

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 50 E 7th Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Minster State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 45865-1095

County Auglaize County

Telephone (419) 628-4174 Fax (419) 628-2482

Web site/URL https://www.minsterschools.org E-mail brenda.boeke@minsterschools.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* Mrs. Brenda Boeke E-mail brenda.boeke@minsterschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Minster Local School District Tel. (419) 628-3397

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. Katrina Nixon
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	29	37	66
1	31	38	69
2	36	26	62
3	35	26	61
4	26	32	58
5	37	29	66
6	24	35	59
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	218	223	441

*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
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 96 % White
 - 2 % 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: 1%

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	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	441
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %

Total number students who qualify: 46

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %
40 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>3</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>28</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 21:1

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	98%	97%	97%	97%	97%
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.

We will create a safe and respectful environment where we Learn, Care, and Grow.

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.

For the entire 2020-2021 school year, we have been providing in person instruction five days a week per our usual schedule.

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

Minster Elementary School is located in Minster, Ohio, a west central, rural, Auglaize County, community. The Village of Minster retains a rich heritage from the early settlers, a band of German immigrants, and boasts a population of slightly exceeding 2,800. The village residents are very involved in Minster's civic, fraternal, school and religious organizations with the Minster Journeyman's Club, the Minster Service Club, and the Minster Civic Association frequently making significant donations in both financial resources and their time and talents to the school. Many, many hours of volunteer work goes into running the multitude of projects to benefit the community. The dedicated, civic minded community members of Minster place a very high value on education. The community not only supports quality education, they demand it. The slogan, "A Tradition of Excellence" appears on our school letterhead and is evidenced in our daily accomplishments.

Minster Elementary School is the only elementary school in the Village of Minster. The current building configuration of kindergarten through sixth grade has been in place since the 2011-12 school year. At that time, a building consolidation changed our configuration from a K-3, 4-8, and 9-12 to K-6 and 7-12, allowing us to serve all students on one campus at the north end of the village. Many benefits have resulted from this change, as the two buildings share resources in terms of personnel and high school student volunteers are able to regularly work with young students.

Our school mission statement stems from the District Mission Statement: Challenging today's students to become tomorrow's leaders. At the elementary level this begins with providing a nurturing and academically rigorous foundational experience. This is captured in our building Mission Statement: We will create a safe and respectful environment where we Learn, Care, and Grow. It is our duty as educators to provide a meaningful and comprehensive program to meet the needs of ALL students. Our day to day operation reflects the following belief statements: We believe in challenging each student to stand on their "mental tiptoes" to grow and achieve all they can. We believe every adult who works at school has an important role in supporting students. We believe in the importance of compassion and a sense of belonging. We model this for our students and expect them to demonstrate kindness and include each other. We believe in teaching students to take ownership in their learning, and we strive to find the best way each child learns. We believe in meaningful practice and accountability. Every student completes every assignment at Minster Elementary. We believe parents are our partners, and encourage parent involvement through open communication and volunteerism. We believe it is an HONOR to be a WILDCAT!

Specific strategies are in place to bridge our beliefs to become the reality for our students. We have a structure in place to monitor and review student progress at each grade level. Adjustments in program and intensity are then made to the instructional strategies in place during an intervention block within our master schedule. All teachers have completed professional development to meet the enrichment needs of our academically gifted students. Individual needs are addressed through differentiated instruction within the regular classroom, a pull out enrichment program, and an accelerated math program. The Intensive Care Unit "ICU" program identifies when a student's progress is in jeopardy and we provide support through designated staff who provide extra homework support. With the honor of being a Wildcat comes responsibility to honor each other. Our school has adopted a growth mindset approach, emphasizing the Power of YET, and each day students are reminded to Yearn to learn, Embrace struggle, and Take a risk to learn something new. An incentive system is in place to recognize and reinforce these desired behaviors.

Following the school closure last spring due to the pandemic, much hard work has gone into addressing academic gaps as well as emotional needs. We have been providing daily, in person instruction since August, and have managed to regain our positive school vibe in spite of the many safety protocols in place. The joy of being together on a daily basis is not taken for granted. When a student has to quarantine, our teachers provide remote instruction through live google meet sessions or recorded Screencastify lessons.

Beyond specific strategies described above, we simply treat each other as a school family.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

All curricular areas have the Ohio Learning Standards as their foundation. Working from these standards, our staff has engaged in curriculum mapping to identify power standards, key vocabulary, and pacing guides. We are laser focused on providing a strong foundation in reading and mathematics for all students, and utilize an integrated approach when teaching skills in the core curricular areas of science and social studies. We teach students to apply skills via real world problem solving and project-based learning, because we believe meaningful application deepens understanding and retention. Teachers are engaged in an ongoing process of aligning assessment questions to Ohio Learning Standards with an increasing emphasis on incorporating Webb’s Depths of Knowledge in formative and summative assessments. Over the past several years, we have incorporated a standards-based approach to communicating progress on report cards, which is now in place through grade four. In addition to required diagnostic testing based on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, we utilize Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) to track growth for all students in the areas of reading and mathematics. Every teacher in our building is considered a teacher of English Language Arts. Mathematics instruction incorporates real life problem solving and explanation in written form. Science and social studies teachers engage students in their content through projects, research, dialogue, and presentation.

Previous to the pandemic and school closures, our fifth and sixth grade students each had a Chromebook issued to them as part of our one to one technology initiative. When our school had to adapt to remote instruction last spring, we quickly expanded this to include grades three and four. With Google Classroom already in place, teachers were given the task of finding ways to provide direct instruction where students could see their faces, hear their voices, and interact with them. Since August, our school has been providing in person instruction five full days per week. Trialing the various strategies used for remote instruction last spring gave us direction in how to best meet student needs in cases of quarantine. Our teaching staff was trained in August in how to use a hovercam and Screencastify to record and post lessons. This system has served as our mainstay in continuing learning when students are temporarily unable to be present in the building.

English Language Arts instruction requires a comprehensive structure to ensure our youngest learners have strong phonological and phonemic awareness. Our kindergarten and first grade students all receive direct, specific instruction in these skills on a daily basis through the Heggerty program and Wilson Foundations program, and our Title One teacher provides additional support for students who are struggling with these skills. Fluency is practiced and each student is monitored through a consistent process to determine if they are meeting benchmark levels. Our philosophy in providing reading instruction is to teach from rich, authentic text and provide explicit skill instruction for comprehension of fiction and non-fiction text. Teachers model metacognitive strategies and instruct students in small guided reading groups. A dedicated book room, organized by level and genre, allows teachers to supplement our text series with literature at students’ instructional levels. Writing instruction incorporates a constructivist approach, based on the work of Lucy Calkins, with an emphasis on using written expression as a means to communicate to an audience. As students develop confidence and a love for expressing themselves through writing, teachers address the technical aspects of writing, such as correct grammar usage, text analysis, and research in which students must cite evidence.

Our adopted text series for math instruction emphasizes essential questions, with depth of understanding, rather than rote practice, as its goal. Students acquire the foundational skills, such as memorization of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts, but the focus of instruction is on developing understanding of the reason behind the rules of mathematics, and giving students opportunities to use math skills to solve real life problems. Teachers differentiate instruction through small guided math groups as well as technology software aligned to the students’ NWEA MAP assessment results, which provides an individualized learning path for each student. Students are often asked to demonstrate their mathematical understanding with a written explanation, as well as frequent dialogue with other students. Projects which incorporate real life application, creativity, mathematical understanding, and presentation skills can be observed in our classrooms.

In science classes, students are taught to apply their reading, speaking, writing and mathematics skills as they master science content. Solution-based projects are in place, such as our grade five students using a design and engineering process to create a lunar module able to safely deliver astronauts to the surface of the moon. Experimentation following the scientific process is another instructional strategy commonly used, particularly in our three classrooms set up with lab stations. Assessments are aligned to standards, and teachers are intentionally increasing rigor through Webb's depths of knowledge. Assessment of lab work utilizes rubrics to determine and communicate mastery.

In social studies, students are taught to apply their reading, speaking, and writing skills as they master the Ohio Learning Standards. With this in mind, project-based learning based on research is an effective strategy often utilized in social studies classrooms. For example, our grade four students each identify a famous Ohioan to study, and assume their identity to present their research in autobiographical format at an annual wax museum. Assessment is aligned to specific standards, and teachers intentionally increasing rigor through Webb's depths of knowledge. Teachers utilize rubrics to assess and communicate mastery of social studies content, as well as application of English Language Arts skill in demonstrating their knowledge.

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:

Minster Elementary provides regular instruction to all students in the areas of physical education, music, and visual art. Previous to this school year, all students also participated in dedicated technology instruction. Due to COVID-19 protocols, the use of a common set of desktop computers for all students was not feasible, so we are incorporating this instruction within the regular classroom. Next year, our media instruction will return, along with the addition of a makerspace. In our makerspace, all students will learn to apply skills in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics to problem solve and create together. We will introduce all students to the basic concepts of coding and robotics through this program.

Our physical education program helps students build physical skills, as well as teamwork and good sportsmanship. The relationship of movement and nutrition to overall health are emphasized as well for all students. Students are challenged to increase their own fitness and performance over time by tracking their performance on the Pacer Test. Dance, stretching, and breathing exercises are in place alongside foundational skills for team sports, all helping students build lifelong habits to support mental health through physical activity.

Visual arts instruction builds on basic concepts in the primary years toward more complex creative processes as students continue through the intermediate grade levels. Students are exposed to a large variety of mediums and often content is tied with literature, history, and science. Sixth grade students learn the basic concepts of digital art. Student work is annually displayed at the county fair, local businesses, and a local art show.

Music coursework builds a foundation in reading music and creative expression through voice and movement. Our second and third grade students present a musical performance for parents and grandparents each year as part of their instruction. Due to COVID-19 the performance this year will be divided into smaller segments with limited and spaced seating. All fourth grade students are introduced to instrumentation through the use of recorders. Fifth and sixth grade students have the opportunity to take instrumental music through band, and the large majority of our students choose this route. For those who choose to stay with vocal music, instruction includes music history and exposure to dramatic performance. Students who are gifted in visual or performing arts are identified and provided differentiated instruction at

the elementary level, then encouraged to pursue higher level courses at the high school which expose them to potential career options in the arts.

To support the social and emotional health of our students, we have implemented the “Character Strong” program, in which all students receive direct instruction on a weekly basis from our guidance counselor. The lessons are carried over into the classroom by our teachers. Our guidance counselor has aligned this program to Ohio's social and emotional learning standards as well as our PBIS common language. Tenets of the "Character Strong" program are respect, empathy, gratitude, cooperation, honesty, courage, perseverance, responsibility, and creativity.

3. Academic Supports:

Minster Local Schools prides itself on meeting the individual needs of all students. Our student population, as indicated on the state report card subgroups over the past several years includes all students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and gifted students. The state report card includes annual measurable objectives to compare the performance of each student group to the expected performance goals for that group to determine if gaps exist. Each of our subgroups has met the annual measurable goal for the past several years.

With the support of a part time data and literacy coach, teachers analyze data to determine needs and plan for remediation and enrichment reflective of individual student needs early on in their school career. Our current school year began with in depth assessment to determine gaps in understanding resulting from the sudden transition to remote learning last spring. Based on student needs, intervention groupings and strategies were developed and implemented through differentiated instruction within the regular classroom setting, Title services, and the Cat’s Pride Intervention and Enrichment period, which is a part of the overall master schedule. Through monthly grade level progress monitoring meetings, this system continues, allowing us to determine, with the support of data, how students are progressing on goals set within Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans, when a student needs to move from Tier 2 support to Tier 3 support, or when the intervention has successfully impacted the student’s progress and more intensive supports can be removed. We have a Response to Intervention (RtI) Team in place to address and track our most critical student needs, and include parents on this team, along with the school psychologist, data and literacy coach, classroom teacher, intervention teacher, and principal. This team makes the determination when a disability condition is suspected, and moves forward with evaluating the student needs through a multi-factored evaluation, which may result in the development of an Individualized Education Program. In the case of our students with disabilities our intervention teachers are co-teachers in the students’ classrooms, offering re-teaching, guidance and assistance to meet grade level standards. Accommodations and modifications are made to the curriculum and coursework as needed. Accommodations include individual instruction by the use of pre-teaching, vocabulary support, use of graphic organizers, guided notes, visual representation, functional skill instruction, checklists, extended time for quizzes and tests, textbooks on audio, and note taking assistance. Our students with multiple disabilities and autistic students receive modifications in the form of extended learning standards and alternative assessments.

A county gifted coordinator oversees intervention services for our identified gifted services, and our district has a dedicated gifted intervention specialist who provides resources as well as direct support for our students. Service takes the form of differentiated instruction for clustered groups in regular education classrooms, subject acceleration, and enrichment instruction during the Cat’s Pride block. Inquiry based learning is the hallmark of this enrichment block, which is provided by a gifted intervention specialist, beginning in third grade.

The needs of our economically disadvantaged students are met by aligning the local Mission

Commission with families in need. The Mission Commission has assisted in purchasing clothes, food, school supplies and household needs for our students. Every Christmas season the Mission Commission also purchases gifts for members of our disadvantaged families. The local AGAPE Ministries also provide school supplies throughout the year for our economically disadvantaged students. Finally we provide lunch and waive school fess for those students who qualify for our free and reduced lunch program.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The foundation of providing an engaging learning environment is to provide a safe space where all students feel a sense of belonging. Our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system keeps us focused on this foundational piece. Our PBIS team established a common language for behavioral expectations in our classrooms, hallways, restrooms, playground, lunchroom, buses, and school event venues. All staff members use this common language for expectations, which we call the "Wildcat Way". "Wildcat Way" posters are on display throughout our building, and students are consistently held accountable to the expectations.

Following a book study in 2017 based on Carol Dweck's *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, our school adopted a growth mindset culture. Our mantra is the Power of YET, and we daily remind all members of our school to Yearn to learn, Embrace struggle, and Take a risk to learn something new. Monthly growth mindset lessons are explicitly taught through guidance lessons, but more importantly, are weaved into our everyday interactions with students. Teachers reward students with YET Cards when they are exhibiting these three behaviors, which students take home for parent signature, then return to the office to deposit for a chance to win the weekly YET card drawing. When a student's name is drawn in the weekly drawing, they become a special guest at the Table of Honor. Students receive special seating and a special dessert when seated at the Table of Honor, and the principal serves them and chats with them about their accomplishments.

Student leadership and ownership are a part of our culture as well. Grade levels take ownership in school community service projects, such as the playground leaf cleanup in the fall, planting flowers around our school grounds, and painting and placing positivity rock messages on school grounds. Our student council leads by establishing learning activities and fun centered around special weeks such as Red Ribbon Week and Right to Read Week.

During the school closure last spring, we held a remote spirit week, in which families shared pictures of themselves on theme days such as Pajama Day, Parent and Pet Day, and Super Hero Day, to honor those working in healthcare. We posted special messages from our staff as well as a music video which featured staff members, to keep our school family connected. Our guidance counselor posted read aloud books and our principal posted a weekly message for all families. For students who struggled with online learning, we provided a remote ICU study hall supervised by the guidance counselor, principal, and intervention specialists.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The more families support their children's learning and educational progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education. Minster Elementary School is a "family-like" school. We want our students to feel at home and our parents to feel like they belong. To that end, our parents and students are invited to a "Back to School" open house in order for students and families to be comfortable at the beginning of the year. We welcome parent volunteers and typically have many regular volunteers, which we will put back in place as soon as COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. Four times throughout the year parents receive report cards and four additional times parents receive progress reports if needed. All students and parents are given access to the student information system, Progress Book. At any time during the year parents are informed of low grades, missing assignments or other grade card information. Traditionally, we invite parents and grandparents to come to school and celebrate students' accomplishments during Open House and Grandparents Day. Musical performances, classroom visits to share projects, a book fair, and student artwork displayed throughout the building are hallmarks of these events. The grandparents of first grade students enjoy lunch with their grandchild serving them. Due to protocols in place for health and safety, these events have necessarily been altered. Our grandparents will receive letters in the mail from our students this school year, expressing love and sharing school happenings. We are planning to provide an altered version of the musical, with one class performing at a time and social distancing in place. Visits to

classrooms will be replaced this year by a shared video presentation as a way to share the learning and celebrations of our school year.

Parents also play a role in the leadership of the school as they are key members of the Principal's Advisory Committee. This committee is made up of parents at each grade level in the school. One role of the principal's advisory committee members is to serve as the liaison between school and home for any new families to the district. At the beginning of the school year, each principal's advisory committee member is given a list of the names of new students to the district in their grade level. They are asked to call, introduce themselves and let them know they can be contacted concerning any school related issue. The Village of Minster also supports the needs of the Elementary School. The Minster Civic Association, Minster Journeyman's Club, and the Minster Service Club provide donations to support various school needs throughout the year. The outpouring of support and generous donations are much appreciated. As noted in previous paragraphs the Mission Commission is also extremely important in helping us engage our families at school.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Since 1999 Minster Schools have implemented Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as our professional development model. Richard DuFour describes PLCs as "educators recognizing that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote the powerful, collaborative culture that characterizes a PLC: a systematic process in which teachers work together in teams to analyze and improve their classroom practice, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. Their collaborative conversations require team members to make goals, strategies, materials, questions, concerns, and results public. These discussions are explicitly structured to improve the classroom practice of teachers—individually and collectively." Minster Elementary School PLCs are created around subject areas and are called teacher based teams. Teachers meet weekly for one hour each Wednesday morning to discuss student achievement, standard implementation, teaching practices, connections and student social emotional health. As our district moves toward the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system, PLC team work has been heavily focused on assessment alignment to standards, matching depths of knowledge to the expected standards, and analyzing student assessment data. This will position teachers well to inform instruction utilizing high quality student data, an emphasis within the updated 2.0 Ohio Teacher Evaluation System.

Having PLC teams in place helped with our transition to remote learning last spring. Team meetings continued utilizing technology, and through those meetings we shared strategies and resources to support teachers as they were engaging in the task of providing remote instruction. Our county educational service center provided many professional development opportunities for using online tools, and our teams supported each other in identifying what was needed and useful, while avoiding an avalanche of too much new information. We used this same format for identifying students particularly at risk during remote learning and shared strategies to support them.

Last summer, all teachers received a hovercam and were provided training in how to use Screencastify to record lessons for quarantined students. This method, along with Google meetings, has been used throughout the year to provide instruction for many students with extended absences due to COVID-19.

Our school has brought on several new staff members due to recent retirements. Each new teacher to the district is paired with a local mentor. The mentor's role is to provide individual professional development in the areas of how things work within the school walls and also how things work in the community. The mentor's role is to assist the new employees in making a positive transition to Minster Schools. Additionally, new teachers to the teaching profession participate in the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA) program. RESA is a multi-year, comprehensive program in which Ohio school districts provide a coordinated set of supports for teachers during their first few years in the classroom.

4. School Leadership:

Minster Schools has three levels of leadership: Teacher Based Team, Building Leadership Teams, and District Leadership Teams. The teacher based teams use student data to determine the level of student progress and make instructional decisions related to meeting the differentiated learning needs of their students. Teacher based teams also discuss the social emotional needs and address any needs their students may have. The teacher based teams serve as the vehicle for continuous feedback between teachers regarding student performance and team member implementation of instructional strategies. The building leadership team is made up of a teacher based team member from each subject area as well as special areas. Teachers elect their representation based on leadership qualities, with teachers serving two year terms. Permanent members of the building leadership team are the principal and guidance counselor. The building leadership team creates the school culture that supports the effective use of data to improve student achievement. They communicate to all staff how the districts vision, mission and focused goals relate to the school. They ensure the building strategies and action steps for instruction and achievement are aligned with the district goals. The building leadership team makes recommendations regarding scheduling and time management based on teacher team feedback.

The final component to our levels of leadership is the district leadership team. This team consists of administrators from each building, teachers from each building leadership team, the superintendent, school treasurer, and a board member. The district leadership team supports the development and ongoing monitoring of a single district improvement plan. They assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding financial and capital management aligned to district goals for instruction and achievement.

Our district and building leadership teams were instrumental in both making decisions and establishing the structure as we planned for the 2020-21 school year. Our district team developed a parent survey and reviewed the survey data, then put forward a plan to return to in-person instruction. Our building leadership team then worked through all the needed adjustments to ensure a safe return to the building for staff and students, including changes made to schedule, class configurations, and many cleaning protocols. The administrative team, consisting of the superintendent and two principals, collaborated to ensure a cohesive district wide approach to implement and enforce the safety mandates in place for COVID-19 and communicated these to our public.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Because our small town is somewhat lacking in diversity, this is a challenging area which we actively address. At the primary level we focus more on a message of kindness and inclusion than on current events or social movements. The previously mentioned "Character Strong" program, purposefully incorporates exposure to different races, cultures, and gender issues. Through video and discussion, our counselor includes culturally responsive lessons for all students. In our classrooms, selected literature used for instruction, such as *The Patchwork Path: A Quilt Map to Freedom*, by Bettye Stroud, and *I Am Malala*, by Malala Yousafzai, provide opportunity for discussion of critical issues from the perspective of literary characters and historical figures. We instruct about how historical events impact our world today and the responsibilities we have within our society. Our sixth grade students read about current events and present their findings and perspectives, which leads to classroom discussion about cultural issues within our country and our world. Students in third grade study other cultures and religions through units of study centered on holiday traditions around the world. Some of our students develop pen pal relationships with students from other places and circumstances, which builds knowledge as well as personal relationships. As our high school students graduate and go on to college, they experience more diverse settings and circumstances, and we invite them, as well as adults within the community who are able to share stories and lessons of cultural diversity, to be guest speakers within our classrooms. Due to COVID-19 protocols, we have had to rely on technology to provide these experiences this school year, but will return to the more personal connection and exposure as circumstances allow.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Maintaining determination to do whatever it takes to ensure success is the single most instrumental factor related to our ongoing success in educating and supporting students since the school closures began. Twelve years ago, when our district first implemented Professional Learning Communities based on the work of Richard DuFour, we developed systems around the "Whatever It Takes" philosophy in responding when students are not learning at an optimal level. The collaborative problem solving and systematic intervention system we already had in place transitioned to a remote approach, right along with our instruction. Our teachers continued to employ their knowledge of the Ohio Learning Standards, as well as the continuum of skills within each curricular area. NWEA MAP data gave teachers an understanding of each student's entry point as they planned meaningful instruction. Lessons were differentiated to meet the remedial and enrichment needs of students as they built skills along that continuum of standards. Students who were not able to demonstrate mastery of the standards were supported through individual sessions with intervention specialists and/or a remote ICU study hall, with several staff members supporting individuals or small groups. Enrichment opportunities continued as well, with project-based learning in the home environment, and utilization of technology to share with peers. In effect, we continued our cycle of Teach, Assess, Reflect, and Adapt. We sought feedback from both parents and students at the beginning point as well as in the midst of remote instruction and made adaptations based on their responses. For example, our families shared with us the need for teachers to find a way to replicate the school family atmosphere within our classrooms because our students missed being together with teachers and peers. Based on this, we developed a remote spirit week, in which we posted student pictures on social media, and teachers scheduled class chat sessions aimed at social emotional health rather than only meeting with students for academics. As we returned to in person instruction this fall, the same cycle of Teach, Assess, Reflect, and Adapt remained in place, adapted back to our normal setting. We have implemented "temperature checks" to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on our students and provide supports as needed through our guidance counselor. When students have had to quarantine, the nurse, teachers, and principal all check in on each family. We do whatever it takes.