

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 7956 State Route 119
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Maria Stein State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 45860-9710

County Mercer County

Telephone (419) 925-4595 Fax (419) 925-0212

Web site/URL https://www.marionlocal.org/ E-mail wilkern@marionlocal.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Michael Pohlman E-mail pohlmanm@marionlocal.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Marion Local School District Tel. (419) 925-4294

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Randy Bruns
(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)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 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	40	30	70
1	38	42	80
2	40	25	65
3	33	39	72
4	23	32	55
5	26	31	57
6	28	44	72
7	37	24	61
8	41	35	76
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	306	302	608

*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
 - 0.2 % Asian
 - 0.3 % Black or African American
 - 0.8 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 98 % White
 - 0.7 % 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	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	586
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 2 %

Total number students who qualify: 13

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
65 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>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>2</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>33</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>21</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8
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.	47
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
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 20:1

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%	98%	98%	98%	98%
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.

The focus of Marion Local will always be the students who comprise our communities. The district will provide an innovative curriculum in a safe environment.

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.

Our school has been open as usual for the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year.

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

Our school serves a middle class community. Parents hold high expectations for their children to perform well, and the community has an equal expectation for the school to be high performing. We are fortunate to have teachers who think about our students best interests and provide high quality academic and life lessons for them.

Support from our parents is extraordinary. On a yearly average, 98% of our students are represented by their families at school events. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences averages 86%. Our school slogan is “Flyer Pride”, and the pride our community has exhibited toward our school is evident in their support of our students through sports, bands, choirs, academics, and other extracurricular activities. Our school is a focal point for community involvement and we are grateful for their support of staff and students.

Our school vision statement is student-centered. Teachers and support staff strive to provide a well-rounded, innovative curriculum in a safe, nurturing environment. Students are encouraged to reach their highest potential and become lifelong learners. Our building mission is “Every student. Every day. Whatever it takes.” The building mission is painted on walls, broadcast on the outdoor sign, and printed on our stationery. Staff members work together to meet the individual needs of our students.

We challenge our gifted students with an advanced curriculum tailored to their individual needs within classrooms. We also use grade level acceleration through modified schedules. Likewise, when students are struggling, we implement the IAT process to document students’ intervention needs. Our teachers find resources to help students close gaps in their knowledge. Through the IAT process, we work to facilitate all students’ success.

One measure we use to monitor student growth is a writing portfolio that follows each student from kindergarten through eighth grade. This gives teachers firsthand knowledge of their new students’ skills as writers. The portfolios include diagnostic measures such as STAR, DIBELS, and state test scores. Teachers also share a Google Document containing insights and interventions for each student. This prior knowledge allows teachers to better understand and meet the needs of their incoming students.

A positive culture exists between our staff members, and in turn, they embed positive supports for students through curriculum and school culture. Our school lobby includes a large mural depicting Flyer Pride, a display of positive character traits, a kindness pledge recited daily, and a wall of teacher generated praise cards, which are read on our daily announcements. Our school focuses on character education through teaching and modeling the importance of kindness. Other character traits, such as perseverance, responsibility and gratitude each have a monthly focus. This focus is taught through teacher developed projects with an emphasis on community service. We invited representatives from several local non-profit organizations to our school and held a charity fair to inform students of the existence and purposes of these organizations. Later, a clothing and food drive was held to support the local food bank.

During last spring's shutdown due to Covid-19 restrictions, we found innovative ways to continue meeting our students’ needs, providing academic rigor and a socially and emotionally supportive environment for all students. Teachers changed teaching strategies, learned new online programs, and connected with their students through zoom meetings. Many of our support staff gave one-on-one support to help meet the needs of all students. Our administration supported families and encouraged students and staff to maintain our standard of educational excellence.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Our school, like all others, was forced to make quick shifts in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in March of 2020 when we closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of the school year. Fortunately, our school was already technologically prepared, which afforded us an easier transition to remote learning. Every student in grades 1-8 already had Chromebooks available to them, and we were using online programs such as Google Classroom/Meet in grades 3-8 and Seesaw for younger students. These programs enabled us to continue teacher and group interactions. Our transition to remote learning also included paper and pencil based activities.

We have been able to conduct in-person learning for the entire 2020-2021 school year. We have adapted and made instructional shifts throughout the year. First, our students utilized Google Classroom in most classes. Teachers use this platform for students to be able to access instructional materials, directions, and an online environment to interact with teachers. Likewise, in grades K-2, our teachers are continuing to utilize the Seesaw platform for students to access different activities for guided reading groups and for communication with parents. Assessments for students are now typically done online through platforms such as Google Forms, Edulastic, Seesaw, and Accelerated Reader. In prior years, many of these assessments were completed by paper and pencil. These online forms of assessment have also allowed teachers to provide more immediate feedback to students and parents as well as offering interventions to students such as read aloud options.

The state of Ohio has made several revisions to our standards over the past five years. Those revisions have provided our school with the opportunity to review our curriculum and how it spirals throughout the nine grade levels of our building. We have taken several professional development opportunities to meet in content areas and review our standards to ensure that content is taught in proper sequence, and that we do not overlap in skills. In addition, we have studied many different instructional resources on the market and adopted new curricula in most of our grade levels. In each of these adoptions, our teachers have worked to realign their standards with the new instructional resources.

In 2016, through a study of our state test scores in ELA, we identified a deficit in writing across all grade levels. According to the 2016 data, only 21% of our fourth grade students scored above average, while 61% of that same class scored near proficient. An initiative was started to put an intentional focus on writing instruction across our K-8 grade levels. Each ELA teacher was given the book, *Writing Pathways*, to help guide our instructional shift. In several self-led professional development sessions, the book was studied and discussed by the ELA teachers. Four key writing components were identified and assigned a time of year in which students would do a pre-writing. After the pre-writing was completed, all K-8 ELA teachers came together for a day and painstakingly scored pre-writings collaboratively. Each grade level shared copies of their writing samples together. The teachers would score the writing and discuss areas on the rubric to determine where each sample placed on the rubric. This process allowed teachers to identify skills the students were lacking in their writing. Plans were developed to address deficient areas and adjust instruction to identify gaps and strengthen student writing skills. Our extensive work to improve student writing skills has paid off through improved state test scores. The fourth grade class that we mentioned above had 74% of the students score near proficient as third graders, but as seventh graders had only 2% near proficient. After the 2019 tests, that class had improved to 96% of their students in the above average range. In 2016, our third graders had 74% near proficient and only 25% above average. In the 2019 testing data, our third graders had 31% near proficient and 64% above proficient. Over the four years, our third grade testing scores had improved by 39%. In addition to our Writing focus, our K-4 grade levels use *Reading Wonders*, *Foundations*, and *Phonics Dance* to cover our phonics instruction, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and literature (both reading and informational text). In grades 5-8, teachers use a novel-based approach to teach reading and informational text content standards. Vocabulary and grammar instruction at those grade levels is covered with either a supplemental workbook or online resources.

An overall area of acceleration in our school has been in the area of math. Testing data obtained in the 2nd grade from the IOWA scores served as a measure and first indicator of students who are excelling. Testing

data in grades 3-8 confirmed our findings and has illustrated a need for an advanced track curriculum for higher performing students. We have a two-tiered approach to meeting this need. First, in grades 3-6 students who are identified are served by our gifted intervention specialist. She is a full-time teacher for our district serving this population of students. In grades 7 and 8, students are accelerated into Pre-Algebra and high school Algebra I courses, respectively. Our struggling students are served through an intervention specialist and regular classroom teacher in a small group setting. Like reading in grades K-2, we have studied available math resources and have adopted a more rigorous series, better aligned to the Ohio standards. All of these factors have led to an increased performance by our students in the area of math. Go Math is the resource used to teach number sense, measurement, geometry, operations, and algebraic thinking in grades K-3. In grades 4-6, the teachers use the Envision series to cover their standards. In grades 7 and 8 we use the Glencoe Algebra I and Geometry text resource to enhance our instruction in Pre-Algebra and Algebra I.

In the areas of Science and Social Studies, we have adopted new curricular materials that are in line with the updated state standards. Science materials lend to a more inquiry based model of teaching and students are leaders of instruction through carefully designed labs. In grades K-4 the focus on Science instruction is based on seasonal changes, the atmosphere, Earth's resources, motion, matter, electricity, and living things. In grades 5-8, students study the solar system, rocks and minerals, light, sound, motion, conservation, energy, ecosystems, the flow of energy, species, and reproduction. Social Studies classes are project-based, designed by the teachers, allowing students to explore their curriculum through hands-on activities. Escape rooms, mock debates, collaborative group projects, and the curriculum Social Studies Alive have helped our teachers enliven their curriculum for their students. Specifically in grades K-3 instruction is focused on studying local communities and how people work and live together. In 4th grade state history is the focal point of instruction. Fifth grade content focuses on regions and people of the western hemisphere. The shift in 6th and 7th grades is on regions and the people in the eastern hemisphere. Finally, in the 8th grade, United States history from exploration to reconstruction is covered.

Our staff is continually striving to improve. Currently, we are piloting a self-led initiative called a student learning log. We have spent months creating a Google Sheets file that will be developed for each student. The student file will include all assessment data for each year they are in the elementary building. A tab will be assigned for each grade level, K-8. This will allow teachers to quickly document assessment progress, regression, interventions that have been implemented, and documentation of parent meetings. Because we have so many different data sources including DIBELS, STAR, AIR, and IOWA assessments, this format will allow teachers to continually and quickly monitor student progress toward yearly growth. Additionally, teachers are given a data binder that includes student data for their upcoming class. They use this information to monitor student progress and begin differentiating instruction to ensure they meet individual student needs.

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

Our curriculum supports college readiness by providing an accelerated model of instruction in 7th grade preparing students to take the high school equivalent of Algebra I during their 8th grade year. In addition, as part of our 8th grade quarterly specials rotation, our students are introduced to a course designed around STEM and engineering curriculum, Spanish, and agriculture. We feel these courses provide students with college and career readiness skills for engineering, cultural appreciation in an area where we have little diversity, and a greater understanding of the science behind a driving force in our local economy, agriculture.

Our school also partners with area businesses in multiple ways. First, HONDA of America provides engineers to come to our school and work with middle school students as part of our science curriculum working with engineering design concepts. This multi-week unit of study incorporates engineering design concepts of how cars are designed for speed and efficiency. Students work in small groups with engineers to design their cars, run testing simulations, and go back to the design phase to improve their car performance. In addition, HONDA of America supports other STEM efforts with our middle school extracurricular LEGO league. Our student team is actually invited to HONDA where an official LEGO League competition is held at their facility. Again, engineers work with students on their LEGO boards to help with robot design.

Eighth grade students, in partnership with our local branch of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, participate in a writing activity each year. Themes consistently center around patriotism and the effects of government on student lives as teenagers. Students practice their leadership skills by presenting these essays to their classmates. Members of the VFW also listen to these presentations and together choose five winners. These winners then present their essays to an assembly of peers and parents.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Art, music, physical education, STEM (science/technology/engineering/math) and technology classes are available for all Marion Local Elementary students. Band is offered for fifth grade and above. Our eighth graders are able to take a variety of courses that help them transition into high school coursework. These classes include Introductory Spanish, Agricultural Education, Industrial Technology, as well as physical education.

When we began the shutdown, we immediately understood the importance of our technology classes. Our students easily adapted to virtual classes. Knowing our students needed access to the arts, our teachers adapted their curriculum to offer online and hands-on projects that could be completed at home.

With our reopening in the fall, modifications were made to meet the state mandated safety requirements. New classroom management and organizational procedures were implemented. For example, many times videos are recorded and projected onto the smart board instead of having in-person demonstrations, and students receive personal sets of art supplies to reduce germ transmission. Through art, physical education, technology and music, students find creative ways to express themselves, work cooperatively with one another, and merge their creativity with real-life experiences.

Marion Local embeds STEM opportunities throughout its K-8 curriculum and in after school activities, such as our LEGO Robotics team and the 5th and 6th grade drama club. Students learn through hands-on experiences by building circuits, designing 3D models, programming robots and drones, and putting on plays. While learning to cooperate with others, students are being exposed to future career possibilities. These opportunities help support life skills, such as time management, goal setting, creativity, problem solving, communication, and coping skills.

Our specials classes and after school teams are open to students of all ability levels. To meet the needs of our diverse learners, supplemental support and one-on-one instruction is offered. Students with diagnosed medical conditions are given modified expectations and assessed with modified rubrics. Students with below grade level abilities are continuously encouraged to persevere when faced with adversity. More rigorous project expectations, choice charts and special interest projects are used to challenge above grade level students, too. Students with above grade level physical abilities are encouraged to be leaders, offer support to others and are challenged by similar-ability peers. The students at Marion Local are sure to cheer on one another's successes and help others that are struggling.

3. Academic Supports:

Marion Local works to embody the motto, "Every child, every day, whatever it takes." While there are students who experience a gap in learning based on the achievement of their peers, we have a variety of programs in place to address this need. Our most common gaps occur with our students identified with disabilities. However, we have also identified gaps in the English language learner subgroup.

Our district implements a variety of practices to close the gap with our struggling learners. One important step is our IAT (Intervention Assistance Team) process which is the first step in

identifying struggling students. This process has recently been updated to become more data and goal driven so better communication can occur between parents and staff. As members of our staff, we have a reading specialist teaching our Title I program and licensed intervention specialists providing instruction for our IAT students and students identified with disabilities. In addition, more than half of our intervention teachers have received training in the Orton Gillingham method of reading instruction. We also offer the Lexia Program for students who need more phonics instruction and are able to practice this outside the classroom.

In order to provide additional instruction, all students in 5th to 8th grade are enrolled in an intervention class daily. These periods allow students additional time to practice the necessary content from all subject areas with either the general education teacher or an intervention specialist. For some class periods there is a targeted lesson to meet the needs of the entire class. On other days, teachers meet with a small group or one on one with students to address missing skills.

Marion Local provides gifted services to students in grades 3-8. Identified math students in grades 4-6 also receive pull-out services provided by a Gifted Intervention Specialist. Identified math students in grades 7-8 take an accelerated math class or services are provided in the general math classroom. Students identified gifted in reading in grades 3-8 receive services in the regular education classroom from teachers with the required professional development course work. These students are challenged in the classroom while still working alongside students of varying abilities.

Further practices we have implemented to close achievement gaps are after school remedial classes and summer school. These are utilized as a more intensive intervention for a small group of students. These sessions typically focus on reading, writing and mathematics. Sessions are offered for students in all grade levels kindergarten through 8th grades. During the summer of 2020, we had 51 students in summer school. We have just recently begun after school remediation sessions for students preparing for our state tests.

Another group whose achievement gap we are working to close is that of our English language learners. At this time, our district has only three English Language Learners. These three students have been paired with a teacher fluent in their original language to provide one on one instruction in English. This occurs during the students intervention time.

Maybe the most important practice we have in place for closing the gap is continued collaboration with staff on IAT or students on an Individualized Education Plan IEP. Through our collaboration we make sure we discuss all students to make sure they are receiving what they need to be successful. This is done during planned monthly collaboration time, daily common plan time, and countless emails and conversations between colleagues and parents.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Marion Local has instilled a positive learning environment that supports all areas of development by using positive mantras and clear expectations. One of the ways Marion Local supports academic growth is by using the growth mindset and believing in the power of yet. There are many posters with the word “Yet” displayed throughout the building. This sign serves as a reminder that even though students may not know how to do something yet, if they work hard and are dedicated, they may be able to in the future. By instilling this mindset in our students now, we are setting them up for success on their college or career paths.

Our district supports students' academic growth mindset and their social and emotional growth. Student expectations are stated in a positive, easy to understand manner, that encourages them to strive to be better. The expectations are: to be considerate, be safe, be proud, be respectful, be caring, be cooperative, be prompt, be alert, be courteous, and be responsible. These expectations help students to develop a respect and a sense of caring for others. The expectations also give every student the opportunity to develop his or her abilities to the fullest. Our school incorporates these expectations into the Flyer Character Cards we reward to students. If a teacher sees a student exceeding these expectations independently, a teacher writes the student a Flyer Character Card and gives it to the principal. The students who are given a Flyer Character Card are recognized on the announcements and the card is displayed for everyone to see. By utilizing this reward system, we encourage students to be kind and be responsible.

Marion Local also encourages students to do their best by nominating a “Citizen of the Month” from each kindergarten through fourth grade class and the top three students from grades 5-8. Every couple of months, the focus changes to a new character trait. The areas we have focused on so far this year are: be aware, be kind, be a leader, and be a good friend.

Even during our remote learning last year, our school was still able to effectively make sure our students were growing academically, socially, and emotionally. To support students academically, teachers held zoom meetings and created videos to cover grade-level standards. Teachers also held meet and greet zoom meetings to allow students to socialize with each other. During the school closure, the school decided to host a virtual spirit week as a fun way to boost student morale. Whether our school is teaching in person or online, we use positive reinforcements as a way to support students' academic, social, and emotional development.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our school is fortunate to have many partnerships with community organizations that enhance and support the learning environment we provide for our students through local donations, higher education institutes, a parent PTO group, and big industry partners.

Our building seeks out opportunities to obtain grants that support our student success, such as McDonalds grants, a local Jennings Grant, which has provided close to \$10,000 for robotics in the classroom, and an Emerson STEM grant that gave our teachers professional development opportunities. Our PTO plays a key role in forging community activities that support our teachers, classrooms, and school building.

Local partnerships are key to our students' success and hands on learning experiences. A local university provides a science fair at which our county schools compete. Honda, a large business partner in our area, provides our students with hands-on experiences by sending in workers to conduct experiments with our students. Honda also donates a large amount of money to support our Lego League, and they host a county wide competition. The Lego League provides hands-on creative thinking and problem solving opportunities for our students. Lego League utilizes parent volunteers, along with our staff members, to further improve our community involvement. Our local library, local recycling centers, and community outreach groups come to the school to present programs and ideas to our students. We have a great partnership with our Sheriff's department with our DARE program and with our JH life choices programs. Our district also uses

resources from a local nonprofit organization that supports family emotional needs with free counseling services. Our families appreciate this free service and support when needed.

Our staff seeks out and welcomes partnerships to support our students and their families. To keep our families informed during COVID-19, our staff initiated new programs for communication between students and parents. Online tools such as Google Classroom, Seesaw, teacher YouTube channels, and even Zoom conference calls to parents have been utilized on a regular basis. A full school text information system and class level emails have been implemented as a means to send information to all family members and staff. Communication between our staff and families has remained strong due to the hard work of our staff and administration.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Maintaining high academic results comes from having high expectations and strong support systems for our staff. One of the largest impacts on students' success is highlighted through teacher participation and the desire to seek out, share, and utilize professional development. Our district models and sets the tone that professional development is important, necessary, and supported. We value our teachers continuing their learning, and each school year, we require that all staff members complete a minimum of ten professional development hours outside of the school day. Our administration and staff members are constantly sending out and sharing opportunities. Collaboration time allows teachers to monitor student learning trends, identify individual students who need guidance, and share strategies and ideas that support student learning. During staff meetings, teachers often present mini professional development sessions and work together toward common goals. We seek professional development throughout the state, the local ESC, and we also use our area schools' teachers as an excellent resource. This collaborative and ongoing learning environment provides support for staff and ensures they feel valued.

We are a small district; however, we stay up to date with new technology and resources. All of our students in grades 3-8 currently have their own personal ChromeBooks. With this resource comes a great deal of responsibility and opportunity. Our technology coordinator seeks out professional development sessions that will benefit our staff and students. She communicates with the teachers, and develops sessions to improve and enhance the teacher's practices. Listening to the needs of our staff is of the utmost importance to determine professional development needs. When the teachers' needs are met, the students and staff are better served. During the transition to remote learning last spring, the support for our staff members was needed more than ever. Our staff members were given technology assistance and last minute professional development on websites such as Google Classroom that were critical sites for remote learning. We quickly became accustomed to Google Meet, Zoom, and other online learning programs we had never had to utilize. Our technology coordinator and our teachers came together to teach one another about the most effective sites and programs to best serve our students learning from home. As we started the new school year, students or teachers that needed to quarantine were utilizing these same resources. Our administration, technology coordinator, and staff members continued to work together and provide support when needed.

4. School Leadership:

Marion Local Elementary is a high-performing school that embodies a leadership philosophy of empowerment to all stakeholders. This empowerment begins with the building principal establishing a shared leadership model giving everyone a stake in the overall success of the school. This vision is fulfilled in all aspects of school management and especially noted through establishing building leadership teams, interviewing committees, and a student council, to name a few. The success of the school is bred from team ownership in the entire educational process.

The building principal is the chief administrator and educational leader of the elementary school. Due to increasing enrollment and increased initiatives at the district and state level, a part-time assistant principal works side-by-side with the principal in all administrative responsibilities of the school. Helping with other administrative tasks of the building are a full-time school psychologist, a part-time guidance counselor and a special education supervisor. A building leadership team meets routinely to chart the course of building initiatives. A sunshine committee also meets routinely to develop the positive culture in the building among

the staff by offering numerous social events as well as activities that take place within the school. The building principal has worked to establish high expectations of teachers and students, provide an environment that enables students and teachers to flourish, worked to retain and recruit a talented teaching staff, and create a clear vision of the direction of the school. It is the priority of the principal that each stakeholder of the school understand they are a vital part of the school's success.

At the onset of school closure last spring, the administration of the building immediately worked with teaching teams to clarify that our primary importance was to ensure all students were in contact with their teachers. Organizing drop off and pick-up times with the primary staff, monitoring student progress through our on-line gradebook, and contacting students and parents as necessary, became one of the vital roles of the building principal.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

In all areas of the school, we expect our students to treat one another with respect and kindness. We have a Be Kind Committee that creates themes for each month and activities that promote acts of kindness and friendship among our students. The students are encouraged to be aware of those around them, their feelings, their experiences, and their beliefs. During our staff members' collaboration time, our guidance counselor leads character building with our students. Through these activities and various team-building activities we present to our students, they learn about one another and understand the importance of respecting and appreciating differences. In our classrooms, we use various resources and novels to teach our students about other cultures. Because our school lacks cultural diversity, our staff members strive to educate our students on different cultures, lifestyles, and environments.

Our student population is homogeneous with less than 3% of our population being non-white students. We have a very Christian, mostly Catholic population of students, too. The lack of diversity among our students is cause for our teachers to educate about diversity, inclusion and equity. Ensuring that everyone feels welcome, valued, and respected at our school is a top priority. Our Social Studies curriculum lends itself to educating our students about diverse cultures, and through current events, student led discussions cover topics of equality, racism and diversity. In Language Arts, teachers are intentional about selecting reading material that is anti-racist and anti-bias. As a school system, we understand the importance of educating our students about acceptance and tolerance of all people.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In March of 2020, we were in disbelief that we would be temporarily closing our buildings. Therefore, we knew we needed a plan that would still provide the excellence in education that our community expected. Our mission statement, “Every Student. Every Day. Whatever it takes.” was put to the test. Honestly, this statement is the single practice that influenced our success in dealing with the closure of our schools.

Everyone in our district worked together to truly do “Whatever it takes.” The entire staff jumped into action to meet the educational and emotional needs of our students and families. We already had a 1:1 computer program in place for our 3rd through 8th grade students. Luckily, most of them had access to internet service. Some of the lower grade levels created a distribution and pick up schedule for student work, while our upper elementary and middle school teachers, with help of our technology department, switched to distance teaching. Our special education teachers held zoom meetings with their students, as well as zoomed into regular classrooms if their assistance was needed. Some of the staff even did one to one virtual work with students to help ensure each student's academic success.

By August, our community had made it clear that they wanted us to do everything we could to have face to face education. Through discussions with parents and teachers about the lessons learned during shutdown, we decided we needed a central learning management system to help parents and students in accessing content that might need to be made virtual. Teacher teams decided on a single platform that would simplify access for parents as well as students. We trained students in all grade levels about how they would be accessing video lessons, homework, email and daily work that would be posted for them. One of our biggest challenges was to make certain that students that were quarantined were included in school virtually. As the quarantines started to happen, teachers adapted to teaching in-person students and virtual students at the same time. Everyone felt this helped to create a seamless transition for quarantined students, while holding them to the same expectations as students that were in the classroom. Certainly, flexibility from our staff, students, and parents was a key to making our year successful.