families were invited to participate in either the Hybrid Model or a full Virtual Model. BCES has 53 students who have worked in the Virtual Academy option all year. For families that wanted the Hybrid Model, BCES started the year in Plan B, alternating students on an A Day/B Day schedule from 9-2. In October, all K-5 students returned to face to face instruction 4 days each week, with one day of remote learning and the schedule changed to 8-3. In March, all K-5 students returned to face to face instruction 5 days.

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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Brush Creek Elementary School opened on January 10, 2002 as a K-5 school which now serves approximately 330 students in a beautiful building nestled at the front of 30 acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina. The school was named a school of High Growth for Exceeding the State's Growth Expectation in 2017 and 2019, and a National Blue Ribbon School in 2009. The school has shown growth in student performance and dedication to educational excellence.

Madison County is located in western North Carolina and borders the state of Tennessee. Brush Creek Elementary School is in the geographic center of Madison County and serves students in the Marshall, Walnut, and Laurel communities. In many family households, both parents work outside of the home with many residents commuting to Asheville for employment. As income levels have increased, the number of students receiving free and reduced meals has declined from 68% to 51% over the past three years. Brush Creek Elementary houses two Head Start classrooms on campus in an effort to help prepare students and their families for success in school.

The population of Asheville continues to expand. As a result, the need for housing in surrounding areas has increased. The remote county is being influenced by the changes of the growing community, expanded culture, and continued development of the area.

Brush Creek Elementary teaches from the heart. Every staff member has a genuine love for the students and the families we serve. The school's vision, mission and beliefs drive the focus on continuous improvement. Staff is committed to reaching the whole child-academically, emotionally, physically, socially and culturally. We do this in a variety of ways.

The school recognizes the importance of a Master Schedule that supports each grade level. This schedule includes consistent blocks of time for core literacy, math and science instruction, as well as, built in time for intervention, remediation and enrichment. The School Improvement Team reviews any necessary tweaks to the Master Schedule each year in an attempt to provide a framework for success for all students.

Brush Creek has implemented the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Model to provide intervention and enrichment support to students. Teachers work in grade-level meetings to address individual needs of students. Data from various assessment tools are used to help teachers assess student growth. Brush Creek Elementary is a school-wide Title I school and students receive services based on the development of Tier Plans within the MTSS Model.

An initiative called "High-5 Time" was created to protect core instruction and provide intervention/enrichment to every student in the school for four 30-minute sessions a week in reading and mathematics in grades 3-5. During this time, all students in the grade level are served in small groups. This provides targeted support for every student in our school. The Exceptional Children's Program serves 20% of students. Support is also provided to students with limited English proficiency through our ELL program. Students qualifying for these services are served during High-5 Time. This ensures continuity in core instruction.

Brush Creek is fortunate to have a strong Student Services team including a guidance counselor, a school social worker, and a nurse four days each week. They work together to address and provide support to families regarding physical and mental health needs.

The school's Positive Behavior Intervention & Support Program (P.B.I.S.) encourages students to show respect, responsibility, and other quality character traits. Project G.R.E.E.N. (Growing Respect for the Environment through Education and Nature) is an environmentally-based science initiative that uses outdoor learning stations and inquiry-based learning activities to foster thinking skills and develop environmental responsibility. The school also has a Recycling Program which adds to environmental awareness and responsibility. The Recycling Committee is composed of students with the School Counselor serving as advisor.

The 2020-21 school year opened under a Hybrid Plan B Model. Students attended face to face instruction two days and worked remotely three days each week. Instructional hours were decreased from 8-3 to 9-2. In October, students returned to face to face instruction 4 days each week, with one day of remote learning. Instructional hours changed from 9-2 to 8-3. In March 2021, students returned to face to face instruction five days each week. Virtual Learning options were offered to families with high-risk scenarios.

The school had several changes in administration the years following the National Blue Ribbon recognition. A strong instructional leader is critical in rallying staff to leverage the momentum the award provides. From 2009-2014, our academic success and school morale declined. In 2015-16, another change in administration sparked improvement in motivation, morale and ultimately academic success. Over the past five years, Brush Creek has continued to trend upward in student growth and proficiency scores, positive results on Teacher Working Conditions Survey, and has improved the community perception of the school climate.



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

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

Brush Creek’s success is rooted in a deep understanding of the core curriculum and a passion for doing everything we can to ensure all students are successful. We hold high expectations for ourselves and our students. As a result, our students achieve at high levels. However, these skills did not prepare us for the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our community. We did not have devices for students who needed them, many families had no internet access, and most students were in the care of elderly family members and could offer very limited support to students academically. Providing access for students to learn from home was a huge challenge. Our approach evolved from paper packets to devices, hot spots, Seesaw Learning Platform, Zoom lessons and recorded instructional videos.

Curriculum, instruction, and assessments were adapted to meet the challenges associated with remote teaching and learning. Remote Learning Professional Development was provided to all staff. The Seesaw program was purchased for K-5 teachers to communicate with students, upload instructional videos and learning assignments and provide feedback to students. Staff, students, and families were taught how to use the program. End of Year assessments were not completed in 2020. This year students participated in benchmark assessments, but remote learning and virtual learning options skewed data results.

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study is followed in reading, math, science, and social studies. Brush Creek implements well-defined curriculum frameworks with great fidelity because consistent use of best practices increases student success. Our top priority is aligning standards-based instruction to the individual learning needs of each student. Data driven instruction and intervention is key in helping each student reach their full potential. Our teachers continually monitor student learning through the use of formal and informal assessments. They work in collaborative teams to analyze student learning data, design instruction for whole group and small group lessons, and develop targeted support lessons for daily intervention blocks. Teachers meet regularly with the principal, instructional coach, intervention team, and special education teachers to discuss assessment data, student growth, identify student needs, and plan instruction for all subjects.

For English Language Arts, Brush Creek Elementary has utilized a balanced literacy approach. This approach is shifting as NC implements The Science of Reading research detailing how the brain learns to read and recommended reading practices that support this initiative. Students engage daily in letter-sound correspondence, phonemic awareness, phonics, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and writing about reading. Students spend a large portion of the day engaged with texts - reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. Brush Creek utilizes a curricular framework provided by our district and implements the district adopted curricular resources with fidelity, including Heggerty for strategic phonological awareness instruction, Foundations for explicit phonics instruction, the Comprehension Toolkit, and the Reading Strategies Book for comprehension strategy instruction and skills based reading mini-lessons, the Continuum of Literacy Learning for reading behaviors to notice and support, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) for systematic reading instruction in small groups, and a Leveled Book Room for guided reading instruction. Our students participate in guided reading groups within their classrooms and they also participate in flexible, skill based reading groups working with teachers across the grade level during our daily intervention block. Our classrooms are rich with print resources. Students learn skills to unlock the world of reading through time spent in all types of texts. Students pursue their own interests as readers during independent reading time.

For mathematics, Brush Creek builds students’ conceptual understanding of numbers and operations. Procedural fluency and accuracy builds upon a conceptual understanding. Brush Creek utilizes a detailed curriculum framework developed by our district. Math Investigations is the curriculum resource used for lessons. Explicit attention is given to the content standards and the Standards for Mathematical Practice as students are engaged in direct instruction, small group lessons, partner work, and independent practice as part of the daily math block. Math lessons are engaging and interactive. Math can be messy! Students read, think, talk, write, and share strategies as they solve problems. Students play games and use manipulatives to build understanding of mathematical concepts. Students also participate in a grade level intervention block

that is data driven based on student assessment data in mathematics. Number sense routines are built into the school day to foster a strong understanding of the number system and problem solving abilities. Teachers invite students to solve problems mentally and share their different strategies through daily Number Talks with the class. Students also practice basic math facts - addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division - using a computer based program for a few minutes each day.

For science, an inquiry-based approach is utilized to teach NC Science Standards. Brush Creek's campus is located on 23 acres in rural Madison County and includes over three miles of learning trails. These trails provide access to an apple orchard, raised vegetable beds, Bluebird habitat spaces, Monarch Butterfly Waystation, a creek and an outdoor classroom. Teachers collaborate with the local 4H agency to extend science concepts at each grade level. Students spend time outdoors, experiencing science in action! Picture Perfect Science is an additional resource for all grade levels.

Brush Creek students explore their community, state, and country through adventures in literature and news articles, examination of primary resources, field trips around our community and state, virtual experiences, and project based learning. Students not only learn where they live in the world and the history of those places but also discover how they can make a positive impact through civic engagement. Our school conducts an annual holiday food drive to provide a ham dinner with all of the fixings for children and families in our county.

While students learned remotely or for those working strictly in the virtual program, assessments were modified. A few assessments could be given online but the majority could not. Teachers utilized the time students were face to face to administer benchmark, formative, and summative assessments.

**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:**

In a regular school year, all students of Brush Creek Elementary receive 45 minute instructional time once a week in visual arts education, physical/health education, music education, and access to the school library and technology computer lab. The school adapted this schedule to accommodate our Hybrid operating plan. When students are remote learning, art, physical education/health/nutrition, technology/media, and music instructors created a padlet that housed weekly assignments and enrichment opportunities. Activities were also loaded in Seesaw and teachers provided feedback to completed assignments.

Students are consistently busy in their exploratory classes preparing for performances throughout the school year. Activities include music and chorus performances, the annual ART's night focusing on visual and performance art, The Madison County Schools Art Exhibit showcasing the students' talents, and a school-wide book fair twice a year where parents are invited to come and enjoy activities to foster a love of reading.

In the art studio, students are treated like real artists and are given the opportunity to create art in 2-dimensional media of drawing, painting, collage, and printmaking and 3-dimensional media of ceramics, architecture, sculpture, and fiber arts. Students are instructed on the North Carolina Visual Arts Standards and National Visual Arts Standards. Students are taught to use and take care of all supplies within the studio, supported to plan, create, and reflect on their own unique artwork, and taught how to clean up their supplies and studio. Students are given the opportunity to share their artwork with classmates and the school community verbally and with written artist statements. Students are highly engaged in not only art-making, but also actively developing 21st century skills including self-direction, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and communication.

In the gym and outdoor classroom, students work on skills strengthening core, kinetic, and motor abilities. Students are given opportunities to lead the stretching segment of the class before moving to the teacher-led activity. Students are engaged in lessons and games incorporating skills from the PE and Healthful Living standards. Students also practice literacy and math as those skills are woven into games during PE class. Walking and hiking activities on our school trails are an integral part of weekly lessons with students. Connections are also made to the Appalachian Trail that runs through Madison County as students experience trail walking on our own trails.

Music education gives students a chance to be expressive in a controlled environment. Students' cognitive functions grow when exposed to music on a regular basis. Sequencing patterns in songs, coupled with movements help young learners develop their listening skills. Musical analysis of symphonic poems, melodic contour, rhythmic patterns, and dynamics in musical selections strengthens aural skills, vocabulary, and cognitive organization skills. Students develop stronger gross motor skills when moving to music and fine motor skills when performing rhythmic or melodic patterns on musical instruments. Students learn to play a variety of percussion instruments, the recorder, and ukuleles at Brush Creek.

While students visit our 21st century school library and technology lab, they are provided a space to be creators, critical thinkers, collaborators, and communicators. They work as 21st century learners, which in turn helps to prepare them for being successful as both a leader and a learner throughout their education and beyond. Students are provided with a global learning environment that promotes inquiry, creativity, and collaboration by focusing on various library skill lessons, maker-spaces, activities, resources, and technologies. This will enable students to effectively acquire and select information, develop a pattern of life-long learning, and foster a love of reading.

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

Brush Creek Elementary School has a dedication to excellence. This begins with staff working together daily to ensure student needs are met. Schedules are in place to provide a foundation for success. The school has refined core instruction. Teachers have received in-depth training on the importance of consistent core instruction that is accessible to all students. Teachers are provided research-based curricula and professional development to support implementation of programs. Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) afford teachers the opportunity to learn standards and plan instruction. Administration conducts frequent fidelity checks to ensure programs are implemented successfully. Student needs are identified in many ways both formally and informally.

The school tailor's instruction, intervention and assessment to provide multiple strategic and intensive supports to students as needs are identified. The school uses the MTSS process to determine student needs and plan support. Grade-level teams and support staff work in Professional Learning Communities to analyze assessment results and problem-solve around instructional delivery, remediation and/or scaffolding ideas, and flexible student grouping. This team approach is critical to meeting the diverse needs of our school population.

Students who are identified at-risk in any area have Tier Plans developed. This plan includes demographic information, present levels of performance, expected levels of performance and gaps identified through benchmark screenings. Goals are developed, along with a detailed plan of the strategic or intensive support needed and how it will be provided. Teachers meet with families to share information and get feedback as the plan is developed and put in place. Students are progress monitored and families are informed of results. If the intervention is working, the plan is continued. If students are not making significant growth, the plan is modified. Additional layers of support are added and the instructional delivery or curriculum may be adjusted. These decisions are made with the classroom teacher and the school's MTSS Team. Information is then communicated with parents. Students receive intervention within "High-5 Time" four days each week. For student's needing more intensive support, additional small group or individual instruction is provided. However, the scheduling of that support is done strategically without impacting core instruction.

Students who are identified above-grade level are provided support in several ways. In kindergarten-second grade, students who score in the upper levels of beginning of year benchmarks and demonstrate high-level thinking skills in the classroom are provided enrichment. Third grade students take the Co-Gat IQ test at the beginning of the year. This test provides feedback on students performing in the 90th percentile. These students are provided enrichment both within guided reading time in the classroom and during “High-5 Time” when all students in the grade level are working in small groups.

Special Education students make up 22% of our current population. Many of these students have also experienced adverse childhood experiences that have impacted their cognitive and emotional development. Over the past five years, students come to us with more intensive needs and mental health issues. We have seen an increase in our Special Education population. In the past, the intensity of needs could be spread across grade levels to provide a balance in each classroom. Today, all classrooms have students with intense needs. The school’s Exceptional Children’s Team consists of three full-time teachers, one part-time teacher, four teacher assistants, and a part-time Speech Language Pathologist. This team works together to manage IEPs, collaborate with grade-level teachers to plan appropriate goals and instruction and communicate student progress with families.

Brush Creek Elementary currently has nine ELL students (3% of the population) and seven speak Spanish and two speak Russian. These students are served during our “High-5 Time” . Madison County currently has one ELL teacher to serve the entire county. This makes scheduling services tricky. Brush Creek ELL students are provided both pull-out and push-in support with the ELL teacher. This is determined by the student’s present levels in language development, how the student is progressing in the regular education setting, and teacher input. Despite having only one specialist in the county to provide support, our system is fortunate that this teacher has many years of experience teaching elementary education. The school considers her recommendations for placement as students move from one grade level to another. This collaboration ensures student needs are met.

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

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

Brush Creek Elementary takes pride in the positive environment we have created to engage, motivate, celebrate, and support the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students. We believe our children should experience joy each day in our building. We create conditions to foster a love of school and of learning. We take the mundane and flip the script to provide a memorable experience for each student each day. One example of how Brush Creek creates positive conditions where all students flourish takes place the week of our NC End of Grade Tests. A week that could easily be stressful on staff and students is not for us at Brush Creek. End of Grade testing is viewed as a time for us to celebrate all we have learned and bask in our opportunity to “shine” on those tests. The week kicks off with a fun-filled, school-wide PEP Rally to encourage our students to do their best. Each morning of testing, as our third, fourth, and fifth graders arrive at school, they are greeted by younger students and staff holding posters with positive messages. Students absorb the positive affirmations as they eat a nutritious breakfast before testing begins. These small initiatives are the norm at Brush Creek and directly contribute to our high student achievement.

At Brush Creek we also take pride in the support we provide to our students and families. Our Student Services department is an integral part of both the academic and social-emotional successes of our students. Our highly trained mental health team includes a school counselor, a school social worker, and community school-based therapists. Our team works with all educators within the school community to ensure student success. They address students’ emotional needs and assist in designing approaches to help students reach their full potential. The comprehensive school counseling program is designed to meet the academic, career, and personal/social needs. These interventions are accomplished with students individually as well as in small group and whole-class settings, consisting of both proactive and responsive services. Our curriculum includes a “Second Step Program” promoting social-emotional learning, a holistic approach with the primary goal of creating an empathetic society. This curriculum is delivered to students on a regular basis throughout the school year. Brush Creek also has a strong PBIS program which allows for consistent school wide behavior expectations and recognition of positive behavior.

BCES has made several adaptations due to challenges with remote and virtual learning to keep students engaged. Attendance has been handled as flexibly as possible to meet the varied needs and health concerns of our families. Teachers provided targeted instructional videos that were uploaded to Seesaw. Office hours were also offered for each classroom to allow students and families to ask questions or get feedback when students were working remotely. Families were provided digital tools (Lenovo lap tops, iPads, Kindles or hot spots) if needed. Teachers developed flexible policies on work completion. Offering extended time for students if needed. Our guidance counselor and social worker provided support to students via Zoom or phone conferences while working remotely. Our social worker worked with families who needed mental health, food or clothing supports. She also helped families eliminate barriers to engagement.

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

Brush Creek Elementary School uses several strategies to engage families and community stakeholders. Our School Improvement Team (SIT) includes parent representation from K-2 and 3-5. During monthly SIT meetings, feedback and suggestions are provided. We notify parents in our beginning of school newsletter, who the parent representation is and how they can be contacted. This ensures parents have a voice in school decision-making and improvement. Administration has put a focus on developing and modeling positive public relations. This focus is reiterated during weekly emails to staff and staff meetings monthly. We discuss ways to show support for our school and how best to promote the work we do. We put an emphasis on celebrating our successes--regardless of how small. This is done in the positive attitude our staff demonstrates and the way in which we use our school website, Facebook and Class Dojo school story and newsletters to communicate learning and activities taking place at BCES. The school’s website is updated frequently. This includes keeping our calendar current, adding headlines and announcements to inform families of events, and monitoring the response the website receives. The school developed a Facebook page--Brush Creek Bears. Daily posts highlight the learning and activities taking place on campus. School

story within Class Dojo allows us to connect with over 85% of our families. This platform is similar to Facebook but only involves members of our school community. When information is shared to this site, all Brush Creek families that are connected receive the information.

Administration can also collect weekly data on family interactions, and this is shared with staff weekly. Articles are submitted to the local newspaper monthly promoting exciting learning opportunities and activities taking place. The Bear's News, our monthly family newsletter, is distributed to all families each month sharing important events and information. Teachers send weekly or bi-weekly newsletters to parents with information specific to their classroom. Brush Creek Elementary plans engaging activities that involve students and their families. This year, we hosted Muffins & Math for our third grade students. Parents were invited to school and taught how to play math games by their child. Then we enjoyed refreshments together. Our Parent-Teacher Organization does an excellent job in encouraging family support. Our Annual Fall Festival draws the local community to our school. Not only does it serve as a fundraiser for our school, it also brings our community together in celebration.

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

Our mission at Brush Creek has been to create a positive and highly collaborative school environment where staff and students flourish. Brush Creek is a high functioning professional learning community that is continually collaborating, reflecting, and determining the next steps for professional growth, instructional strategies, and student learning. All of Brush Creek's work is directly tied to our focus on student learning. The staff adopts a growth mindset and believes that all goals can be accomplished when we work together as a team. Brush Creek believes in the power of YET – we may not be there yet, but we will get there by the end! This culture has been especially important over the past year. Operating school during a pandemic has been a huge challenge. Teachers were provided a needs survey before school started. Technology support was provided through professional development and by our Media Specialist. Work is done daily within the building to promote the great teaching and learning that is commonplace from classroom to classroom. Successes are shared and celebrated. Positive energy is contagious - among the staff, students, families, and community.

Teachers have an active role in determining the focus of professional development each year, a school focus as well as individualized opportunities to support teachers across a range of interests, experience and expertise levels. Teachers are routinely asked: What do you need? What would help you do your job better? Change initiatives are often sparked by teachers who are interested in a new idea, seek training, and return to the building excited to share their learning with staff. Our professional development model also includes classroom demonstration lessons where teachers and our instructional coach open their classroom doors to other teachers in the building. When staff see a new initiative in action by their colleagues and feel nonjudgmental support, they are more likely to implement it and have success with the implementation. Teachers are not afraid of trying something new. The role of our principal and our teams of teachers is to support others, help implement change, and provide guidance when things get bumpy.

All members of the staff are included in the professional development at Brush Creek; instructional assistants, tutors, specialists, classroom teachers, instructional coaches, and the principal all benefit from professional development throughout the year. Progress toward professional goals is monitored through the use of classroom data, surveys and conversations in order to make necessary changes to better impact student learning.

Brush Creek's master schedule provides collaborative planning time for each team to develop, share, and implement rigorous and engaging lessons that ensure students acquire essential knowledge and skills. Consistent lessons and instructional strategies are used from classroom to classroom across the grade level. The task at hand is far too complex for teachers to work as isolated units, so collaboration is key for the success of all students. High functioning grade level teams support each teacher on the team. Teachers are trusted and are viewed as experts and leaders as they guide their colleagues throughout the building. Brush Creek is a medium sized school with a small school feel. Teachers know every child and are strongly committed to ensuring every child is successful.

This year, we had two teachers who were approved to work remotely (due to health concerns) and provide support to students in the Virtual Academy. We made a conscious effort to ensure they felt connected to our campus and maintained relationships with colleagues through weekly Zoom meetings, emails, and participating in PLC's .

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

4. Standing behind every great school, is a great group of leaders. This is certainly true at Brush Creek Elementary, a school where every staff member serves as a leader. Leadership at Brush Creek is team oriented and every member is willing to do their part to ensure the school is the best it can be for our students. Our shared goal is for students to achieve at the highest level possible while they are with us and later in life.

Our principal inspires us to lead in our respective roles and helps us imagine the possibilities within each of us. The principal leads with a servant heart, rolling up her sleeves and joining us in the midst of growing pains that accompany teaching and learning. When we meet a goal, she celebrates with us and then points us toward a new goal a notch higher. Our principal serves as a change agent for the school, reflecting and looking ahead, listening, removing obstacles, and providing teachers with the resources needed to facilitate the important work of teaching and growing our student learners.

Our principal works in conjunction with a highly effective team of leaders, including our Lead Teacher, Grade Level Chairs, School Improvement Team, and Parent Teacher Organization. This collective group of leaders remain united and committed to ensuring teaching and learning are at the forefront of every decision made at Brush Creek Elementary.

The Lead Teacher makes a great impact on teaching and learning at Brush Creek. Our lead teacher is a master teacher, with years of experience employing high impact practices to foster student learning. Her work includes supporting teachers through instructional coaching, organizing and facilitating data meetings, serving as the school's Testing Coordinator, teaching daily intervention groups, and chairing several committees.

The grade level chairs are also critical to the school's academic success. This team of veteran teachers demonstrate high-level leadership skills. They facilitate weekly meetings with their grade level colleagues. In these professional learning communities, teachers analyze data, discuss instructional strategies and pacing guides, plan lessons, and problem-solve around student learning.

The School Improvement Team functions as the backbone of student achievement at Brush Creek. During SIT meetings, school leaders and key stakeholders engage in shared decision making as they review data, reflect on what is working and not working, brainstorm new approaches, organize the implementation of new initiatives, and plan celebrations for school successes. There is a high level of trust and commitment to continuous improvement among this team. The leaders facilitate meetings with their respective teams to disseminate information and implement plans for action items. The principal depends on the SIT leaders to be an encouraging voice in the school and community to support all stakeholders in moving toward our common goals.

Brush Creek has a strong Parent-Teacher Organization also committed to supporting teaching and learning. Our PTO Board meets regularly with the principal and has parent representation on the School Improvement Team. The focus remains on student learning as the PTO helps provide funding for programs, engages volunteers for school activities and initiatives, and contributes resources to support students and families.

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

Brush Creek is committed to addressing the needs of the whole child. This is done in a variety of ways. During our monthly MTSS meetings, problem-solving teams analyze academics, attendance, social-emotional, behavioral and mental health needs of our students. This team works

to ensure we are meeting student needs, tracking student progress, and providing equity for all our students. During weekly guidance lesson, students participate in Second Step lessons designed to teach students skills for learning, how to cooperate, communicate, and solve problems. These lessons tie to our PBIS school-wide supports and reinforce respect in the classroom. Cultural awareness happens in part, through integrated units of study on diverse populations. We celebrate our Appalachian culture each year through our annual Arts program. Students learn skills and experiment with Appalachian art and traditions. They learn to clog, quilt, and weave. They learn to sing ballads and practice storytelling for their families. Brush Creek's entire staff works to be positive, enthusiastic, and accessible to our stakeholders. We view ourselves as a family – loving, supporting, and working together for the good of our students. As a school of leaders, we remain committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure our students are successful and achieve at high levels.



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

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The one practice that has been the most instrumental to Brush Creek's academic success this school year was the focus on targeted professional development around online learning and the implementation of the Seesaw online learning platform. Our teachers needed a way to provide instruction when students were working remotely. When the pandemic hit, we were not prepared for online instruction and faced many challenges. Our rural county has limited wifi access. Our school did not have enough devices for every student. The county ordered devices that included laptops, iPads, and hot spots. Our teachers participated in professional development when students were working remotely last spring that focused on best practices for online learning. They completed needs assessments in planning for the new school year. A tool to deliver instruction, house assignments and provide a way for schoolwide communication was needed.

The Seesaw platform was a perfect fit for this needs. Teachers were provided a quick 15 minute training they could access during the summer. This laid the foundation for how the program works and what it offers. During the first three work days at the beginning of the year, our county provided in-depth training to all K-5 teachers on this platform. Prior to this training, our Media Specialist loaded all classes and teachers to the platform to allow teachers access before the school year started. This proved very beneficial because most staff came to the county training already prepared to begin implementing this program. Our teachers and Media Specialists created a digital and paper info sheet for families that explained how to access the platform, load the ap and their student's log-in information. When students came the first day, they immediately began learning how to use a device and how to log-in. Teachers spent the first weeks of school loading and accessing assignments on Seesaw and used it during their face to face instruction. This allowed them to know that kids were comfortable using both the platform and their device. It also allowed us to troubleshoot and problem-solve issues that arose. When students worked remotely, our Media Specialist and classroom teachers provided technology support to families. They could email, call, or come directly to the school for support. This allowed us to meet student and family needs and made remote learning much more effective. We did have students that despite our best effort, could not access digital learning. For those cases, we created paper packets and provided feedback and support via telephone calls.