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 Ms. Michelle Craddock

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

Official School Name Clemson Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 581 Berkeley Drive

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Clemson   State SC   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 29631-1791

County Pickens County

Telephone (864) 397-1500   Fax (864) 624-4425

Web site/URL https://cle.pickens.k12.sc.us/   E-mail michellecraddock@pickens.k12.sc.us

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

_____Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Danny Merck   E-mail DannyMerck@pickens.k12.sc.us

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

District Name School District of Pickens County   Tel. (864) 397-1500

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. Shannon Haskett

(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   14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   5 Middle/Junior high schools
                                            4 High schools
                                            0 K-12 schools

                                           23 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)
   [X] 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	16	14	30
K	56	55	111
1	63	56	119
2	61	64	125
3	58	49	107
4	68	68	136
5	56	63	119
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	378	369	747

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school (if unknown, estimate):   9.2 % Asian
                                          10.3 % Black or African American
                                          5.1 % Hispanic or Latino
                                          0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          69.5 % White
                                          5.9 % 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: 5%

    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 *to* the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	37
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	834
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

    Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, Chin (Burma), French, Bengali, Hindi, Russian, German, Malayalam, Burmese, Vietnamese, Armenian, Gujarati, Farsi, Polish, Korean, Romanian, Indonesian, Lusoga, Sinhalese

    English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %

                                                         86 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21 %

            Total number students who qualify: 155

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

     96 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.

12 Autism	3 Multiple Disabilities
1 Deafness	0 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deaf-Blindness	15 Other Health Impaired
10 Developmental Delay	25 Specific Learning Disability
1 Emotional Disturbance	64 Speech or Language Impairment
0 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
4 Intellectual Disability	0 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	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	37
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	23
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.	1

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   19:1

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%	96%	95%	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 X

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.

As a learning community, we will provide meaningful experiences that build educational foundations for all students to inspire lifelong learning, positive self-concept, and responsible citizenship.

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 opened in August for face-to-face instruction. On a daily basis, district officials monitored community spread of the COVID-19 virus as well as school specific data that reflected the number of students and staff in required isolation or quarantine to ensure that our students and teachers were not in unnecessary danger of exposure. As a result of a number of close-contact exclusions among faculty, it was necessary for our fifth grade students to begin the year with a week of virtual learning. This was synchronous learning with teachers instructing live via Webex. Since that time, we have been fortunate to have all grade levels following each of the district's six-week plans for student attendance. District plans have included designated virtual learning days during periods of expected surges as well as planned asynchronous learning days that have not only allowed teachers to conference with parents and work with individual or small groups of students to bridge learning gaps but also have permitted deep cleaning and sanitization of our building

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's slogan, "Clemson Elementary: where every day is a great day to learn," offers a pledge and inspires all who walk through the doors and hear the words. It creates a positive mindset focused on growth. Our school provides a safe, engaging, and diverse learning environment. Our administration, parents, teachers, and community members work together in partnership to support all areas of a child's development in order to encourage natural curiosity and promote practices that sustain lifelong learning.

Clemson Elementary is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in upstate South Carolina. The school is nestled among quiet neighborhoods where students are able to enjoy walking and biking to school. Three institutions of higher learning, Clemson University, Southern Wesleyan University, and Tri-County Technical College, are all located within a 5 mile radius of the school campus, making it a part of a diverse community where members share common beliefs in the value of education and expectations for outstanding academic performance.

The impact of its neighboring institutions on Clemson Elementary extends beyond the school's student population. Pre-service teachers routinely complete field experiences and internships in our building under the direction of our master teachers. In addition, Clemson Elementary has been designated a Clemson University Professional Development School and has hosted methods courses for junior and senior education majors so that undergraduate instruction can be provided in an environment that provides real world experience.

Through a partnership with Clemson University, Clemson Elementary students benefit from extracurricular activities unique to our school. Future Engineers, which introduces students to the engineering career field, and America Reads, which pairs Clemson University students with a child who needs extra assistance in reading, are examples of how the school and the university work together to benefit the community. Clemson Elementary also partners with our local high school to place student interns enrolled in Civic Responsibility and Teacher Cadet courses. These high school juniors and seniors serve in classrooms, on the playground, and in the media center to promote positive relationships and provide support to teachers and students.

Clemson Elementary celebrates its large population of international students. Through the years, the school has hosted students from 71 different countries. Proudly displayed in the school's cafeteria are the flags of each of these nations. Held annually, the school's International Festival showcases the cultures that are represented in our school community. Art, food, music, dance, and a native dress parade from our students' home countries are shared with the community at the festival. This is the most highly anticipated and best attended event that our school hosts each year.

Clemson Elementary strives to promote growth of the whole child and positively impact all areas of a student's educational journey. Character education is part of that journey. A monthly program was developed to identify and recognize our students demonstrating character traits associated with the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Building Tomorrow's Graduates Today recognizes students displaying world class skills and positive life and career characteristics. Students are recognized for being innovators, team players, creative thinkers, collaborators, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. They are also recognized for showing integrity, perseverance, and strong work ethic. Appreciating the contributions these students make to the school community has helped to elevate the importance of character education.

Our school has experienced much success throughout its history. We have been awarded the School Incentive Award (1986-1999), Palmetto Gold Award (2001-2015 & 2018), Palmetto Silver Award (2019), Red Carpet School Award (2002-2003), and Safe Kids Safe School Award (2011-2016). The school's commitment to excellence played an important role in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 since March of 2020.

Continued focus on world class learning prompted students returning to our building to begin the process of recovering unfinished learning. Operating under COVID-19 safety procedures and protocols, teachers have

embraced innovation. They continually seek new opportunities for students to safely collaborate on real-world problem solving experiences that have become part of the school culture. Technology, personalized learning, and very creative teaching methods have resulted in strong gains in student achievement from fall to spring in spite of the limitations placed on us by health and safety protocols.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Clemson Elementary strives to create an environment that will help all students become 21st Century learners by embracing the desired outcomes of the Profile of a South Carolina Graduate. We believe our students are learners who value a stimulating environment and are particularly engaged when technology serves as a tool to support the learning process. As such, devices are frequently used for instruction in and out of the classroom and have been instrumental to our success in engaging students after our school closure in March.

Technology is used to apply a more streamlined approach to daily instruction, to access instruction from home on remote learning days, and to accommodate students who are quarantined, so they may continue to participate in real-time class lessons.

Clemson Elementary uses a variety of instructional practices to engage and meet the diverse needs of all learners. Instruction is designed and then differentiated based on review of multiple data points from a variety of formative and summative assessments such as teacher-made quizzes and tests, benchmarking, fluency passages, Mastery Connect, DreamBox, FlipGrids, Padlet, Kahoot, Quizez, Quizlet, Raz Kids, the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth, Fountas and Pinnell, MAP Fluency, SC Ready, CogAT and Iowa assessments to name a few. Whenever possible, teachers personalize learning to make it relevant and appealing to the students they teach.

In all content areas, our teachers build lessons based on South Carolina College- and Career-Ready (SCCCR) Standards. In addition, we use district learning progressions to plan for instruction, assessment, and reporting.

Clemson Elementary embraces a balanced literacy program built on the fundamentals of reading, writing, and communication and intended to develop students' abilities to think within, about, and beyond the text. Our literacy approach allows flexibility for teachers to adapt their teaching methods to meet students' needs with all having the goal of helping students develop a love of reading.

Whole group, guided reading and writing groups, and reading conferences are common methods used to provide reading instruction. Using resources from Fountas and Pinnell, Literacy By Design, Rooted in Reading, Fluency Passages, and strategies from Jennifer Seravallo allows us to differentiate instruction. In all classrooms students routinely practice reading to themselves, reading aloud, and listening to others read. Early on they are exposed to a variety of genres of literature and taught to carefully analyze text in order to support claims in their writing with evidence. Programs like Book Buddies where kindergarteners read with older students, America Reads, tutoring for at-risk students, and BARK, a volunteer canine assisted literacy program for students struggling with reading confidence, help ensure all students are developing literacy skills in a rigorous learning environment.

Assessment is a key component of meeting students' needs in all subjects. In English language arts, the Fountas & Pinnell Reading Benchmark Assessment System is administered to students in the fall and spring to determine their independent reading level, as well as their use of strategies in reading. Students also complete the NWEA MAP assessment 2-3 times each school year to measure growth and achievement in reading and to plan for appropriate instruction. Early childhood students complete the NWEA MAP Fluency test to assess their reading accuracy, reading rate, comprehension, and phonemic awareness. Informally, we administer anecdotal running records along with other formative assessments throughout the year to assess students' progress and guide instruction in all subject areas.

Math instruction focuses on students' conceptual understanding and whenever possible, is linked to real-world application. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Into Math curriculum and many supplementary resources support this at Clemson Elementary. In the classroom, teachers use spiral math practice and provide manipulatives for students to use to deepen their understanding of concepts. Programs like Dreambox and Freckle Math allow us to incorporate technology which along with guided small groups and class/homework

assignments allow us to differentiate instruction. Teachers use unit pre-assessments and results from MAP Growth as well to plan instruction and to create student groupings for intervention and acceleration. In the upper grades, students demonstrating high achievement on standardized math tests participate in accelerated math class. For underachieving students, extra support outside of school, like Step and Stomp, has also been offered. Step and Stomp was created to build girls' confidence and understanding of vital math strategies while also learning dance step routines that could be performed during schoolwide gatherings.

Clemson Elementary's science instruction extends to include National Science standards. To support this instruction, we use the Discovery Education Techbook for SC, an inquiry-based format that builds important skills aligned with the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.

In many classrooms, STEM instruction and project-based learning are combined to peak students' interest in real-world problems linked to grade-level standards. We incorporate and use Project Lead the Way, STEM bins, and monthly STEM challenges to engage learners. Other opportunities in science have included Future Engineers club and LEGO Robotics team. We utilize an integrated curriculum approach that meets the needs of our students, with reading and writing incorporating science and social studies curriculum whenever possible. This year's science fair included virtual judging due to restrictions related to COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Student participation and the quality of the projects presented was on par with previous years, a testament to the excitement for science that we have been able to foster.

In social studies, teacher created units derived from the South Carolina Social Studies Support Documents are used in conjunction with the McGraw Hill curriculum to teach the South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards. The McGraw Hill curriculum provides learning experiences that use an inquiry-based approach to instruction and assessment. All units are centered on an essential question and require students to reflect on South Carolinians' role in that period of history. Each unit includes ongoing assessment to measure student mastery of the standards. Students also take part in interdisciplinary projects that reinforce the standards such as the African American Wax Museum, Immigration Day, Native American Day, Famous American Day, and Buck-A-Book. These projects provide integrated instructional opportunities in English language arts such as reading informational texts, developing academic vocabulary, creating graphic organizers, and writing.

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

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

Clemson Elementary serves our youngest learners through an engaging 4K program. We offer half-day classes with options for students to attend in the morning or afternoon. With the goal of early intervention, our program is designed to meet the needs of children who are considered at-risk based on established criteria. The Dial4 screener is used to identify the students accepted into the program. Our curriculum focuses on developing the whole child through academic and social-emotional opportunities. The academic instruction focuses on foundational skills in reading, writing, and math. Cognitive development, approaches to play, motor development, and self-care and safety are also core areas of the curriculum.

Our program has been adapted this year to meet the challenges of COVID-19 while still engaging our children in strong instruction. The students participated in centers to develop communication skills and foster their creativity, imagination, and inventiveness as the teacher has rotated to them. Using the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assessment tool allowed our teacher and assistant to plan and provide whole group, small group, and individualized instruction in the areas of name writing, letter recognition of uppercase and lowercase, phonological awareness, beginning sound awareness, print and word awareness, rhyming words, and nursery rhyme awareness.

The district's mission to provide quality educational experiences that prepare all students to be successful beyond the classroom begins with our pre-K programs. The curriculum in 4K is aligned to increase kindergarten readiness and our students are provided opportunities to learn through exploration and

discovery with the use of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool. Our goal is for our early learners to begin kindergarten with the foundational skills needed to be successful in reading, writing, math, and communication. Kindergarten standards and expectations are rigorous and the instruction provided in 4K helps build stamina for the kindergarten year. Our 4K students' immersion in a literacy-rich environment with a heavy emphasis on collaboration, teamwork, and problem solving builds a solid foundation for the academic expectations of elementary school.

2. **Other Curriculum Areas**:

Clemson Elementary students continue to have daily opportunities to participate in related arts classes designed to extend students opportunities to develop world class knowledge and skills as well as life and career characteristics. To minimize opportunities for exposure and maintain cohort groups, related arts teachers have traveled to the students to provide lessons in homeroom or outdoor settings this year. On inclement weather days, PE classes have been held in the gym with students maintaining appropriate social distancing and wearing masks when required. To minimize teachers' exposure to large numbers of students, the school has operated on a rotation schedule that allows students to participate in PE and one other related arts class during a 2-week period.

During art and music instruction, students enjoy experiences that inspire and cultivate the artistic process. Each year students build on their previous experiences as they progress through a continuum of learning from kindergarten through fifth grade that draws upon students' abilities to think creatively and critically, communicate, and problem solve. Lessons address the South Carolina Academic Standards for the Visual and Performing Arts and are centered around creating, responding, performing, and connecting.

PE not only offers students a chance to learn and practice elements of a healthy, physically active lifestyle but also fosters personal and social growth through activities that require students to communicate effectively and interact appropriately with others. In addition to the standards outlined in South Carolina's Academic Standards for Physical Education, PE teachers work with our school counselor to provide instruction in RAD Kids, a nationally renowned child empowerment program. During PE, fourth and fifth grade students also participate in archery and bike safety in which a number of students have actually learned to ride a bike for the first time.

The American Association of School Librarians Standards Framework for Learners guides Media lessons for our kindergarten, first, and second grade students. With lessons now occurring in the classroom, this year's orientation included how to use online resources to select and request books for checkout. Once requested, books are delivered to the students' classrooms. During lessons, the media specialist presents to these young learners materials and services they can also access from home such as e-books, online books, and video resources.

Technology introduces kindergarten, first, and second grade students to South Carolina Computer Science and Digital Literacy Standards. Lessons address digital literacy, computing systems, networks and the internet, data and analysis, and impact of computing. Students learn about internet safety, use of educational websites and applications, and coding with OZOBOT and Hour of Code. They experience virtual reality with Merge Cube, practice word processing in Google and Microsoft Word, and learn to create digital presentations with Google Slides and Microsoft PowerPoint.

World Language provides students with an introduction to cultures of non-English speaking countries of the world and teaches conversational phrases in languages other than English. Clemson Elementary has one of the highest populations of international students in our area and World Language offers third, fourth, and fifth grade students an opportunity to learn more about the cultures of their classmates. Many students are excited to share their own experiences and their knowledge of other languages while others realize how diverse our learning community really is. The open discussion and sharing have helped to broaden the experiences and understanding of all involved.

3. **Academic Supports**:

Clemson Elementary classrooms rely strongly on differentiation to maximize student academic growth. Through regular use of formative assessment, teachers monitor student progress to identify students not meeting expected growth as well as identifying each student's general performance level. The data collected from these formative assessments can then be used to inform small group and individual instruction targeted to specific student needs.

When data reflects that students are not making expected gains in the classroom, teachers refer students to a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) meeting. MTSS is a continuous-improvement framework that supports all students academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. Teams comprised of administrators, teachers, guidance counselor, school psychologist, and reading coach meet monthly to discuss student achievement, behavior, and social-emotional concerns. These team meetings provide opportunities for collaboration about best practices to reach individual students. When strong core instruction and general classroom supports are not enough to meet student needs, next level interventions are implemented.

While Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is often used with small groups in the classroom to supplement core reading instruction, students requiring more frequent or more intensive intervention to address reading concerns may be pulled out for Reading Recovery or small-group LLI lessons with the school's reading interventionist. Students showing low performance in math may be assigned to work with a tutor to address specific needs identified by the team. In all cases, progress monitoring continues so that data can inform decisions regarding instructional adjustments or next level interventions.

Clemson Elementary offers a variety of special education settings to meet the needs of identified students. Specialized instruction may be provided through inclusion, as part of a pullout resource program, or in fully self-contained settings. Regardless of the setting, students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) accommodations and modifications are implemented with fidelity and clear communication regarding students' progress is expected from all involved in supporting the students. Students participate with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.

Students performing above grade level are all encouraged to go deeper in their content studies. In their classrooms, teachers rely on differentiation to accommodate and challenge these students. Advanced math students identified in fourth and fifth grade participate in Accelerated Math.

Students identified as gifted and talented participate in Quest, a pullout program that accommodates the unique needs of gifted learners, allowing them to demonstrate the depth and complexity of their knowledge and skills. These third through fifth grade students who demonstrate advanced skills and aptitude receive from 125 to 200 minutes of enrichment per week. Clemson Elementary currently serves close to 50% of its eligible student body in the Quest program.

Our community's extensive international population is reflected in the number of English language learners (ELLs) we serve. Our teachers collaborate to develop Accommodation Plans that identify strategies and accommodations to be used to provide support to individual ELLs in all settings. Supplemental instruction by a specially trained teacher is provided through a pullout, classroom model and includes regular consultation with all other teachers working with the student. Tutoring and translation services are also offered.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. **Engaging Students:**

As a school, we are responsible for teaching the whole-child and that requires that we address students' social-emotional needs in addition to their academic needs. Partnerships with families and within our community have been essential to student growth and success as they have helped us establish meaningful relationships with students and their families. These relationships have resulted in our knowledge of student needs on all levels and have enabled us to then provide whatever support was needed to keep our students engaged in the learning process.

In our classrooms, teachers conduct morning meetings to foster respectful learning environments where students' feelings of connectedness, confidence, and empathy for others can grow. This affords students a safe place to share ideas, concerns, and needs. Students are taught to be leaders of their own learning. Working with their teachers, students reflect on their classroom behavior and academic performance to set attainable growth goals for themselves. While adapted to the situation, these meetings were able to continue during closure. That allowed established relationships to continue growing, providing another layer of support for students during a period when many felt so isolated. It was a practice that benefitted all and it played a critical role in our being able to engage our students.

Extracurricular programs provide opportunities for leadership development in students' areas of interest. Students may choose to participate in activities like Chorus, Chicks with Kicks, Jump Rope team, WCES News Show, Chess Club, or Garden Club. Additionally, students interested in community service opportunities may choose to participate in our CLIMB Team-Clemson Leaders, Improve Their Goal, Model, and Become Respectful, Responsible Citizens. This team is sponsored by the school counselor and offers a great way for students to build confidence while experiencing the value in helping others in our school and community. These opportunities help to foster students' feelings of success and belonging, both critical to student engagement.

In the classroom, Clemson Elementary teachers strive to create and implement engaging lessons that appeal to students' need for activity and creativity. They incorporate student interest and allow students choice whenever possible. In our classrooms, student input is highly valued and planned differentiation allows students to be challenged but not overwhelmed by the tasks they face.

2. **Engaging Families and Community**:

Clemson Elementary is truly a community school with strong ties to the stakeholders in our surrounding area. Our school benefits from having parents and guardians who prioritize and value the education of their children. We appreciate their open communication and commitment to partnering with us so that students achieve excellence.

During our Meet the Teacher event, teachers begin to build a personal rapport with each student's family before school even begins. Teachers keep families engaged and informed by communicating with them often through weekly newsletters, Schoology updates, text messages, phone calls and emails. Our teachers always make every effort to connect using methods that are most effective for each individual family. Families have a deep sense of trust in their child's teacher and are willing to share problems and concerns when they arise. We have cultivated a strong, cohesive bond with our families that is reflected in our conference attendance rates each year.

The active engagement of parents continues with dedicated participation in our Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and our School Improvement Council (SIC). These organizations provide great opportunities for parents and community members to strengthen our school programs, initiatives, and student success.

Prior to COVID-19, we enjoyed a variety of annual events aimed at bringing family and community members into our school. Some examples include our Open House Night, Fall Festival, a monthly breakfast

with family members to recognize the Tomorrow's Graduate recipient from each class, our Winter Concert featuring vocal and instrumental performers, Family Literacy Night, Family Math Night, Book Fair Family and Friends Events, our International Festival and Art Show, and Artist in Residence programs. In addition to these annual events, volunteers provided countless hours of classroom support over the course of the year.

Within the school community, local restaurants and businesses work with our PTA to host school events that raise funds to support instructional initiatives like in-house filed trips, teacher grants and student clubs. Community members also make generous donations each year to facilitate a smooth start of school for all students regardless of their income or family status. Backpacks stocked with the necessary supplies have been readily available and field trip scholarships have been possible for students in need thanks to these groups and individuals.

3.   Creating Professional Culture:

School closures in March of 2020 sent shock waves across our community. With a short time to prepare, teachers launched into hyper drive to plan, create lessons, and gather any and all materials that may be needed before students would hopefully return to our building. Their worry for students was evident. Health and safety were the immediate concerns and teachers began to quickly assemble to do lists and reminders. As time began to pass and new norms were established, teachers realized students were not the only ones susceptible to learning gaps. New applications promised to help them maintain the relationships that had been a school year in the making but most teachers had very little experience in this new realm of instruction.

In a short time the technology stars came to the rescue. School leadership encouraged these individuals to share what they had learned and what they had been able to implement with virtual learning with others who had expressed frustration and concern. Teachers faced so many challenges, but they did not give up and with the help of their colleagues, they demonstrated for their students how perseverance can pay off.

The district recognized the critical need for training and created a variety of options that would allow teachers to expand their technology skills. With the tech training in place, teachers began to consider the new learning environment and how it compared to face-to-face instruction. Their initial concerns centered around engagement. Again, their colleagues offered solutions. These are prime examples of the professional culture that exists at Clemson Elementary. Teachers take responsibility for the students they teach but they also support their colleagues so that all students may experience success.

The collection of professional development now available to teachers at the click of a button continues to grow. This is a reflection of how our system has adapted to meet the needs of those it serves. Within our building, meeting the needs of students is often accomplished as a result of open lines of communication and a level of trust that allows faculty and staff to seek and accept support from within our own school community. We are committed to professional growth and development that benefits our learning community.

4.   School Leadership:

The principal's shared leadership philosophy draws on the strengths and talents of teachers, recognizing that each brings ideas, strategies, experience, and skills that add to the school's ability to create an environment for sustained improvement. The principal does not work in isolation. Assistant principals, guidance counselor, instructional coach, grade chairs, parents, community members, and district personnel work in partnership with the principal to focus on the school environment and educator effectiveness.

The principal collaborates with teachers to support learning experiences for all students. When teachers requested training in project-based learning (PBL), the teacher-led initiative was funded and the principal and assistant principal enrolled in the graduate courses with the group seeking endorsement. Funding in the following years supported additional PBL cohorts so these unique, student-driven learning experiences could be schoolwide.

To grow as leaders and educators, the principal and assistant principals are participants in the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching Principal Leadership Series. This series of professional development focuses on shared leadership, building capacity of school members, coaching, creating a culture of reflective practice, and continuous improvement. To support student growth, the principal has held regular instructional team meetings, participated in MTSS, and established committee teams to address school initiatives, content specific instruction, and schoolwide celebrations.

Clemson Elementary provides a welcoming, safe, and nurturing culture; it provides a supportive environment in which students excel. School leadership recognizes that student achievement can only be accelerated when basic needs are met. In addition to monitoring student progress during school closures in 2020, administrators served on teams to prepare and deliver breakfast and lunch to students. This exemplified their commitment to meeting students' physiological, safety, and social needs.

Keeping students and staff safe upon return to campus required physical changes. Campus space was repurposed for instruction, outdoor learning areas became more widely utilized, extra furniture was removed from classrooms and group work tables became individual work stations. Signs and other visual reminders are displayed around campus to draw attention to social distancing and mask requirements. Our master schedule was adjusted to reduce potential exposure during lunch, related arts, and transition times. Arrival and dismissal procedures were adjusted to minimize large groups of students congregating in any one area. Seating charts are required in all settings including bus routes to and from school each day. Administrators now contact trace and make notifications when quarantine or isolation is required.

What has remained constant is our commitment to students. They continue to be our first priority. Our in person and virtual interactions with students must always convey how much we care.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

A distinct international presence in our classrooms and signs of shifting school demographics have made culturally responsive teaching and learning a priority at Clemson Elementary. We recognized that without a focused effort, success for all students would not be possible. An initial step towards this endeavor was building library and classroom book collections that ensured equal access to relevant and engaging content. Our media specialist and teachers have sought out books reflecting our student population to supplement collections and provide opportunities for all students to relate to literature through common experiences and personal interests. Seeing themselves in the curriculum that is used in classroom instruction engages learners and provides new perspectives to students.

Knowing our community and students, consciously reflecting on the materials and practices we employ, and actively engaging in questioning within our professional community to identify potential bias are steps required to keep us moving forward on our journey towards equity. Recognizing our limited diversity as a staff has led us to partner with outside organizations like the YMCA to provide mentors for students to build confidence and a sense of belonging.

In addition to these steps, we must continue embedding culturally sustaining practices in our daily routines. Providing student choice, making use of community resources for information and cultural enrichment, and holding all students to high expectations are only a few of those practices that can continue to positively impact our students.

Creating a school environment where all feel welcomed and valued is a continuous work in progress. To make this a reality in our building we have acted purposefully. We have made efforts to include our self-contained students and their families in schoolwide activities. These students have joined grade-level performances, signing alongside their peers as they performed. Morning coffees for the parents of our ELLs have been hosted to answer questions about our school and

provide information about community services available to them. We have included a wide variety of individuals from differing backgrounds to present career information to students in hopes that all students will explore their personal interests regardless of perceived limitations. Parents and prominent community members have been invited into our classrooms to share their personal immigration stories and we have even worked with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to host a ceremony for 26 individuals taking their Oath of Allegiance, signifying the culmination of their naturalization process.

We are committed to maximizing local resources to benefit the diverse needs of our school community. Our students, their families, and our staff deserve the best and through culturally responsive practices we can continue to provide opportunities and experiences that result in success for all students.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Strong collaboration around a collective vision is necessary for any successful initiative. This was confirmed many times since the pandemic disrupted our world. Thankfully, Clemson Elementary is part of a network of schools where a systemic vision for instructional technology enabled us to continue to educate and connect with our students during an unprecedented time of school building closures.

Though we were not yet 1:1 at the time of closure in 2020, second through fifth grade and self-contained special education students all had access to district provided devices for home use. In addition to devices, Wi-Fi hot spots were also available to families in need and our guest network was opened to the public so families could access filtered broadband from our school parking lot. Through a single sign-on (SSO) solution, one login gave students access to their digital textbooks and web resources through district devices as well as personal devices used by many younger students. Cisco Webex allowed instruction and vital, personal connections to continue via video conferencing with students and families. The last months of the school year set the course for the year to come. In August of 2020, Clemson Elementary students returned to our building, all having some type of technology device and teachers equipped to meet the needs of all learners regardless of the setting.

Professional learning, where teachers received training on-demand from a variety of system support structures including face-to-face classes, online synchronous workshops, and self-paced learning modules have helped teachers develop the skills needed to instruct and connect in an online classroom. In addition, the technology and the training to use it effectively have helped to foster teacher creativity and confidence. Teachers maximize the benefits of technology during times of virtual learning as well as use it when on campus as a way of personalizing learning and minimizing potential exclusions as a result of COVID-19 exposure.

While the primary focus during our initial closure was the social-emotional well-being of our students, our focus has grown now to include delivery of instruction that engages and challenges students to excel in this new learning environment. Having the technology and infrastructure to support it in place and building the human capacity to use technology effectively for both learning and developing and maintaining connections with students has been paramount in achieving successful outcomes for students.