

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 Dr. Amy Debelak
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 9609 Montgomery Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Cincinnati State OH Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 45242-7205

County Hamilton County

Telephone (513) 686-1730 Fax (513) 792-6131

Web site/URL https://www.sycamoreschools.org/Domain/13 E-mail lewisc@sycamoreschools.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. Frank Forsthoefel E-mail forsthoefelf@sycamoreschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Sycamore Community City School District Tel. (513) 686-1700

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. Melissa Weiss
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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	38	37	75
1	59	55	114
2	46	47	93
3	48	61	109
4	43	48	91
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	234	248	482

*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 17.6 % Asian
 - 6.4 % Black or African American
 - 2.9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 67.5 % White
 - 5.2 % 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: 8%

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	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	43
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	548
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.08
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

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

Guyarati, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Malayalam, Portuguese, Turkish, Telugu, Tamil, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, Mandarin

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %

Total number students who qualify: 21

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

32 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>9</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
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	97%	97%	97%	96%	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.

Create a culture of academic excellence through inclusive and innovative learning opportunities for the whole child.

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.

During the 2020-21 school year, Montgomery Elementary School has been open face-to-face 5 days a week. Parents were offered an option to enroll their child in a Virtual Learning Academy that is run by Sycamore Community Schools. At the start of the school year, 140 students chose to enroll in the Virtual Learning Academy and 342 enrolled in the in-person model. We did allow students to change instructional models if the family's or student's needs changed over the course of the school year. Social-emotional and academic needs were considered equally when changes were requested.

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

Montgomery Elementary School is a suburban community that celebrates its diverse student population. We value and incorporate different cultures, perspectives, and experiences into our climate and curriculum. Our students come from 10+ foreign countries. We also take pride in being a destination district for students with challenging disabilities. Our dedication to inclusion exemplifies our commitment to provide a rigorous and rewarding learning experience for ALL students.

At Montgomery Elementary School, we successfully utilize systematic alignment of resources to student needs. Co-teaching is a key strategy, allowing teachers to teach grade-level standards to ALL students, differentiating and accommodating as necessary. Co-teaching permits us to successfully include students with disabilities and English Learners in all content areas.

In 2017, we instituted a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program to meet our students' social-emotional needs, providing a solid foundation and positive school climate. We focus on rewarding positive behavior and restorative practices rather than punitive measures. Our students are explicitly taught the 4 Be(s) of Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be A Problem Solver, and Be Responsible. Our school team works together to operationally define what behaviors a student should exhibit under each of the Be(s) to earn a PBIS reward. Students and staff are given incentives through weekly raffles based on points earned via PBIS Rewards. Behavior referrals to the office have decreased dramatically, and out-of-school suspensions and emergency removals are zero for this school year.

We are proud to have two unique programs at our school: Montgomery Ambassadors and our Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Montgomery Ambassadors is a parent volunteer program designed to welcome new families to our school, focusing on non-English speaking families. The Ambassadors reach out to share all of the "ins and outs" of our communities. Advice is given about everything from pediatricians, after-school activities, pick up and drop off routines, to the interpretation of standardized tests. Information is provided in the family's home language to ensure understanding and a welcoming environment. We believe the faster the entire family is connected to our school community, the easier it will be for the child to acclimate to the classroom environment.

Our school team created a participatory action research project to directly ask our diverse families what barriers existed to assuming leadership roles in our school community and being more active participants at the building level. Schedules and lack of opportunity were determined as root causes. As a result, our parent Diversity and Inclusion Committee was created to focus on solving this issue. Several adjustments to schedules have been made to create better access and to increase involvement amongst diverse families.

When we initially moved to remote learning in March 2020, we engaged our staff in professional development to learn remote pedagogy and technology. Our teachers supported each other by sharing resources and providing training during their weekly Professional Learning Committees. The building leadership met weekly with each grade level team to answer questions and provide curricular support. Staff was in close communication with families and, as any concerns arose, building administrators were notified and reached out to families. These personal conversations reduced the number of students that were not engaging in learning. If needed, families or staff were connected to appropriate community or district resources. The need to continue to monitor staff, students, and families' emotional well-being continued in the 2020-2021 school year.

Our school district has provided families with the option for either virtual learning or in-person learning during the 2020-2021 school year. All aspects of the school day were analyzed to allow for safety protocols to be implemented. We then did a deep dive into how we could teach foundational curriculum like reading and math without doing in-person conferences for formative feedback while still implementing safety protocols. Teachers have used technology tools such as Google Classroom, Padlet, Lucy Calkins online resources, and Go Math! to extend their teaching practices and meet student learning needs in virtual and in-person models.

Most importantly, we found creative ways to continue to grow our culture and capacity as a school community. We engage our virtual students in principal and peer picnics each week for students to see their friends and teachers during the school day. Our school hosts family fun nights each quarter through Google Meet. The school counselor and school-based therapist meet with families virtually and in person at an individual level to meet students' emotional needs during the pandemic.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

We focus on personalized learning by implementing a rich language arts curriculum that is student-centered and promotes a love for reading and writing. Lucy Calkins Units of Study, Words Their Way, and StoryWorks are the primary resources to build decoding strategies, fluency, comprehension, and writing skills. We utilize Readers and Writer’s Workshop models to allow children to practice their skills daily at their own academic level. Through mini-lesson instruction, mentor text, conferring, guided and independent reading and writing, high student achievement goals are met. Recognizing the importance of students being fluent readers of both fiction and nonfiction and the importance of the reading and writing connection, teachers strive to ensure that text materials are exciting and engaging. In the upper grades, both fiction and nonfiction texts are used as a springboard for essay writing. To build a solid foundation and extend learning, students receive explicit instruction in phonics, word study, spelling, and vocabulary.

Teachers have adapted our language arts curriculum to optimize student learning in a remote setting. Lucy Calkins' digital component, Google Meet, and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra are tools to provide small groups and one-on-one instruction. Breakout rooms simulate in-person turn and talk with partners. Instructional materials are linked in Google Classroom from Google Docs, Google Slides, Jamboard, Padlet, Wakelet, and other core curriculum resources. Teachers can project instructional materials through the use of IPEVO cameras to model instruction. Teachers provide feedback and confer with students in real-time on shared Google documents. The technology skills taught during in-person learning, combined with the online platform of our materials, have made it possible for Montgomery students to seamlessly transition from in-person to remote learning when the need arises.

Students are given regular individual assessments. Data is then analyzed to target instruction to the needs of every learner. NWEA MAP, Eazy-CBM, and DRA are summative and formative assessments used for benchmarking purposes. The results are used to determine the need for Tier 1 or 2 intervention and team discussion through our Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) to collaborate on best practices to build student achievement.

Ohio's Model Curriculum is the foundation used to instruct all students in mathematics. Standards are presented in a logical sequence allowing students to build on previously learned concepts. Frequent collaboration between face-to-face and virtual teachers ensures a seamless transition from grade to grade and between the two instructional models. Daily instruction is delivered using the 5E approach of engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. Lessons begin by engaging the learner. Essential questions are explored and deconstructed, so students have a specific learning target for the lesson. Typically, students are engrossed in an inquiry launch where various mathematical concepts are explored. Students can be found using hands-on or virtual manipulatives to begin their concrete understanding of the unit during this time. Explicit instruction occurs, and students are readily communicating with one another to present their thinking and defend solutions. For our virtual students, Google breakout sessions have been utilized. This practice enables students to move to a more abstract understanding of the concept. Students are allowed to explain by sharing and showing their knowledge as a means of formative assessment. We value allowing students the opportunity to self-assess to monitor their overall mastery of the essential question. All concepts presented are embedded in problems where critical thinking is required. Exit tickets are commonly seen at the end of lessons to guide the following day's instruction.

Students own their learning process by setting goals. Students take a pretest to show what they know and analyze the results by locating the standard they need the most work on. Students are given a specific path of instructional activities to gain a clearer understanding. This process allows us to take a solid approach to differentiation. Small groups are conducted to extend and remediate. Technological resources such as, Compass Learning, Raz-Kids and Word Voyage are used to promote further growth for both the virtual and in-person learner.

Montgomery Elementary uses the Ohio Learning Standards and Model Curriculum for Science as our basis for instruction. Just like math, we implement these standards using the 5E instructional method. In a typical

year, science is taught using hands-on and real-world experiences. Teachers will group children to allow them to learn to take turns and problem solve, which is a critical life skill. However, Covid restrictions will not allow such techniques. Students cannot share equipment and cannot work in groups due to social distancing guidelines. To combat these effects, teachers rely on google meets, scientific demonstrations, and creating individual supply bags. We were also tasked with creating an online school for students who chose to stay home. Teachers in our online learning academy needed to get the supplies into the families' homes. A monthly pick-up of home materials need to be organized by the virtual teachers. These home experiment kits allowed the parents to become a part of their child's learning.

It is critical when running two learning models that the tools teachers use to assess children are cohesive. Teachers worked together to create pacing charts, formative and summative assessments for both in-person and virtual learners.

Our social studies teachers use multiple resources and methods to deliver instruction, including Ohio Studies Weekly, Let's Find Out, and additional reading materials. These resources provide us an opportunity for cross-curricular lessons with language arts. We take pride in delivering the Ohio Content Standards while focusing on representing our diverse community. The content of our resources must educate students about individuals and themes from different cultures and backgrounds. We are purposeful in selecting literature that celebrates diversity and addresses complex social issues to enrich discussions. We intentionally choose biographies so students can discover the fantastic achievements of people of color and women. Stories about the Chinese New Year, Diwali, Hanukkah, and Day of the Dead are shared throughout our building. In both learning models, family involvement has allowed students to hear from our community, share their experiences, and promote a diversity of thought.

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:

At Montgomery Elementary, we offer a variety of co-curricular activities. Students in all grade levels attend special classes every day, rotating through music, art, physical education, and media center. One week a month, pre-COVID, a district STEAM bus would also visit our school. Students would have an opportunity to participate in hands-on science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematical challenges. Lunchtime concerts, author visits, and field days are just some ways the extra-curricular disciplines are celebrated school-wide.

The Music Program led by a licensed elementary music specialist is all-inclusive and follows a curriculum aligned to Ohio and National Music Standards. Our music teacher utilizes a variety of music education pedagogy, including Orff Schulwerk. Students participate in Project-Based Learning activities, which allow them to show their musical knowledge and abilities while applying musical skills in ways that interest them (i.e., creating a music soundtrack to given artworks, telling stories through sound, etc.). Culminating their musical journey at Montgomery, fourth-grade students perform and create an end-of-year concert through composing instrument parts, improvising, creating choreography, or helping with stage transitions behind the scenes. The fourth-grade celebration has moved to a virtual celebration with students creating an online show for families and friends.

The Art Program at Montgomery Elementary uses the Ohio Visual Art Standards and is considered vital to our children's school experience. All ideas are welcome in this room. There is no one correct solution in art, only varying degrees of individual expression! This results in hallways full of unique and diverse student artwork that help promote an atmosphere of unity, community, and inclusiveness. Student artwork can also be found displayed in the district office for the community to appreciate.

The Physical Education Program is designed to cover the ODE benchmarks. Each class prioritizes social interaction and self-expression. Lessons are integrated from academic areas resulting in a community atmosphere. Additionally, we offer weekly Adaptive Physical Education for special education students combined with community leisure skills. Our special needs students are also included when general education students take physical education and modifications are provided for each student's needs. Other fitness programs include the P.T.O. walkathon and our second grade Flying Pig Marathon Program that is run one mile each week, culminating with the Second Graders participating in one mile run of Cincinnati's Flying Pig Marathon.

Many programs are taught at Montgomery by our licensed school nurse. These programs include Basic First Aid Training for third-grade students and cover first aid skills for choking, poisoning, wound care, and hands-only C.P.R. Other programs included Growth and Development and drug education. These are taught yearly to fourth-grade students and cover physical, emotional, and social changes related to puberty. Staff is also given basic first aid, triage skills, and our Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) is trained yearly. Additional staffing was added to the health room to manage health protocols to support the pandemic.

The media center is bursting with inquiry, collaboration, and creativity. At any given time, one might witness quiet reading, team research, robotics, planning, digital learning, art projects, and engineering activities. As a "Future Ready" school, our certified librarian provides students, staff, and parents with resources and strategies to implement innovative learning opportunities. Focusing on literacy, our library has an inclusive print collection that celebrates diversity and provides extensions to the informational curriculum presented in core classes. During COVID restrictions, the students have learned to access e-books from the local public library and utilize online subscriptions and other digital resources.

3. Academic Supports:

Montgomery Elementary utilizes a 3-tier model to address students performing below grade level in academics or behavior. Our priority is for all students to engage and progress in the general curriculum, whether that be through core instruction, small groups, or one-on-one.

We use a variety of data points to look at individual student progress. All students in grades 1-4 participate in Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing 3x a year. The CoGAT ability assessment is given in second grade and fourth grade. Teachers also gather individual data for each student, such as the Diagnostic Reading Assessment and common assessments. At benchmark meetings, homeroom teachers, administrators, and intervention teachers review individual student data. A color-coded system based on MAP and EasyCBM norms is used to determine the level of support a student needs. Supports range from the homeroom teacher's in-class help to a small group pull-out reading intervention using a research-based program with an intervention specialist occurring 3-5x a week for thirty minutes. We also hold RTI meetings designed to analyze specific students who are struggling and collaboratively solve how to help them progress.

Montgomery Elementary utilizes two main standardized tests to determine gifted qualification and placement that combine ability and achievement, giving a fuller picture of each student. Gifted services are implemented through Advanced Language Arts (ALA) and Accelerated Mathematics (X-Math & XX-Math). These classes are offered to our third and fourth graders and can be taken by qualifying for both classes or just one. ALA gives students the same standards with more challenging texts and higher-level thinking. X-Math offers students the chance to learn the state standards for the grade level ahead of their current academic placement. ALA and X-Math/XX-Math meet daily and are taught by a licensed GIS (Gifted Intervention Specialist) who is the class's teacher of record. Those students who are virtual this year have a GIS teaching ALA, X-Math, and XX-Math virtually. The virtual and in-person GIS's meet weekly to ensure pacing and rigor are consistently delivered.

At Montgomery Elementary, our students require a variety of supports depending on their learning needs. Montgomery provides related services, educational assistant support, and two classrooms to support students with low-incidence disabilities. All special education teachers collaborate weekly with the general education teachers regarding lessons, assignment modifications, accommodations, and support adjustments. Our school has been committed to co-teaching to ensure students receive direct instruction during a thirty-minute no new instruction block and a reiteration of the standards during regular instruction from their special education teacher. Virtual teachers work with families to ensure IEP goals are met.

Montgomery Elementary tailors instruction to English Language Learners (ELL) through multiple forms of models and tiers. The beginner and intermediate ELs receive instruction that focuses on developing English skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The collaboration of ESOL and curriculum teachers benefit all ELs. Collaboration, pull-out ESOL instruction, and push-in curriculum support are highly successful for core content and language acquisition.

Virtual EL teachers use instructional strategies and assistive technologies (e.g., visual timers, closed captioning, visual schedules, positive behavior intervention supports, audio readers, Google Meet breakout rooms for consultation/push-in services) to not only accommodate specific needs but to provide a structure similarly found in an in-person learning environment.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

We utilize proactive strategies to keep students engaged and motivated to follow the four Be's of our school: Be Safe, Be Responsible, Be Respectful and Be a Problem Solver. Daily, educators model and teach behavioral expectations and provide positive rewards increasing student morale. Our goal is for students to feel heard, seen, and valued. We focus on students' social and emotional growth, which positively impacts academic achievement. The matrix was revised at the start of the school year to include the new school protocols for COVID.

Our PBIS Committee makes fun videos at the beginning of the year that demonstrate examples of expected behavior in all school areas. Accompanying these videos, staff follow a PBIS lesson matrix that continuously reinforces the four Be's, setting the foundation for a healthy and happy school environment. Educators conduct a PBIS pep rally at the beginning of each year to engage students and build excitement for our new school year. Students receive their PBIS t-shirts worn on the first Friday of every month.

Educators frequently hand out PBIS points with the aid of our PBIS rewards software. Students receive points by following one or more of the four Be's. Educators focus primarily on a student's positive behavior to increase intrinsic motivation. Teachers and administrators review this PBIS data at monthly PLC meetings. The data helps to determine student supports based upon our three-tiered intervention system. Students are given immediate feedback on their behaviors and are also recognized weekly in the classroom and school-wide raffles. Two students from each class are chosen quarterly for the PBIS Awesome Aviator Award. This award is given to those who exemplify all four Be's qualities in all school settings. Awesome Aviators have their picture displayed in the hallway and enjoy a pizza party with staff. Teachers and administrators conduct weekly classroom and school-wide raffles. If a student's name is chosen, they can win incentives and even decide to dress up the school administrators (our assistant Principal has dressed up as Harry Potter).

To continuously focus on the four Be's throughout the school year, classroom teachers run morning meetings concentrating on the whole child (Tier I intervention). They set up a nurturing environment and teach mindfulness, calming strategies, problem-solving, and read social and emotional mentor texts. Based on data gathered through our PBIS Rewards application, the school counselor provides Tier II interventions to students in one-on-one and small group counseling sessions. The school counselor provides whole class lessons for additional support. All of these supports have been able to be implemented in the virtual learning environment.

All staff, including custodial, food services, administration, educational assistants, are involved in PBIS, making the school environment more predictable, accountable, and positive.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The Montgomery Elementary PTO is a dynamic group working tirelessly to engage our families in school-wide events and promote school spirit. At the start of the 2020-21 school year, our PTO hosted a New Family Virtual Orientation. The PTO has held virtual Family Fun Nights and coordinated an Ambassadors group for ESOL families to feel welcome and included. Our PTO engages with business in our community through fundraising. Several times a year, a local produce market donates a fruit or vegetable for our student on "Taste it Tuesdays." Montgomery families collect hundreds of pounds of plastic lids to be recycled and turned into Buddy Benches.

We have Yearbook Theme Week, where students are encouraged to dress according to the daily theme. We also partner with the company Boosterthon for a fundraiser about character building and a week of fun! This year is different, our annual Boosterthon Fun Run will look different with safety guidelines, but the message and enthusiasm will remain! Our PTO organizes memorable 4th-grade graduation with music and a slideshow of pictures.

Operation Give Back (OGB) benefits many of our students and families. OGB works closely with our students and staff to provide academic support, after-school tutoring, or other skills assistance. Throughout the school year, our building advocates for families in need by partnering with SycamoreBridges, a volunteer organization that “bridges” those in need with community goods/services.

The Aviation Station, a decommissioned school bus turned mobile classroom visits Montgomery Elementary and provides STEAM-related activities. Teachers schedule time for their classes to jump on board and participate in activities that have been front-loaded during their time in our Media Center. Four days a week, teachers travel to local neighborhoods on board the Aviation Station to provide homework help after school. The bus is equipped with wifi so students without wifi can connect.

We set up a Little Free Library at our school. Students within our school can access books of all levels to take home for free, and we can then send books to our sister school, Winston Hills. We collect clothing, along with letters of gratitude, and drop them off downtown at the Homeless Veterans Community Outreach Division.

Students plant and care for a spring lettuce crop in our school garden from early March through late May. In May, students collaborate with the Montgomery Farmers Market to establish a fair price to sell the produce. Students advertise, harvest, weigh produce, sell and make change with customers. Montgomery Elementary also promotes a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities throughout the school with an International Night. We celebrate our diversity through student, family, and community-led presentations of food, dance, and music.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Montgomery Elementary has strived to create a supportive environment, particularly during the transition to distance learning through professional development. Transforming typical in-person staff development opportunities into innovative virtual opportunities has improved and successfully transitioned staff.

Reconstructing conventional professional development opportunities was a priority for teachers as they now begin teaching in unique circumstances. The importance of aligning all buildings in the district meant that communication from Montgomery Elementary administration was, and continues to be, consistent. Montgomery provided various virtual supports such as online training (Aviator Passport), technology point personnel, Virtual Commons, home building connections, and tech bundles to bridge this great task. Many online trainings have been provided since the onset of the pandemic last Spring. These trainings focused on content delivery (i.e., flipped classroom, Google classroom, menu boards, screencastify, hyper docs, etc.), student engagement (virtual meetings, Blackboard communication, and tracking student performance), and remote learning (i.e., weekly guides and remote learning tabs). A technology team point person was assigned to meet every 2-3 weeks with teams to troubleshoot and teach new technology for implementation into instruction. Virtual teachers were housed in the Virtual Commons, a facility that was rented to provide a collaborative workspace. Virtual teachers were connected to a “home building” and administrative support team. Teachers meet weekly to discuss curriculum, needs and to help troubleshoot. Tech bundles included a monitor, Bluetooth headphones, document camera, wireless keyboard, and mouse for all staff members to assist in remote learning.

New hires at Montgomery are provided with a multitude of supports. A mentor is assigned to a new hire to help expand their knowledge and skills. New teachers are provided opportunities to interact with a supportive, collaborative teaching team that offers professional and emotional support. Beginning educators have the chance to take part in team-building activities to develop camaraderie within the school building and receive an observation of teaching by their mentor to provide feedback on their teaching.

Montgomery provides ample opportunities for in-person staff to take part in professional development activities. Online courses are available through the technology department, and book studies at Montgomery are offered for college credit. A technology innovator is assigned to do “pop-up talks” and “ask me anything” opportunities, and professional development days are available throughout the school year.

In conclusion, Montgomery has provided various professional development opportunities to support in-person and virtual teachers, which creates an environment where teachers are supported and valued. Our professional culture has been integral to the successful transition from in-person to remote learning.

4. School Leadership:

The Montgomery building leadership philosophy is based on transformational leadership beliefs. To support teacher ownership of instructional practices, building-level administrators ask challenging questions, have direct conversations, and work collaboratively to discover the answers. Administration and staff are focused on analyzing data so that our students will continue to be high-achieving learners. The Principal and Assistant Principal meet with teachers for quarterly benchmark meetings to analyze data, trends in MAP and AIR assessment results. Administrators recognize teachers and staff know students at a deeper level and trust their decision-making skills regarding student achievement. Administration made a shift in their perspective this year to incorporate the unique learning needs of virtual learners and adapted how administrators needed to support virtual teachers this year. The Principal and Assistant Principal are seen as educational leaders who know teachers and staff as individuals and understand how teams function to meet student needs.

Montgomery Elementary has educational staff leadership opportunities such as the Building Leadership Team. This team is led jointly by administration and teacher grade level representatives to speak on behalf of and communicate back to their particular grade level on both building and district level concerns. This includes student and staff safety, event planning, and staff and PTO concerns. Leadership opportunities are also present on the Montgomery Instructional Leadership Team. This team comprises grade-level teacher representatives who help make building-level curriculum-based decisions and communicate grade-level progress towards building and implementing curricular goals. This team is also responsible for analyzing targeted data gathered from grade-level PLCs.

Montgomery has building level members of the district CAT (Curriculum Articulation Teams) leadership teams for Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Each CAT team is responsible for creating curriculum maps for a particular subject, guiding curriculum-based programming decisions and purchases, creating a pacing guide that ensures standards are being taught in a way that maximizes student achievement, and finding resources to enhance teaching.

The Montgomery PTO is an organization consisting of parents, teachers, and school staff working together to enhance every child's education. They support the school and teachers with volunteers, provide a forum for two-way communication, fund teaching tools, host Boosterthon, Virtual Family Fun Nights, and Montgomery Ambassadors.

As a school community, we have various activities to help promote staff, students, and families' emotional well-being. These include safety measures but, more importantly, focus on the social and emotional well-being of staff and students in both learning models. To promote students' and families' well-being, administrators have planned and participated in; monthly staff birthday celebrations, a holiday treat cart, personal notes and gifts placed in staff mailboxes, and weekly prizes for using the PBIS Reward systems. For students and families; we held virtual Family Fun Nights, weekly PBIS drawings, and Virtual Picnic with Peers so remote students can reconnect with friends who are attending face-to-face.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Montgomery Elementary models the core values of Sycamore Community Schools, which includes "Diversity and Inclusion." The district values the development of the whole child. This includes leading the way by modeling, addressing, and implementing best practices to provide all learners the opportunity to achieve at the highest level. We have a Culturally Responsive Practices (CRP) district team in which Montgomery teachers, administrators, and parents address our community's diverse needs based on social movements and current events. Our CRP district

representatives are a direct link to our buildings initiatives. Through monthly meetings, the Montgomery CRP members tackle challenging issues like poverty, implicit bias, and inequity, providing growth opportunities for our staff. We build on these conversations to break down barriers inside and outside of the classroom. Through reflection, collaboration, and a growth mindset, we see our students and curriculum through a culturally responsive lens. Our building has its Diversity and Inclusion Committee consisting of families and staff to ensure curriculum and activities are looked at with an equity lens.

Staff desiring to dig deeper into culturally responsive practices have the opportunity to be involved in our Sycamore Equity Encounters (SEE) program, which began this year. This program provides an opportunity for staff members to discuss various equity-related issues and current events with building-level colleagues in a relaxed, safe, and informal format. We have tackled such topics as the challenging conversations of the George Floyd killing and the riots that followed. These open conversations on inequity help build a solid foundational approach to seeing the whole child and developing a collaborative staff.

At Montgomery, we have a very diverse population of students and families. We must educate and encourage our staff to collaborate, produce, and implement a curriculum that shares this representation. Part of this was accomplished through our Social Studies curriculum of using multicultural literature to teach the standards.

In having a very diverse population, we see students from all around the world. At Montgomery, we celebrate this diversity. We have students from multiple countries with just as many different languages spoken. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) department provides the instruction necessary for English Learners to grow their English language proficiency and supports them with tools needed to achieve academically and socially in the classroom. We value that learning an additional language such as English is not a barrier to academic success.

To ensure that all families feel welcome, we have our PTO Montgomery Ambassadors program. This program consists of parent volunteers who help new families transition successfully into the district, particularly those with a language barrier. This organization offers help in primary languages on various aspects of school life, including enrollment forms, computer systems management, and getting connected with the school community.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most instrumental strategy to ensure the school's continued ability to successfully educate and support students since school closures began in March 2020 is using our Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, PBIS. Montgomery Elementary has been successfully using PBIS for years but needed to revise the practice to safely educate and support students during this time.

When school closures began last spring, the school realized we needed to make changes to our current PBIS matrix to include virtual learning. After the school year ended, the team realized the need for new Covid safety procedures to ensure students were being safely educated in our classrooms. A team was assembled to create new PBIS matrices for each building area to ensure students were following the 4 Be's: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Be a Problem Solver. The staff was trained on the new Covid Matrix. New posters were placed throughout the building for visual reinforcement.

The positive aspects of PBIS create an optimal learning environment for all face-to-face students. We launched the school year with a PBIS Virtual Kickoff where all staff wore PBIS t-shirts. The kickoff modeled the 4 Be's and showcased Montgomery Elementary families. Students were then given their new PBIS t-shirt to wear the first Friday of every month. In the first few weeks of school, teachers presented and modeled daily lessons centered around Covid safety practices. The lessons covered the Montgomery Elementary Covid matrix and aligned videos that showed how to follow the 4 Be's in various locations throughout the building. Students are rewarded by earning points through the PBIS Reward system. Points are used in raffles to earn rewards.

Creating a positive environment in the virtual classroom through PBIS has been instrumental in supporting our students' socio-emotional needs. The PBIS matrix fosters virtual teachers building empathy, helping students make sense of the events occurring in their lives today, and building relationships with and between students. Teaching and modeling expected behaviors through class discussions, student role-playing, consistent feedback, and goal setting have been vital in laying the foundation for PBIS. Teachers positively reinforce expectations through constant praise and by recognizing select students monthly with Virtual Awesome Aviator awards. Collaboration and positive rapport with families make a positive impact on students' socio-emotional needs and academic success.

In conclusion, one of the most instrumental strategies in ensuring our school's continued ability to successfully educate and support students since school closures began in March 2020 has been using our Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports. Since revising our PBIS practices to be most effective for the 2020-21 school year, we have supported our students' academic and socio-emotional needs. Furthermore, by refining and utilizing our PBIS practices this year, our students have been able to flourish within our educational model.