

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Meadows Of Dan Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3003 Jeb Stuart Highway  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Meadows Of Dan State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 24120-4197

County Patrick County

Telephone (276) 952-2424 Fax (276) 952-1160

Web site/URL https://mde.patrick.k12.va.us E-mail amy.nester@patrick.k12.va.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\* Mr. Dean Gilbert E-mail dean.gilbert@patrick.k12.va.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Patrick County Public School District Tel. (276) 694-3163

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 0 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	7	9	16
K	9	11	20
1	8	4	12
2	6	5	11
3	6	7	13
4	10	6	16
5	6	7	13
6	5	6	11
7	8	8	16
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	65	63	128

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 5.4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 92.1 % White
  - 1.5 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 1%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	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	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	135
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
2 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 54 %

Total number students who qualify: 69

8. Students receiving special education services: 27 %  
34 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |                                                |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <u>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	9
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 14:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
 Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Meadows of Dan Elementary School believes in meeting the individual needs of students to ensure their success as productive citizens of our ever-changing world. We do this by building positive relationships, creating a culture of high expectations, providing innovative learning opportunities, working together with families and the community, and looking toward continuous improvement and best practices.

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.

In August of 2020, Meadows of Dan Elementary and all Patrick County Public Schools began operating with all virtual learning. On September 14, 2020, our school began a hybrid model with some students remaining all virtual learners. This model has continued throughout the year with the exception of a two-week virtual period in January 2021 due to an increase in quarantined staff members. Students in at-risk categories, such as students with disabilities, English language learners, students receiving Section 504 services, and our preschool through second-grade learners, have gradually been invited back to attend in-person learning four days per week. On March 15, 2021, we switched to all students attending four days per week except for the few who have opted to continue as virtual learners. Students attend in person on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Students have virtual learning on Wednesdays and have had virtual learning on most inclement weather days.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Students attending Meadows of Dan Elementary live in a rural area that values community and small-town uniqueness. The community is surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the Blue Ridge Parkway runs through the area. Tourism, events, and historical landmarks, such as music festivals and Mabry Mill, draw in people from all over Virginia and other states. Jobs in the area consist of manufacturing, construction, transportation work, health care, public schools, and small family-owned businesses.

Meadows of Dan Elementary is a centerpiece in the community. Families often rely on the school to meet the needs of the “whole child” including meals, clothing, supplies, and instruction. Families are settled in the area so students rarely move in and out. Once a student begins in preschool or kindergarten, they have the same classmates through seventh grade before beginning high school. Most school staff and leaders are members of the community and know the families well. Families exhibit a sense of pride in what they can do and who they are, often discussing or showing their self-sufficiency skills such as hunting, fishing, and farm work. The students and their parents value hard work and respect for others.

Meadows of Dan Elementary prides itself on its family atmosphere. We are a true team, and teachers instill collaboration in students. Students love coming to school, and the enthusiasm of the students and staff can be seen daily. Older students are often mentors to younger students. Meadows of Dan Elementary offers students in grades PreK-7 a small group approach to learning in all subject areas with a focus on reading and math. We follow the Virginia Standards of Learning and supplement those with our involvement in the regional Comprehensive Instructional Program (CIP). This partnership has allowed us to grow in areas of improvement as well as share successes.

Teachers and staff believe in educating and meeting the needs of all students. Before they can grow academically, we strive to meet their physical and emotional needs. Our school has offered therapeutic day treatment services for several years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. We now offer counseling through a local agency, with an in-house guidance counselor, and a mental health worker. The community helps to provide backpack food bags weekly, holiday gifts and meals, clothing, shoes, and school supplies. We offer a summer feeding program, and in the winter of 2019 offered a winter clothing closet on Saturdays. Teachers seek opportunities to learn more about reaching students of trauma and supporting students’ mental health and social-emotional needs. Meadows of Dan Elementary was the first school in Patrick County to do away with demerits and adopt a positive behavior intervention support program. Students earn cardinal cash to buy rewards that include fun activities and recognition, not just material items. Our school uses flexible seating to allow students movement or the ability to work in a way that they feel comfortable. Flexible seating options include the use of softer seating, stand-up desks, wobble stools, and any other creative ways used to enhance student focus. Although our school does not have a physical education teacher, the classroom teachers, along with administrators and volunteers, provide daily physical activity. Equipment has been purchased and donated so that students have access to a variety of resources to use for exercise. Prior to COVID-19, we offered a morning movement time that paired with our grab and go breakfast. Students were able to eat and then play basketball, jump rope, walk, run, and play in the gym area. Brain and movement breaks are included multiple times a day in the classroom as well.

Meadows of Dan Elementary offers an after-school enrichment program where students have the opportunity to hear guest speakers, participate in projects, view virtual tours, and create art. This program is unique to our school, and many community partners support this effort. Our 4-H board and Junior Achievement volunteers provide additional enrichment opportunities during the school day. Meadows of Dan and the surrounding area have a wealth of cultural history, from fiddle and banjo music to making apple butter, which is incorporated into these programs. Our enrichment programs are instrumental in providing students with authentic and immersive learning opportunities.

In March of 2020, the closure of school in person for the remainder of the school year was unexpected for our community. For our close-knit, family-oriented school, one could see the heartbreak on faces during that dreaded Zoom call. For the 2020-2021 school year, we have provided instruction both virtually and in person. Teachers had to quickly learn to provide simultaneous instruction to both students in the classroom

and students at home. We have remained on a hybrid learning schedule most of the year. Thankfully we already had one-to-one technology so each student has a device. Lack of strong internet in our area was a need that came to light. Over a short amount of time, hotspots were provided to families that needed one. We celebrated each little victory along the way. Family outreach took precedence during this time. Student and parent contacts, meal pick up and deliveries, paper packet pick up, technology training and problem-solving, and appointments for assessments and remediation filled our schedules. At one point, our special education teacher and assistants were meeting students at the local park shelter for instruction. The changes quickly displayed that we were willing to think outside the box to serve our students.

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

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

Meadows of Dan Elementary follows the Virginia Standards of Learning in all grade levels as well as the enhanced scope and sequence lesson plans that are provided at the state level. We are a part of the Comprehensive Instructional Program (CIP) that provides pacing guides in math, science, social studies and English. The CIP also uses teacher teams that collaborate to provide quarterly benchmarks, updates to pacing or assessments, as well as data on how each district is performing and ideas for improvement. We believe in the power of small group or individual instruction. This is the approach in all content areas but is a definite focus in reading, writing, and math. After a short focus lesson, students will break into small groups or rotations, and will come back together in between each group for reflection and discussion before moving on to the next group. Students spend most of their instructional time in a small group of no more than three to six students where they receive modeling and practice of individualized skills. Our interventionists, such as Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), Title I, and Special Education teachers, are part of the small group instruction daily. Classroom teachers provide remediation and interventions daily.

Our school has focused on improving our beginning reading instruction from grades PreK-3 and beyond for students that need intervention. We have implemented multi-sensory and science-based reading instruction for the past five years. We have seen successful growth in our beginning readers. Students in small reading groups will be seen participating in phonemic awareness verbal activities prior to working with printed phonics activities. Teachers use a gradual release approach of I do, We do, then You do to effectively model and practice the skills being taught. Our teachers have various levels of training in teaching reading. Some teachers are trained in Wilson and Orton Gillingham. We have a current pilot group completing a year-long training in the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) philosophy which matches the beliefs of the science of reading. We use the approaches for emergent readers, beginning readers, and transitional readers. Using PALS, we assess readers PreK-3 in the fall, at mid-year, and in the spring. We also use the developmental spelling inventory, Test of Phonemic Awareness (TOPA), and the Phonemic Awareness Screening Test (PAST). Our school is fortunate to have an abundant leveled library of books, short read cards, magazines, decodable books, and other text resources. We also have a book mobile that comes to the school and the community from the local Patrick County Library. Often community members, parents, and students check out books from the book mobile. The area of teaching writing has also been a focus area of improvement for several years. We are now using the Units of Study writing approach by Lucy Calkins in each grade K-7. Our students submit writing samples throughout the year that are graded using a state rubric. These samples are then passed to the next grade level with the student.

In math, we follow many of the same approaches as in reading. We believe in using small group instruction or interactive rotations during math. Teachers use the gradual release model in all lessons. Students often participate in projects, group problem solving, practice on whiteboards, and technology-based programs, as well as task card activities around the classroom. Our school has a math manipulative library where teachers can check out different hands-on tools to support their instruction. We have an algebra readiness teaching assistant who provides support in our sixth and seventh grade math classes. Assessments in math include pretesting, benchmark testing, quizzes, quick checks, exit tickets, and other formative assessments. Students who are having misunderstandings are remediated either on the spot, at the end of the class, daily, or during weekly tutoring. We believe in quick and effective feedback so that students achieve mastery of math skills. Professional development in math and number sense has been offered and expanded upon to promote student success.

Meadows of Dan Elementary follows the Virginia Standards of Learning and Comprehensive Instructional Program for our instruction in science and social studies. Students begin in kindergarten exploring topics that they will build on as they move through elementary school. Project and problem-based learning is a focus in science and social studies. Students in third grade complete project-based assessments instead of taking a standardized test each year. Online learning tools and virtual tours have supported the science instruction this year as well as connected it to other content areas. In grades 4-7 students participate in benchmark testing for science at least two times per year. A state test is given in fifth grade and counts

toward the school accreditation. A state test for Virginia history is given in fourth grade and a Civics and Economic Standards of Learning test is given in seventh grade. Benchmarks are also used to monitor student growth in these areas. To bring the social studies curriculum to life, literature is used in reading that relates to the Standards, especially in the area of Virginia Studies. Students also take overnight field trips in sixth and seventh grade to Jamestown, VA, Williamsburg, VA, and Washington D.C. These trips bring the topics to life for the students.

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

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

Meadows of Dan Elementary does offer a preschool program for four year old students under the Virginia Preschool Initiative Program (VPI). The main curriculum used is the building blocks of learning that come from the state of Virginia. Our school also uses Frog Street Curriculum. These curricula together provide instruction in reading, writing, math, physical development, motor development, personal, and social development. Our current preschool class enrolls sixteen students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, twelve students attend in person and four are virtual students. The preschool teacher holds daily zoom classes and uses Class Dojo to reach out to parents. She meets with students by appointment for screenings and testing. PALS testing is required in the state of Virginia. She and the teaching assistant also provide paper packet work weekly that included letter writing sheets, alphabet books, and other practice materials. Our preschool is evaluated by a tool called the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS uses student and staff interactions to measure the effectiveness of the preschool-age classroom. All elementary administrators are certified to complete CLASS observations. These are completed a minimum of once per year. Our students that attend preschool at Meadows of Dan Elementary are well prepared to enter kindergarten. They work on letter recognition and letter sounds along with other emergent reading skills. This puts them a step ahead of students who may not have had a preschool experience which is very common in our area.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

At Meadows of Dan Elementary we have several fine arts and specialist teachers who we share with other schools during the week. We have an art teacher for one day per week, a primary music teacher for one week every five weeks (this is a slight reduction of time during our hybrid instructional model), an upper elementary choir and band teacher two half days per week, a librarian one day per week, and a guidance counselor one to two days per week. These teachers work closely with grade-level teachers to support their instruction. They provide activities and lessons based on their own standards that also enhance what is being taught in the classroom. Each year we have at least one art show, several music performances, an online or in-person book fair, and other events that these teachers plan and are involved in. During Youth Art Month each year, many students participate in various events supported by our art teacher. Specialist teachers have created online learning platforms to offer students virtual lessons and activities as well. Our primary music is currently offered every fifth week. Before the pandemic, primary music was offered one day a week. Our primary music teacher was able to purchase a set of ukuleles for our school. Students have been able to learn to play during music class and at other times during the week. Due to the lack of time with fine arts, these teachers reach out to individual students and small groups of students to ensure that those who want to have more time or instruction in these areas receive that during their virtual learning days. These teachers are an important part of our community and family involvement. Our art teacher has established a yearly event called Empty Bowls. Students make clay bowls to donate to the local food bank. Students are also involved in making cards for local nursing homes, the Veteran's Hospital, and local Veterans. A local church also provided paint sets so that each student could have their own during the pandemic. Our librarian has also purchased and used materials to provide Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) lessons during her instructional time.

**3. Academic Supports:**

Meadows of Dan Elementary School faculty and staff believe that every child deserves ways to meet their individual learning needs. We believe in educating the “whole child”. To meet diverse learning needs there are several practices in place. The first would be that all instruction is provided either in small differentiated groups, short mini-lessons with visuals, or individual work with a teacher. These small groups for learning are fluid; they do not stay the same all year. Teachers meet often, sometimes weekly, to adjust. Our leadership team and each grade level teacher collaborate to look at student growth, progress, and data to ensure that we are providing the exact fit for their success in all content areas. We seek resources and professional development that meets those needs. We offer remediation daily and after-school tutoring starting early in the school year. Students are also part of a school-wide positive behavioral support program that rewards focus, determination, strong study and work habits, and respect of classmates and teachers. When fully in-person we have daily remediation time built into the master schedule titled “Power Half Hour”. Students go in groups to various areas throughout the school building to receive remediation, review, or enrichment. Our district has one instructional coach who is in our school building weekly. She works with all teachers to make sure best practices are in place. At Meadows of Dan, we often see that our students enter school with significant gaps in school readiness skills. For example, some students have not been exposed to valuable pre-school instruction. Due to the instruction that is in place and the care of the teachers, by third grade, we often see that those gaps have closed.

Our school has one special education teacher and two full-time special education assistants. We have 21 students who receive special education services through an individualized education plan. These students are included in the general education classrooms with push-in and pull-out support at various times during the day. We also have a PALS teaching assistant and a Title I teacher who provide daily student interventions in grades K-4. It is exciting to say that our district has formed a Diversity and Equity Committee which meets monthly to provide teachers with the tools they need to promote equity and ensure equality among our students and staff.

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

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

Our student engagement is top notch. Our class sizes are small, and our attendance rates are high. We also have teachers that build positive relationships with students and families prior to and definitely from the first day the students walk in for the new school year. Our instructional focus is on small flexible groups and making sure every student understands and succeeds. Our school has a wealth of resources, books, technology, and manipulatives that promote multi-sensory learning. We offer remediation, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities throughout the year so students have a choice of activities and events that interest them. Community groups and people often volunteer to provide these learning opportunities for students. We also offer many recreational sports and even a physical conditioning time for younger students where they could stay an extra hour after tutoring for exercise. To keep students focused and engaged in class, we use short mini lessons, visuals or video clips, online games, songs, movement, flexible seating, brain breaks, and flexible group rotations to ensure that students are moving and their minds are prepared for higher level thinking.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are still happy with our student engagement although it is more challenging. Being in a rural area, our district provides technology devices for every student to use at home. Hotspots are provided to all families and staff who need one. Teachers provide daily live Zoom sessions at all grade levels, and most use some type of individual time or breakout sessions to continue the small group atmosphere. We overcame the challenge of new technology quickly and remain flexible along the way. Parents are able to meet with our leadership or our technology assistant for training and help. We keep the line of communication open and update teachers, parents, and students daily and weekly...at times moment by moment. Zoom times have changed some; but once we established a routine, we have seen over 75%-95% attendance on Zoom. If students are not able to join the Zoom class, they may watch a recording, reach out for an individual make-up time, or set up an in-person appointment to catch up. Students also have options for paper packet work, books, and materials they need weekly with a set pick-up and drop-off time. Students are given extra sets of supplies to keep at home even including whiteboards, markers, erasers, and other math tools.

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

Imagine a four-year old preschooler receiving a handmade patchwork quilt from a community member to use during rest time at school. The joy on their face will purely show you what Meadows of Dan Elementary and the surrounding community is all about. It is truly like taking a step back in time when it comes to family and community engagement. Though the community is rural and small, we have more organizations that support the school than can be listed. Several small-town businesses provide meals and food boxes to families in need both during the pandemic and currently. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a clothing closet was available to students one Saturday per month. On Veteran's Day, students put on a tear-jerking ceremony held at the school for whoever wants to attend. Veterans from the area are served breakfast by the students, and patriotic songs are performed. These men and women are saluted along with our American flag. Best of all, the Veterans' names, pictures, and branch of service are shared for all students to recognize them as heroes and learn the value of being an American citizen.

Academically, our success with family and community involvement includes our Title I Family Involvement Nights, student-led parent conferences, Project-based exhibit nights, and other school events. At least twice a year we host a family involvement night for math and reading. At each of these we provide a meal, treats, door prizes, educational games, guest readers, storytelling, and ideas on how the parents can help their children at home. Last year, we had a 50s diner theme where ice cream floats were served. The year before we had a Wizard of Oz theme where students could dress up and see our motto of "There's no place like Meadows of Dan Elementary (MODE)". Student-led conferences are also a highlight at our school. With the help of teachers, students prepare a portfolio to share with parents. Students also set goals and share their strengths and areas of growth.

In the spring of 2020, we held a drive-through celebration for all students and to recognize our seventh-grade students who would be moving on to the high school. We sent letters to each student with an ice cream coupon to show that we were still here and cared about them even though it had been so long since in-person learning. We began the school year virtually from August to September 14, 2020. Students were able to come in to meet teachers and pick up materials by appointment, and we held Facebook live sessions for the families. The most powerful tool has been phone calls, home visits, virtual meetings, and talking with parents and families in-person when able. We have also highlighted positive school events online to hopefully keep spirits high during the tough virtual learning time. We handed out popsicles in August and pumpkins in October during a drive through pick up time. During the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, local churches provided holiday meal boxes including huge turkeys for eight families. Many community partners also provided gifts for children. We recently held a Zoom attendance and participation award for our students due to having a virtual two week shut down and inclement weather during the month of January and most of February.

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

Meadows of Dan Elementary and Patrick County Public Schools is forward thinking in their approach to professional development. Unique for a small division, professional development opportunities bring well known authors, speakers, and leaders in the field to work with staff. Teachers and staff participate in deciding what types of professional development are needed and the format presented, especially during COVID-19. Workshops and professional development opportunities are often led by staff and are held during all parts of the school year and summer. Leaders and teachers attend professional development and then return to the district to share with others. The leadership team at the school and district level believe in growing other leaders and collaboration among staff. Teachers are required to do yearly colleague visits to see effective instruction in action. Grade level meetings are held across the division several times a year to ensure consistency and share successes. Our instructional coach leads professional development in all content areas and works to support new teachers.

During COVID-19, teachers were given extra planning time to allow for the virtual learning piece. They were provided with training for online learning platforms and had say in which platforms they felt comfortable using. Hotspots and document cameras were provided to teachers who needed one at home. If a teacher wanted an extra monitor to use during zoom classes, they were provided. Teachers were able to communicate feedback when decisions were made to return to in person learning or to make our hybrid learning model more successful.

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

Meadows of Dan Elementary School has one principal and a leadership team which consists of lead teachers and teaching assistants. The school also has a crisis and safety team and Title I Family Involvement Team which works closely with the leadership team. There are two instructional facilitators, an instructional coach, a gifted resource teacher, and a student testing coordinator. It is the goal of the principal to serve as an instructional leader at all times while also ensuring the health and safety of all students and staff. The principal is visible during all parts of the day and believes in working with teachers to improve instruction and to provide direction as needed. The leadership team can often be seen helping to provide student supports such as health needs, positive behavioral intervention, and remediation or intervention during lessons. A school nurse and administrative assistant help keep routines running smoothly each day as well. The principal and teachers are supported fully by the central office administration. Monthly leadership team meetings are held and critical information is passed along to all staff afterward. The county and school leadership strive to highlight successes and collaboration among all staff. There is a level of comfort and trust from teacher to principal and principal to district administration. Financial resources, as well as physical resources, are spent on instruction especially in the area of literacy and writing. Teachers have up-to-date resources and technology and have been supported fully in this way during virtual and hybrid instruction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication has been open and effective between all district and school leadership. Feedback has been requested from and provided to teachers, parents, family, the community, and school leaders. The principal of Meadows of Dan leads efforts to ensure the safety and health of all students by being present in the building to model mitigation strategies, communicate

effectively with all stakeholders, and completing various jobs around the building. The principal also helps with lunch deliveries, home visits for needed materials, packet pick-up and drop-off, planning and implementing virtual learning, and any other job that is needed. During virtual learning, the building principal participated in Zoom classes attending several a day to build positive relationships with students.

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

Meadows of Dan Elementary School has taken steps to ensure culturally responsive teaching and learning with a mindset of remembering the big picture. Our teachers and students live in a rural area and often spend most of their life here. Meadows of Dan Elementary student demographics show that our student population is 92% white and 7.8 % minority. We have fifteen students who receive speech and language services. Twenty students with disabilities have individualized education plans and receive special education services. The three main categories under which these students are eligible are specific learning disability, other health impairment, and developmental delay. One student receives special education services under the category of Autism. Our community has many farms that employ migrant workers, so at times we enroll students who are from migrant working families. Our school has one English Language Learning teacher. We have a few parents who do not speak English.

Patrick County Public Schools began a Diversity and Equity Committee during the 2020-2021 school year. Many teachers from Meadows of Dan participate in this committee and attend monthly meetings and training offered throughout the year. The principal has been a leader of the committee and part of the planning team for discussion, teacher tools, and any areas of need. This committee has partnered with community groups to identify and help resolve issues of inequity or bias in our district. Our local Rotary Club is providing a \$5,000 book grant to provide teachers and students with diverse literature. Our school guidance counselor made it her year-long goal to teach Spanish to students in grades 6 and 7. There is also a group called the Patrick County Friends for Equity and Justice which partners with the committee for discussion.

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

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One practice that has been most instrumental in successfully educating and supporting students is educating the “whole child”. The leadership team and staff at Meadows of Dan Elementary and the Meadows of Dan community believe in meeting the needs of every child so that they can be successful at school. For example, this year we have had students who lost everything in a house fire. After finding out about the fire, the school principal and other staff immediately went to work, even beyond their contracted time, to provide for the family’s needs. Clothing, food, toys, and supplies were gathered and delivered the same day of the fire. Through staff donations, the family received financial support to help them get back on their feet. The student was able to attend school the very next day without having to worry about food, clothing, or supplies. This truly shows how we meet the needs of the whole child.

Before and during the pandemic, our school staff always go above and beyond to know our students and families. Our vision is that each student no matter what they are going through will be happy and motivated to come to school and put forth their best effort each day. We strive to make them feel loved, cared for, and understood. We want our students and their parents to know that we are here should they need anything at all. This belief was refined during COVID-19 when leadership and staff were delivering meals to each home, talking with parents in the school parking lot, providing Wi-Fi in the school parking lot, meeting with students at an outdoor picnic table, and taking any measure to make students feel some success. In our school and community, positive relationships are a way of life. Our students love coming to school, and the parents trust our school team to teach and care for their children.