

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 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 Mr. Patrick Reed  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 523 S. College Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Newton State AL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 36352-4017

County Dale County

Telephone (334) 299-3581 Fax (256) 447-8130

Web site/URL https://nes.dalecountyboe.org/ E-mail preed@dalecountyboe.org

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Ben Baker E-mail bbaker@dalecountyboe.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dale County School District Tel. (334) 774-2355

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. Dale Sutton  
(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 signatures 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 1 K-12 schools
- 7 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	10	8	18
K	24	20	44
1	25	23	48
2	24	22	46
3	20	14	34
4	16	21	37
5	16	13	29
6	20	19	39
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
<b>Total Students</b>	155	140	295

\*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
  - 15 % Black or African American
  - 3.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 72.5 % White
  - 8.8 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 6%

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	291
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %

3 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 66 %

Total number students who qualify: 196

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 14 %  
41 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>25</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</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: 6
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.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
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 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	96%	95%	94%
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 2021.

<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.

The mission of Newton Elementary School is to produce students who are prepared to begin the next level of learning with self-confidence and a desire to succeed. This will be achieved by providing an appropriate curriculum taught by an innovative and nurturing staff in a positive and caring environment.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://nes.dalecountyboe.org/aboutus>

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Newton Elementary School (NES) is a small, rural school in Southeast Alabama. The school was established in the 1900s and currently serves two hundred ninety-five students in grades Pre-K through 6th grades. Newton Elementary School is one of seven schools in the Dale County School District. The school is located in the Town of Newton which was founded in 1843. According to the US Census of 2010, the Town of Newton is home to about 1,500 citizens. The Town of Newton is mostly a farming community with a few businesses. At one time the school served students through 12th grade and was called Newton High School. The students who graduated from Newton High School formed an Alumni Association in 2000. The Alumni have held yearly reunions in order to maintain their connection to the school. Over the years, they have made donations to help advance our school. One of the biggest projects they helped us complete was the much-needed addition of a gym in 2016.

Even though Newton Elementary is located in a rural area of Dale County, members of the community help in supporting the continued growth and learning of our students. Our local bank has presented different programs to our students focused on the importance of savings and finances. The Town of Newton Library director has partnered with our library media specialist to make sure students are aware of the Summer Reading Program and other activities offered at the Town of Newton Library throughout the school year.

The mission statement of Newton Elementary states that we “produce students who are prepared to begin the next level of learning with self-confidence and a desire to succeed” and that we will achieve this “by providing an appropriate curriculum taught by an innovative and nurturing staff”. This statement is something we strive for every day. Our principal provides our staff with ample professional development needed to learn and implement innovative teaching strategies to ensure our students are equipped with the skills needed to succeed. By the end of the sixth grade, our students are well equipped to enter middle school and continue their successes.

One innovative program Newton Elementary has recently implemented is the Orton-Gillingham approach to phonics from the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (IMSE). This program explicitly teaches the connections between letters and sounds. It not only is beneficial for all students, but this program is also known to be highly effective for students with dyslexia. All kindergarten through third grade teachers as well as special area teachers received a week-long training in which they learned how to implement this approach in their classrooms. Our principal anticipated the need for a supplemental reading program due to the new Alabama Literacy Act passed in 2019. The Alabama Literacy Act was established with the aim of improving reading proficiency among kindergarten through third grade students with the ultimate goal being for students to be reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.

Our students have the opportunity to be involved in a number of different activities to help encourage and develop their full potential. Our 4th through 6th graders have the option of participating in the 4H program through the Dale County Extension Office. Students also have the opportunity of participating in the Student Government Association (SGA) whether as an officer or a class representative. Recently, our library media specialist has started a Book Club for 3rd-6th graders that meets once a week. After many years without a music program, our music teacher has started up a chorus and recorder group for students. In addition to these activities, students can also participate in our annual Fun Run organized by our physical education teacher. Students are encouraged to get members of the community to sponsor them in the Fun Run with money raised being donated to charities voted on by the student body.

We also have a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) system in place at our school. This system encourages students to be respectful, responsible, and resourceful. Students are awarded gotcha tickets by teachers and other members of our faculty and staff when exceptional behavior has been demonstrated. Students can then turn their gotcha tickets in for a chance to win a prize from the treasure box. This system has proved successful in helping our students show accountability for behavior while at school.

We are fortunate to have been able to maintain face to face instruction throughout this school year given the recent challenges posed by the pandemic. During the 2020-2021 school year, Newton Elementary



implemented mitigation practices to deter the spread of COVID-19 such as the use of facial masks, practicing social distancing, and enhanced cleaning practices. We began that school year with uncertainty, but we were hopeful that we would remain face to face. Indeed, we did. The number of students choosing to work remotely also decreased as the school year progressed. We started this school with optional mask wearing, and we continue to use enhanced cleaning practices.

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

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

#### **1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:**

NES is a school that believes that all students need to be active participants in learning. Our teachers engage our students and implore them to be active participants in the classroom. Students must interact with the material and experience a connection to what they are learning. We motivate our students to learn and explore in the classroom. Students are solving problems and asking questions to demonstrate their understanding. Being an active participant improves students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-awareness. Being able to be in control of some of the decision-making gives students a voice and makes them feel valued. We feel that It can result in insightful comments and interesting connections being made by students, and can foster a high level of energy and enthusiasm in the classroom learning environment. When all students are engaged in their own learning, behavior problems dissipate. Teachers can use both covert and overt active engagement strategies to create connections with their students and to help students develop an intrinsic desire to succeed. Having active participation is important across all of our subject areas. Teachers utilize multiple strategies to engage students during lessons. Active participation may not look the same for all students. We want to create an environment in which the students have the opportunity to learn and explore from a variety of viewpoints. The teacher's goal is to create conditions that enable students of various learning preferences and personalities to contribute. Teachers cultivate an environment where students feel they can be active participants and have expectations and strategies implemented to help their classrooms run smoothly. There is nothing more rewarding than a classroom full of active and responsive students. Active student participation adds quality and depth to the teaching and learning processes. Motivating and getting students to contribute to the learning process in the classroom requires careful planning and creativity which is something we pride ourselves on here at Newton Elementary.

At Newton Elementary, we strive to provide the best curriculum and instruction for our students. We have put much effort into our curriculum design in our school and district. Our teachers use The Alabama College and Career Ready Standards in all subjects which were written by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). All standards are carefully reviewed and followed by our teachers. We use formative and summative assessments to determine if students are mastering these standards in order to progress to the next grade level. The Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) is administered here at NES to second through sixth grade in the Spring. This assessment is new to Alabama and was administered beginning in 2021. We also administer a benchmark assessment three times a year to students to determine areas of need and to track progress.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The core reading curriculum resource at NES is Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA). CKLA is a comprehensive language arts program for students in preschool through sixth grade. We implement this program in kindergarten through third grade here at NES. While teaching skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking, CKLA also builds students' knowledge and vocabulary in literature, history, geography, and science. The curriculum covers concepts specified in the Core Knowledge Sequence. In fourth grade through sixth grade, we also implement Engage NY as a supplemental program. We use these curriculums to teach many skills, but also incorporate several supplemental programs as well. We use the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness program every day in our Pre-K through second-grade classrooms. We chose this program because studies have shown that phonemic awareness is a foundational skill, essential for learning to read. As students learn to identify sounds through oral and auditory activities, they become phonemically aware. Engaging in phonemic awareness instruction develops students' understanding of sounds, and that knowledge directly impacts their spelling and writing. All of our teachers from kindergarten through third grade have recently been trained in Orton Gillingham (OG). OG is a research-based, explicit, multi-sensory approach to teaching students phonics. It was the first approach to use explicit, direct, sequential, systematic, multi-sensory instruction to teach reading, which is not only effective for all students but essential for

teaching students with dyslexia. At NES, we understand how important reading is for students. It is a critical component of building lifelong learners. During the literacy block, students are engaged in whole group, small group, and reading centers. Teachers differentiate their instruction based on student needs. We also implement Lexia Core5 Learning at NES. Lexia Core5 Reading is an adaptive blended learning program that accelerates the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities, helping them make that critical shift from learning to read to reading to learn. The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) works closely with the Reading Specialist who then turns around and offers professional development and coaching cycles for teachers.

When looking at the benchmark testing results for fall, winter, and spring, we determine who needs to be in intensive and strategic intervention. We use Specialized Program Individualizing Reading Excellence (SPIRE) for our intervention in reading. SPIRE is a comprehensive, intensive, and multisensory reading intervention that integrates phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and handwriting. SPIRE is based on the well-established Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction. We have a small group pulled out of the classroom by our highly-qualified intervention teacher who then provides explicit instruction to them based on their areas of deficit. Once a student qualifies for Tier III intervention, they are pulled out of the classroom for 45 minutes a day. This time is built in so that students do not miss any core instruction in the classroom. Teachers use formative assessment in class to determine when they need to reteach and which students need it.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Kindergarten through sixth-grade students at our school use the envision curriculum. EnVision is a research-based curriculum with a comprehensive vertical alignment throughout each grade level. This curriculum uses problem-solving to develop deep conceptual understanding that leads to procedural fluency. Each lesson contains visual models and scaffolding to allow access and equity for all learners. Every lesson incorporates one or more of the eight mathematical teaching practices and is highlighted in the teacher manual to provide constant opportunities for teachers to use these on a daily basis. Each topic includes 3-Act math and Pick a Project. These are engaging rigorous tasks that promote problem-solving. An extensive digital component is provided for the enVision curriculum. This not only allows teachers to assign tasks to students and receive immediate feedback but provides an opportunity for visually appealing presentations to facilitate interest in the lesson.

Teachers support students with whole group math lessons as well as small group intervention. Instruction is differentiated for intervention based on student needs as determined by formative assessments. The enVision curriculum provides built-in support for reteaching concepts in each lesson as well as A Math Diagnosis and Intervention System resource where teachers can reteach prerequisite skills.

We also provide intensive intervention for those students who are showing severe deficits in math based on benchmark assessments. Students who show a need for this type of intervention are provided thirty minutes of small group instruction by a highly qualified teacher. Students' progress is monitored on a regular basis and is documented. SuccessMaker is one of the tools that we use to identify particular weaknesses in students who are in need of additional instruction. Once the student has been identified as needing intensive intervention, the student completes an initial placement task that pinpoints the level of mathematics in which they are currently performing. A learning path is then developed to close the gap between their current performance level and the grade they are assigned.

Beginning this year all math teachers have been trained and provided the materials to facilitate daily number talks. The purpose of this is to improve students' number sense fluency as well as mathematical discourse.

Teachers use both summative and formative assessments on a regular basis. The enVision curriculum provides end-of-topic summative assessments for all topics across all grades that teachers are expected to use. Various types of formative assessments are used at the teacher's discretion including, but not limited to, exit tickets, observation, number talks, and work samples. Benchmark assessments are given school-wide three times per school year using AimsWeb Plus.

A district math instructional specialist has been hired to support all schools in the district. She provides support for the enVision curriculum, provides professional development, as well as analyzes data with teachers to identify areas of need for improvement.

All students in our school have access to one-to-one digital devices. This allows teachers to incorporate technology into their lessons. In addition to the extensive digital resources provided with the enVision curriculum, our teachers also use math programs such as Prodigy, MobyMax, and Khan Academy.

#### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

At Newton Elementary, science is integrated into all subject areas. Our teachers are using the Listening and Learning strands from the CKLA program in grades K-2. These are knowledge-rich and integrate science into the curriculum through literature. This also includes rich vocabulary and is engaging for the students. In grades 3-6, teachers are also using Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI) kits for hands-on, engaging science lessons. Students are using critical thinking skills and are able to think and act like scientists. These are aligned with our state standards. Students learn note-taking skills, use graphs, charts, and data to better understand the content they are learning. Teachers serve as guides and facilitators for student inquiry, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Science is usually a 30-45 minute time period each day. Students are taught in a whole-group setting. Our school has taken many field trips that cover our science standards. Some field trips include visiting the annual Groundwater Festival. The mission of the festival is to educate students and their families about all aspects of groundwater and other related natural resources and to instill in them a general environmental awareness and stewardship ethic. Teachers also utilize virtual learning field trips. We use the Alabama Digital Learning platform to access different virtual field trips. Our school also has a garden and compost bin. Students are able to help with planting, tending, and harvesting the different vegetables in the garden. They also learn about composting and its importance. For assessments, teachers often use formative assessments to check for learning. Kindergarten and first grade do not take assessments in science as they are just exposing them to the content and checking for understanding. They are integrated into the reading program. In second grade, teachers are using a science notebook and are also exposed to science content through a weekly unit. Each day they have a daily check for understanding and then at the end of the unit they have an assessment. In 3-6 grades, the assessments are aligned with our state standards. Teachers do formative assessments and check for understanding daily and then summative assessments are given at the end of the unit.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

For social studies, our teachers are using the Listening and Learning strands from the CKLA program in grades K-2. These are knowledge-rich and integrate science into the curriculum through literature. This also includes rich vocabulary and is engaging for the students. Our 3-6 grade curriculum for social studies is Studies Weekly. This is a student-friendly periodical and also has an online program. These are aligned to state standards and frameworks. It is also organized through themes. Reading and writing tasks are embedded in the social studies curriculum. They are able to highlight vocabulary in their studies explore weekly newspapers, take notes, use graphic organizers, and prepare for the weekly assessment. Social studies is for 30-45 minutes daily. It is taught in a whole group setting. For assessments, teachers often use formative assessments to check for learning. Kindergarten and first grade do not take assessments in science as they are just exposing them to the content and checking for understanding. They are integrated into the reading program. For assessments, teachers often use formative assessments to check for learning. In second grade, students are given formative assessments and quick checks. Teachers will focus on a unit and then complete a summative assessment following the completion of the unit. In grades 3-6, students take an online assessment each week following their periodical in Studies Weekly. We also take field trips to engage students in learning the social studies standards. Our goal is to develop responsible citizens who understand the local and global community. Teachers implement diverse literature and use digital tools to teach students about social studies. Students in the sixth grade present a Christmas Around the World presentation to our students to educate them on the different cultures around the world.

Since NES and our district is part of a smaller, rural community, our Board and Superintendent decided that we would discontinue the use of our online platform for virtual learning beginning in August 2021. We have

continued having traditional school and have been successful in transitioning back from the previous year when many students used virtual learning in place of face-to-face instruction.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Newton Elementary School has one First Class Pre-K program. Alabama's state funded First Class Pre-K program is intended to provide high quality learning experiences that prepare four year old students for future school success. This program has been awarded the highest quality rating from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for the past fifteen years. Both the lead and auxiliary teachers receive professional development throughout the school year to ensure professional growth and a sound understanding of appropriate teaching practices. Our First Class Pre-K program provides instruction for up to eighteen four-year-old students during the school year. The daily schedule is made up of multiple whole group activities, small group instruction at least once during the day, free choice time, gross motor activities, and a nap/rest time. This daily schedule allows for flexibility based on the interests and needs of students.

Our preschoolers are taught lessons and participate in activities based on the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children and Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives and dimensions. These resemble standards in the Alabama Course of Study and cover the areas of Social Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Math, Science and Technology, Social Studies, and the Arts. In addition to Teaching Strategies GOLD serving as a basis to lesson planning, this tool is also used for assessment and includes daily observations and at least two pieces of documentation to show objectives have been met at each checkpoint throughout the year. Our lead and auxiliary teachers work together throughout the school day to exemplify cooperation and collaboration. Teachers also engage in conversation with students during learning and free choice times as well as meal and snack times to help foster appropriate conversation and model manners and appropriate social skills. This act helps prepare our Pre-K students for the next level of learning in future grade levels.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Newton Elementary School offers additional curriculum areas that include physical education, library media, music, and counseling. Each of these programs helps to promote self-confidence and a desire to succeed among our students.

At NES, kindergarten through sixth grade students participate in Physical Education (PE) daily. We have a fixed PE schedule allowing kindergarten through sixth-grade 45 minutes of PE class each day. Our PE program aims to provide students an opportunity to exercise their bodies as well as their minds. Our PE teacher is implementing the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) program which aims to promote healthy foods and an active lifestyle. In addition to the HEAL program, our PE department promotes the importance of community involvement through our Fun Run fundraiser aimed at helping charities that are near and dear to our students. Each year, our sixth-grade students have the opportunity to present Field Day in which they plan, organize, and implement games and activities set-up as stations for each grade level to participate in.

Our library media program allows all students an opportunity to visit the library during 30 minute regularly scheduled library classes each week. In addition to scheduled library times, students also have the opportunity to come exchange books during our open checkout/flexible scheduling times. Teachers can also take advantage of the flexible scheduling by collaborating with the media specialist or utilizing the library for activities and lessons. During regularly scheduled library classes, students participate in story time, practice library media skills, practice technology skills, participate in art activities, and participate in STEM activities. Some of our students also participate in the Lunch Bunch Book Club which meets weekly in the library. All of our classrooms have Chrome carts with the exception of kindergarten. Our library media specialist has scheduled Chromebook Lab times for kindergarten to help bridge the gap in meeting digital literacy standards.

We are fortunate to finally have a music program back at our school after many years without one. Our students in kindergarten through sixth-grade have the opportunity to attend music class once a week with a 30-minute class time. Our music teacher organized a Christmas Sing-A-Long allowing students an opportunity to share Carols with one another and has plans for additional performances as the music program continues to grow. We also have students participating in a choir program with intentions of performing for the community in the future. In addition to choir, our third through sixth-grade students have the opportunity to learn how to play the recorder during music classes.

Our counselor schedules times throughout the school year to meet with classes where discussion topics focus on leadership, character building, teamwork, and friendships. Our students who are part of the Student Government Association (SGA) help promote character building each morning during announcements with a positive and uplifting message to our student body. We also have community involvement in which outside organizations come in to the school to discuss special topics with our students.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Newton Elementary meets the needs of all students with tiered instruction. We use a research-based core instruction program. Teachers tailor instruction for students by differentiating their Tier I instruction which is provided in the classroom. Students receive whole group and small group Tier I instruction. All students receive Tier I instruction. Formative and summative assessments are used to determine our students' needs. We use this information to determine where there are gaps in a students' learning. We use AimsWeb as our diagnostic tool. If a student is performing below grade level, they will begin Tier II instruction in the classroom. It is provided by the classroom teacher in a small group setting based on daily formative assessments. Students will be monitored by frequent progress monitoring. If students continue to lack progress, then they will begin Tier III intervention outside the classroom with a highly-qualified teacher. They will be placed in (Response to Instruction) RTI Rails and monitored by the Problem Solving Team (PST). Tier III intervention targets deficits in foundational reading skills that were missed in earlier grades. Tier III intervention takes place in addition to their core instruction in the classroom. It is a high-intensity intervention that also includes diagnostic assessments to determine strengths and weaknesses and progress monitoring to determine growth. Tier I instruction lasts 90 minutes and Tier II is 30 minutes. If Tier III instruction is needed, the student will be pulled out for an additional hour (outside of core instruction) in a small group setting of no more than 6 students. They receive explicit instruction and are progress monitored to determine growth. Every educator is prepared to meet the academic needs of every child so that each student is intellectually challenged and academically prepared for success in school and beyond.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

It is important that all students' academic needs are met. All students receive Tier I instruction to ensure mastery of grade-level content standards. Tier I instruction takes place in whole group and small group and is differentiated based on student needs. If students are performing above grade level, they will receive instruction that will challenge them. Students who are above grade level will be able to check out library books based on their level of reading. They will also have differentiated materials in their reading and math centers to help challenge them. These students will be able to work on their independent levels on a specific online program called Lexia. This is tailored to their specific needs. Students are also tested by the gifted teacher in 2nd grade for the gifted program. Students can also be tested in other grades, but 2nd grade is when the gifted teacher tests as a grade level to find students who may be gifted. Our school has talented and gifted programs (TAG). This is a broad group of special practices, procedures, and theories used in the education of children who have been identified as gifted or talented. These students are pulled once a week for one hour by a highly-qualified gifted teacher. She provides students in gifted with challenging curriculum and lessons. They are also grouped with students of similar abilities. Students are challenged and their level of instruction is raised. Formative and summative assessments are used to determine a student's strengths and allow teachers to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of students who are performing above grade level. Additionally, students who are performing above grade level will set goals for themselves

academically and strive to achieve them. These students need faster-paced lessons, deeper and more advanced content, and opportunities to work with other gifted students.

### **3c. Special education:**

Our special education students are serviced by two special education teachers and one speech and language pathologist. We have two brand new resource rooms where our special education teachers are able to provide instruction. Our special education teachers also work collaboratively with the general education teachers. Depending on the students' needs, the special education teachers may work in the general education classroom and/or take them to the resource room for a private area where distractions are limited. Each special education student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) tailored to meet the needs of each specific student with attainable goals for the school year. Parents are encouraged to take part in all IEP meetings. Parents are also encouraged to reach out to the special education teachers as needed. Our special education and general education teachers work together to ensure accommodations are put in place to help our special education students reach their goals in each child's least restrictive environment. Additional services such as occupational therapy and physical therapy are also provided as needed through outside sources. Our special education students also have opportunities to participate in all extracurricular and hands on activities like their general education peers. They have the opportunity to participate in 4H, the music program, Book Club, the annual spelling bee, field trips, and other opportunities presented throughout the school year.

Our Talented and Gifted (TAG) students are identified during second grade based on class screening data. The TAG teacher visits these classrooms throughout the school year and does activities with students to get an idea of who might qualify for gifted services. The TAG teacher also consults with classroom teachers. Once students have been targeted, a letter requesting further testing is sent to parents. With parent approval, students then go through a screening with a psychometrist to determine if they are gifted. Once students have been identified as gifted, they participate with the TAG teacher once per week and focus on lessons and activities that go beyond their grade level standards.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Upon enrollment at Newton Elementary, each parent completes a home language survey which helps us identify if a student needs to be screened for EL services. Once screened and identified as English Language Learners, an Individualized English Language Plan (I-ELP) is developed. The student is then served by that plan which helps to meet their language needs. Not only do they receive whole group and small group instruction, but many of them also receive pull-out intervention services to help develop foundational skills needed to be successful in the general education curriculum. Some of the intervention services used include Orton-Gillingham strategies and SPIRE. We also consider our EL students in our PST/RtI monthly team meetings to ensure we are providing all the interventions they may need. Our district also provides an EL paraprofessional who schedules time at each school to work with our EL students in a small group or one-on-one.

EL students are assessed using formative and summative assessments. They also are assessed using ACCESS, which is a yearly assessment only EL students take. The ACCESS test determines their proficiency in the English language. Their individualized education language plan is updated yearly and accommodations are changed depending on current needs of the student. Even if a student tests out of EL services by scoring a 4.8 on their ACCESS test, we continue to monitor them for four years. During the four years, should they need the support of an I-ELP, we reconvene the team and put an I-ELP back in place. We have local resources in which we use to assist with translating during parent conferences or meetings. Our district also subscribes to TransAct to ensure all documents sent home to parents are translated correctly. At Newton Elementary, we put forth every effort to ensure each ELL student is included and that they have no barriers to receiving instruction

### **3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Currently, we do not have any students at Newton Elementary who are classified as homeless. However, should we have a student to enroll with that classification, there would be no barriers to enrolling them. We have extra school supplies and access to other resources to provide to them if needed. Also, we have various local churches we partner with who have backpack meal programs who help us with nutrition needs for any students in need.



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

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

Newton Elementary School believes in cultivating, supporting, and maintaining a positive and an engaging learning environment for its students in grades pre-K through sixth grade. In doing so, Newton Elementary School is able to foster academic success as well as to create lifelong learners. One major component that sets Newton Elementary School apart from other schools is the strong, positive relationships between faculty/staff members and students. The faculty and staff at NES understand that students must feel loved and safe before they are ready to begin learning. NES has adopted a positive behavior program called Gotcha tickets. Faculty and staff members are encouraged to identify students who are being respectful, responsible, and/or resourceful. Once students are identified, they are issued a Gotcha ticket. Gotcha tickets are turned in weekly, and multiple students have the chance to win with the name drawing on Fridays. Students who win the drawing are given an opportunity to choose a prize from the NES treasure box, and the principal provides them with verbal praise and recognition.

NES students are also provided with the opportunity to socialize with their peers and grow as leaders in their school and in their community through programs and clubs such as the 4-H Club, the Lunch Bunch Book Club, the Superintendent Advisory Council, and the Student Government Association. When students are able to participate in clubs like these, they are able to develop communication skills, leadership skills, creative thinking skills, and social skills. In addition to fostering the development of these skills, these clubs and programs also motivate students to attend school on a regular basis and share their interests and skills with their peers. Newton Elementary School's club opportunities also enable students to engage with a diverse group of their peers.

NES believes that celebrating student success is a pivotal component of creating and fostering an engaging and positive learning environment. All students at NES are encouraged to participate in the Renaissance Accelerated Reader (AR) program. The AR program is designed to meet the individual needs of students based on their specified reading level; therefore, each student is given an individual goal to meet by the end of the nine weeks. When students meet their AR goal for the nine weeks, they are invited to an AR celebration where their hard work and success is recognized by the school's principal and the school's media specialist. In addition to recognizing and celebrating students who have mastered their AR goals, NES students are also recognized for mastering Lexia skills throughout the school year. Lexia is a program that cultivates growth in reading comprehension. Through these programs, NES is able to foster academic excellence and celebrate student achievement.

During COVID-19 remote learning, teachers used Schoology and Google Classroom to deliver meaningful and engaging content and instruction to students who chose to enroll in the remote learning option. To ensure academic success for the students participating in remote learning, NES hosted a parent training session for the Schoology learning platform and for the Google Classroom platform. Students and parents were also provided with contact information for the school's designated technology support personnel. Students who needed technological resources were provided with the devices they needed to be successful, such as WI-FI hot spots and Chromebooks. NES also provided parents and students with a means to communicate and to stay connected via the Remind 101 app and the school's website. At the end of the school year, the faculty/staff members hosted a socially distanced awards day parade. Students were encouraged to drive through the school's car line area to say farewell to their teachers and to accept their academic awards. Hosting this event boosted the morale of the students who had been isolated from their teachers and their peers during the school year.

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

Creating a strong connection between Newton Elementary School and its families and other stakeholders is a crucial part of creating a strong learning environment for students. NES recognizes the importance of keeping families and community members informed regarding school events, announcements, and other programs. For this reason, NES utilizes the SchoolCast system as a means of notifying parents and

guardians during emergency and non-emergency situations. With the SchoolCast system, NES is able to send out rapid emails, text messages, and recorded phone calls to notify families and community members of operations going on within the school. In addition to the NES SchoolCast notification system, the school also uses the Remind101 platform. With this mobile messaging system, teachers and other staff members are able to send out instant reminders and notifications, and parents are able to reply with questions if they have any. Having this open communication ensures parents and students are involved and are up-to-date on current news. The NES Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is also very active. They hold monthly meetings and parents are encouraged to join and attend these meetings. The PTO provides parents and guardians with a means to stay involved and advocate for their child's education. Lastly, the school's media specialist creates and sends home a monthly calendar. This monthly calendar includes information regarding academic events as well as other fun activities and holidays. When parents and other stakeholders are informed and aware of events going on throughout the school, they are more likely to be involved and invested in their child's education and academic success.

NES also offers a summer reading camp program for students in kindergarten through third grade. Students are invited to the school's summer reading camp program based on their benchmark scores and teacher input. This reading program focuses on students who display a deficiency in reading. The goal of this summer reading camp is to close the gap for these students and prepare them to be successful in the next grade level. The NES summer reading camp is completely free to students, and the students are provided with a free snack and a free lunch during the day.

In addition to hosting a free summer reading camp for the students at NES, the school also partners with the Town of Newton Library during the summer months and throughout the school year. The librarian at the Town of Newton Library sends fliers home with students monthly. She hosts movie days, reading camps, and other fun activities for students and their family members. NES has also partnered with The Gathering, which is a nondenominational church across the street from the school. The Gathering provides after-school services for families who need it. The students who attend The Gathering's after-school program are provided with help on school assignments and homework, and they have the opportunity to eat a snack and socialize with their peers. This after-school program provides support for students who come from working family households.

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

The Newton Elementary School mission statement highlights the importance of ensuring the school's curriculum is taught by innovative and nurturing staff members. The NES mission statement also references the importance of creating a positive and nurturing educational environment for the students. In order for these two things to take place, the staff at NES must feel like they are valued and supported. The principal at NES, along with the school district's superintendent, has created an atmosphere where teachers are encouraged to ask questions, provide feedback, and notify school officials of their needs as well as the needs of their students. Any time a new curriculum, or any kind of new learning platform is purchased, the staff at NES are provided with in-depth, educational training and professional development before they are expected to implement the program.

In addition to providing staff members with thorough professional development, staff are also given an opportunity to provide feedback on how and when they would like to receive their trainings. The school's principal and the school's reading coach often send out digital surveys to see when teachers would like to schedule their professional developments. When on campus professional developments are scheduled during the school day, the principal and the school's secretary usually take care of making substitute arrangements so that it does not become a burden for the teachers. Staff members who participate in the on campus professional developments are also provided with free, catered meals and snacks. By making professional development accessible and engaging for staff members, they are more likely to have a positive outlook on the professional development, which results in the professional development having a greater impact on the teachers.

The NES school leaders and staff members also find it to be beneficial when grade-level teachers have protected time to work together on planning classroom instruction and analyzing student data. The schedule

at NES has been designed so that grade-level teachers have their planning period at the same time. Since grade-level teachers have the same planning times, it makes scheduling professional developments, planning instruction, and analyzing student data easier to schedule. Lastly, the principal at NES has made it very apparent to teachers that he is their biggest advocate, and that he will support them in any of their instructional needs. Staff members are encouraged to address any of their classroom needs or students' needs with him so that he can find a way to meet their needs. Providing support and encouragement to teachers is a pivotal part of what makes Newton Elementary School so successful.

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

The leadership philosophy at Newton Elementary School is a direct reflection of our school's transformational leadership style. The principal and other stakeholders at NES believe in empowering our school's leadership team to be actively involved in the decision-making process. In doing so, a shared purpose is created and fostered throughout the school environment. This shared vision promotes growth and success throughout the school. The problem-solving team (PST) is the established leadership team at NES. The problem-solving team consists of the school's principal, the reading coach, the intervention teacher, the classroom teachers, and a special education teacher. This team meets monthly during teachers' planning periods to discuss data, curriculum, and response to intervention (RTI). During these meetings, PST focuses on student achievement, student growth, and other student needs that need to be addressed.

Shared leadership is a main focus at NES. The principal designates other faculty and staff members to leadership roles throughout the school. The reading coach meets weekly with kindergarten teachers, first grade teachers, second grade teachers, and third grade teachers to discuss the progress of students and the impact of the curriculum. During these meetings, they also discuss small group strategies as well as how to foster a classroom environment that will produce student growth and student success. The school's media specialist also plays a key role in the leadership at NES. In addition to managing and facilitating a library rotation for the students at NES, she also oversees the school's website, the Accelerated Reader program, and the monthly schedule that goes home to parents and students. The school counselor is also a critical part of the leadership at NES. In addition to her every day counselor duties, she acts as the school's attendance officer, the EL coordinator, and the school's testing administrator.

Overall, the principal at NES and the superintendent of Dale County Schools leads the faculty, staff, and students through exemplary modeling. They believe in building a strong community foundation, and they are dedicated to helping teachers and students strengthen their skills. They believe that investing in the well-being of the people around them will result in a successful school environment. Their effective leadership creates the foundation for NES to be a high achieving school.

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

At Newton Elementary School, we ensure that students are provided with learning opportunities and learning materials that are effective in engaging a range of diverse learners. NES believes that all students are important, and their differences should be acknowledged and celebrated. The media specialist at NES ensures that all students have reading material that fits his or her needs. Before ordering new materials for the library, the media specialist visits the Perma-Bound website for suggestions on literature that highlights the importance of diversity. Providing reading materials that honor the diversity that is present at Newton Elementary School ensures that all students feel honored and respected.

Newton Elementary School also offers various programs and services to accommodate diverse populations. Students are screened for the Talented and Gifted program in the second grade. Students who are eligible to join the Talented and Gifted program are provided with engaging learning opportunities through weekly lessons with the Talented and Gifted teacher. NES also provides English Learner services for students who need them. Providing students with EL services enables non-English-speaking students to be successful in their academics as well as in their social environments. The special education department at NES is also equipped with various resources that are available to use in addressing the needs of diverse learners. The NES special education teachers attend trainings throughout the year to further equip themselves to better serve their diverse learners.

NES teachers also create lessons and projects that celebrate and highlight cultural differences. For example, the sixth-grade students at NES participated in a project called Christmas Around the World. Students were asked to choose a country and conduct research on how the cultures in their selected country celebrate and acknowledge Christmas. Students created a presentation on their selected country to present to the other classes at NES. Each class had an opportunity to learn about the various Christmas traditions among countries all over the world. Teachers all over the NES campus also encouraged students to celebrate Black History Month in February. During the month of February, teachers of various grades and subject areas, provided students with meaningful, informative, and engaging lessons and projects related to Black History.

Teachers at NES are encouraged to determine age appropriate and culturally aware responses to any social movements and current events that may capture the attention of students and community members. Teachers are able to address such topics at the classroom level within their comfort level. The NES school counselor is also available to help students navigate any emotions or questions they may have during such events.

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

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Newton Elementary School's mission is to produce students who are prepared to begin the next level of learning with self-confidence and a desire to succeed. Our school focuses on many strategies to aid in success; however, the one practice that we feel is most important in fulfilling this mission is providing an environment where students feel safe, loved, and appreciated. Socio-emotional learning is such a key component to the everyday success of our students, and we feel that providing a positive learning environment gives our students a chance to thrive in the present as well as prepare them for the next level.

After returning from the COVID shutdown of March 2020, we were not sure how our students would adjust considering all of the precautions taking place to maintain a safe learning environment. Our faculty and staff worked together just as we always have to help our students feel as normal as possible.

Our students are greeted each morning and throughout the day by faculty and staff members that appear genuinely excited to see them. We take pride in being able to recognize students by name across grade levels as they walk the sidewalks and hallways. We also make a point in recognizing our students by announcing birthdays, awards, and achievements over the morning announcements.

We give our students opportunities for brain breaks during the school week. Some examples of those brain breaks include fresh-air walks and extra recess time when weather permits. We feel these breaks allow our students a chance to refresh and reset the brain in preparation for the next step in learning. We also allow students time for interaction among peers in different grade levels. This year, we have implemented the Lunch Bunch Book Club allowing some of our students an opportunity to gather during lunch once a week and discuss topics on the current book selection and how that topic relates to what might be going on in their daily lives. In addition to Book Club, some of our 5th and 6th graders participate as buddy readers with our 1st graders allowing for interaction across grade levels.

Our school also maintains a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) system. We allow students opportunities to earn Gotcha tickets based off being respectful, responsible, and resourceful. These Gotcha tickets are turned in to the office each week for a chance to win prizes from the treasure box. This program allows our students an opportunity to feel valued for a job well done.

We feel all of these actions help in building the self-confidence and determination our students need to succeed.