

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 1950 Park Street Southeast
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Decatur State AL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 35601-5262

County Morgan County

Telephone (256) 552-3031 Fax (256) 552-3036

Web site/URL https://wje.dcs.edu/o/wje E-mail tamara.caudle@dcs.edu

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Michael Douglas E-mail michael.douglas@dcs.edu
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Decatur City School District Tel. (256) 552-3000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Michele Gray King
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The 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

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):
- 12 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 17 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	0	0	0
K	28	23	51
1	22	16	38
2	26	27	53
3	19	13	32
4	25	12	37
5	21	18	39
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	141	109	250

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 27 % Black or African American
 - 14 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 57 % White
 - 0 % 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: 14%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	265
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.14
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

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

Spanish, Quichean, Pohnpeian, Gujarati

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %
16 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 71 %

Total number students who qualify: 178

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 13 %
32 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services 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>6</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>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</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: 5
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
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 10:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	95%	95%	95%
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.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

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

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

The mission of Walter Jackson Elementary School is to provide innovative and challenging instruction which fosters creativity, excellence, and compassion in our learning environment.

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

The Decatur City Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or age in its programs and activities, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

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

Community is the foundation that allows members to share common attitudes, interests, and goals while bringing different experiences to the table. Walter Jackson Elementary School is fortunate to be surrounded by community members who support our staff and students. Located in a quaint and mature section of the city of Decatur, Alabama, Walter Jackson Elementary has a certain charm. Historically, the majority of students attending Walter Jackson Elementary School were from middle-class families. However, the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch has increased to seventy-one percent over time. Walter Jackson Elementary thrives because our students and families are diverse, committed, and ambitious. The mission of Walter Jackson is to close academic achievement gaps while opening the doors to social-emotional growth. We have worked diligently to create and maintain a culture that celebrates all students, while also welcoming students who are transported from high-poverty neighborhoods in our city. Here at Walter Jackson Elementary, we call ourselves “The Jackson” in reference to the Jackson 5. The staff at The Jackson uses the Jackson 5 as a reminder to be where you are supposed to be and do what you are supposed to do at all times.

Character Education is a large part of our school community; therefore, we utilize a House System. This initiative encourages students to grow academically, emotionally, and physically. The House System at Walter Jackson is divided into five houses: Misteratio, Quantum, Spatium, Probitatis, and Tenebitur. Each house represents a different character trait of the Jackson 5 such as compassion, honesty, respect, perseverance, and responsibility. We strive for our students to feel connected to their peers and be able to get to know each other. Each of the houses is split into families of three and they include students from all grades. Students earn coins for good character by getting “caught” doing good deeds which allow them to contribute points to their houses. The students can earn points by displaying good character, being chosen as Student of the Month, and/or winning in their house competition. In addition to personal growth, the House System at Walter Jackson provides an avenue to give back to our community by focusing on specific projects each year.

If one were to visit Walter Jackson Elementary, one would find that leadership is around every corner. Walter Jackson has several extracurricular activities that students can join such as Student Council, Student School Officers, Ambassadors, Academic Cheerleading, Math Team, Robotics, Greenpower, Spelling Bee, Outdoor Classroom, Garden Club, Viola, News Show, and JAG Choir. Our students work tirelessly to be prestigious leaders who positively impact their academic achievement and personal growth. The extracurricular activities teach the students at our school to always be their best selves and lend a helping hand to those in need. Many of our extracurricular activities use service projects to teach leadership skills. For example, our student council collects canned foods in November for families for Thanksgiving. In the Spring, the Student Council and Ambassadors team up to do a sock drive to donate new socks to those in need. The students love being able to help others and knowing that they are making a difference.

Additionally, our school counselor teaches character education classes twice a week to every class to promote character education and remove the stigma of mental health. The mission of the school counseling program is to have a positive impact on student achievement, behavior, attendance, and discipline by using data-informed decision making, needs assessments, and surveys to teachers and staff, parents, and students. By utilizing the American School Counselor Association National Model in her program, our school counselor can challenge students to grow personally, socially, and academically. During guidance lessons, our school counselor uses bibliotherapy, diverse puppets, and fidgets to utilize play therapy in her classes to teach academic, social, and career skills. In addition to guidance classes, she uses individual and small group counseling to ensure students are being reached in all tiers. The School Counselor Integrates service projects in her program to educate students on the importance of serving their community. Each Fall, students make homemade thank you cards for veterans at local nursing homes and the American Legion. In addition, they create anti-bullying posters for the Anti-Bullying Campaign which are displayed in the hallways.

Walter Jackson Elementary celebrates cultural diversity daily by modeling inclusion in the classroom. For example, our teachers intentionally choose diverse books with multicultural characters. Every student should be able to identify with someone who looks like them, and learns like them whether it is a character from a

book or a video. This resource impacts our school climate and allows students to grow academically and social-emotionally. We can see the data from these impactful initiatives working to close the achievement gap.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

A typical school day at Walter Jackson includes instruction in reading, math, science, social studies, writing, technology, physical education, music, library, character education, and art education. At Walter Jackson Elementary, we are committed to teaching all Alabama Course of Study standards in each subject area. In addition to the standards, teachers follow pacing guides provided by the district level for Decatur City Schools. Teachers adhere to schedules and implement bell-to-bell instruction. Teachers adhere to a daily literacy block of time which includes a multi-tiered approach. Jag Time is thirty minutes of independent reading required daily for each student. We use data from formative and summative assessments to guide our instruction and use this data to find deficits that need further assistance. Every classroom runs on a tiered instruction approach, which includes the implementation of Tier I and Tier II instruction daily. Teachers are committed to meeting students where they are and using small group or individualized instruction to scaffold and differentiate curriculum as needed so that all students can feel a sense of achievement and success.

Teachers at Walter Jackson understand the importance of continuously assessing our students and allowing those assessments to drive their instruction. These assessments include daily formative assessments such as the use of exit tickets, Kahoots, teacher observations, and more. Students are progress monitored monthly using STAR Reading, STAR Math, and mCLASS with DIBELS.

Math foundation and problem-solving skills are critical components of our math instruction. Teachers use Envision math as our core curriculum. In addition, all teachers get yearly training in the Decatur Math Initiative (DMI). This implementation is a proven tool to increase students' number sense, operations, and problem-solving. Students have access to a variety of supplemental tools that serve as intervention such as Freckle Math, Prodigy, and Splash Math.

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

Walter Jackson uses a variety of instructional approaches to successfully teach and assess Alabama Course of Study Standards. Our core ELA curriculum is Wonders by McGraw Hill. Additionally, we have embraced the Science of Reading and know that skilled reading is a product of background knowledge, vocabulary, language structure, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge, phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. Our K-3 teachers are currently enrolled in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training. Teachers in grades K-2 use Michael Heggerty's phonological and phonemic awareness program daily along with a phonics and morphology progression developed at the district level.

Our highly qualified teachers are experts in providing explicit daily instruction in whole group and small groups settings. Grades K-3 participate in a minimum of 150 minutes of reading instruction a day, while grades 4-5 participate in a minimum of 120 minutes of reading instruction a day. Our reading blocks include aspects that we consider 'non-negotiables'. These include daily phonemic awareness/phonics activities, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, morphology, read-alouds, and whole group/small group instruction. Every student in grades K-2 meets in a small group setting daily to receive an explicit phonics routine. A phonics routine is 25-30 minutes in length and includes the following: a review of previously taught skills, phonemic awareness, new learning, blending, reading, spelling dictation, and connected writing of the phonics skill being taught. Knowing syllable types equips students with the skills they need to decode and encode unfamiliar words, especially words with multiple syllables. Teachers believe in the importance of teaching the six syllable types in all grade levels, starting in kindergarten.

To motivate, monitor, and manage students' independent reading practice, we use Accelerated Reader,

which is a computer-based reading program. Students are awarded points as they read books and pass comprehension quizzes on that particular book with 85% accuracy. All students are provided with an attainable goal at the beginning of each nine-week period, and students spend the entirety of this time trying to exceed their goals, all while maintaining comprehension scores of 85% or higher. Other incentives include surprise AR Field Trips, periodic recognitions and rewards, participation in faculty/student competitions, and more. The idea is to keep students motivated all school year so that they continue to grow as readers.

STAR is a computer-adaptive leveled test that encourages students who are not meeting grade-level expectations and challenges students whose skill level is beyond grade level.

Teachers use the data from STAR assessments to monitor growth, determine what standards have been mastered, and which students need additional support.

mCLASS with DIBELS is another progress monitoring tool. DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. It is a series of one-minute measures that test phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension. We administer three benchmark tests yearly to students in kindergarten through third grade with progress monitoring bi-monthly. DIBELS scores to drive literacy instruction, identify students with dyslexic tendencies, and screen for students that may need intervention support.

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

Walter Jackson also uses a wide variety of resources to teach and assess the Alabama Course of Study for Mathematics standards. This past year, Decatur City Schools adopted a new math curriculum, enVision Mathematics. This program presents the math standards with engaging and rich content, including workbooks, hands-on center activities, and an online platform. The online platform, Savvas Realize, is easily accessible and links class rosters from other digital learning resources that we are already using, such as Google Classroom and Canvas. These resources make connections between media types smooth enough for all students to manipulate easily. Each lesson includes videos and interactive games that help to increase student understanding. Another benefit of enVision is that this program has embedded assessments throughout each aspect of the lesson that gives our teachers data instantly. This implementation allows us to create or adapt lessons to meet the individual needs of all students directly.

We incorporate standards-based strategies from the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) to enhance student learning. Teachers set learning targets and success criteria for students while utilizing these research-based, concrete, hands-on methods. Students from kindergarten through fifth grade participate in daily data activities using Venn diagrams and other graphic organizers to deepen their understanding of data. Classroom teachers facilitate number talks at least twice a week that strengthens each child's number sense and uses hand signals that help keep classroom management fluid and engagement high. We receive support from the Decatur Math Initiative (DMI) throughout the school year. Consultants from DMI observe our teachers and give feedback that helps us know how we can better our lessons to increase student achievement. These consultants also provide professional development for teachers. They support our teachers as they dive deep into the curriculum and show what parts are the most beneficial when planning lessons. Also, they have introduced us to Graham Fletcher's Three-Act Tasks. These problem-based lessons foster student curiosity, increase questioning abilities, and develop a wide range of strategies for problem-solving.

Teachers use enVision strategies and ideas from AMSTI and DMI to provide 90 minutes of core math instruction daily in kindergarten through fifth grade. Each class maximizes an uninterrupted block of 60 minutes that includes time for whole group instruction and small group intervention. The remaining 30 minutes is a combination of smaller increments that have time for Calendar Math, data collections, number talks, and number sense problem-solving activities.

Teachers assess and advance student thinking by posing purposeful questions in all lessons and providing formative feedback about their progress to students and their families. Kindergarten through 2nd-grade

teachers utilize Educational Software for Guiding Instruction (ESGI) daily to easily track student growth. This online progress monitoring platform allows teachers to monitor student progress and provides accessible forms of communication for parents. 3rd-5th grade students take quarterly assessments in reading and math that teachers in our district create. This data and format of progress monitoring assist students and teachers in preparation before taking the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP).

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

Walter Jackson is fortunate to access hands-on science kits through the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). Kindergarten through 5th-grade classes receive three kits per year that coincide with the Alabama Course of Study. Teachers in each grade level use these kits to bring the standards to life and engage student learning. Each kit is full of interactive lessons that take student achievement in science to a whole new level. Kindergarteners plant seeds and watch a living thing grow over time. Then, they take a field trip to Annie B. Hays Nature Preserve to see living and nonliving things in their natural habitat. Second-grade students design habitat dioramas in their plants and bugs unit. Then, they enhance their learning with a field trip to the Botanical Gardens, where they can have more in-depth studies and make real-life connections. To help further the understanding of the water cycle, fifth graders create eco-Columns using 2-liter bottles. They make a terrarium to use as the base of the eco-Column and an aquarium for the top. The water cycle keeps the eco-Column sustained for an extended length of time. These kits provide hands-on activities and experiences for our students. However, they do not cover all of the standards each grade level is responsible for learning. To effectively teach standards not covered by our AMSTI kits, we integrate science into our ELA curriculum through fiction and nonfiction texts. Science Weekly provides students in grades three through five with culturally relevant curriculum reading driven by guiding questions that push students to explore the world of science through hands-on open-and-go lessons. Teachers use both informal and formal assessments to check for mastery of the science standards. Fourth-grade students also take the science subtest of the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) test in the spring of each school year.

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

Walter Jackson's social studies curriculum is designed to teach the standards from the Alabama Course of Study. Each grade level receives Studies Weekly magazines that cover these standards in depth. Teachers have access to paper copies as well as digital resources to further enhance student engagement. Teachers use the online videos and songs to add excitement to their lessons and make the paper copies come to life. First grade students identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens within the local community with the first magazine of the school year. This allows our teachers to welcome new students while establishing rules, procedures, and routines through interactive role-play. Third grade students discover the significance of representations of American values and beliefs, including the Statue of Liberty, the statue of Lady Justice, the United States flag, and the national anthem, along with locating the five geographic regions of Alabama in the research issue magazine. This particular Social Studies Weekly teaches students about these standards while having them do research using a variety of resources. Fourth grade students have the opportunity to learn about Alabama's entry into statehood, the establishment of its three branches of government, and the constitution in the Alabama Statehood issue. Teachers continue their study with research projects and then take the students on a field trip to our state capitol in Montgomery to see our government in action. These materials are very beneficial in teaching our standards, however, they also have gaps in the curriculum that we fill using other resources. Just like in science, our teachers in all grade levels use both fiction and nonfiction texts to close these gaps. We also utilize other online resources, such as Liberty Learning. Teachers use both informal and formal assessments to check for mastery of the social studies standards.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Walter Jackson's Art Department offers a wide variety of experiences for all students in kindergarten through 5th grade. We share an art teacher with two other schools. She rotates between each school every 30 school days. All students in kindergarten through 5th grade receive art instruction once a week for 30 minutes. The art teacher creates lessons that adhere to the age and developmental skills of the students in each grade. A few examples of student work are: Third grade students made pinatas for Hispanic Heritage Month and the art teacher guided all students in creating projects for unique experiences such as River Clay Chalk Art Competition and Panoply. Students entered the competitions and won awards for their inventive creations.

Our Physical Education teacher meets with all students in Kindergarten through 5th grade daily for 30 minutes. She designs lessons that encourage students to get up and get moving while promoting a healthy lifestyle. Her activities provide students with active games and opportunities to develop age-appropriate skills from galloping in kindergarten to ball manipulation in 5th grade. She encourages students to participate in a Heart-Healthy Challenge where students jump rope and raise money for the American Heart Association. Students take part in our field day each year. The PE teacher plans games and competitions for students. Some are just fun games that keep the students moving and active. Others, such as tug-a-war and relay races, are competitive. These competitions give students the opportunities to show good sportsmanship and teamwork.

Walter Jackson's Library Media Specialist meets with all students in Kindergarten through 5th grade once a week for 30 minutes for library classes and once a week for 30 minutes for technology classes. His library lessons encourage the love of reading through read alouds that bring stories to life. Students never know what to expect when they walk into the library. They may find him dressed in a tie and tutu for 2-22-22 or in safari gear to explore where the wild things are. He hosts an annual book fair where selling books is the intention, but promoting reading is the ultimate goal. His technology lessons teach skills such as typing in kindergarten through 2nd grade and coding for all grades. Students are 1 to 1 with devices, which allows our librarian to expand on lessons and skills already being taught in the classroom. Fifth graders work with him daily to bring the school news, weather, and important information to us on a live YouTube channel.

Walter Jackson offers our students the opportunity to be in clubs and organizations. Third through 5th grade girls can be part of our Academic Cheerleaders who perform at assemblies such as Math Masters and ride in city parades. Fourth and fifth graders can take part in our Robotics and Green Power Teams where they hone in on their engineering, architecture, and biotechnology skills. Third through fifth graders have the opportunity to make the WJES Math Team and compete against other schools in our district while executing skills learned in the classroom.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Teachers use a variety of resources to meet the academic needs of students. The principal, reading specialist, teachers, and the Problem Solving Team (PST), gather and hold monthly data meetings to view current or updated data points. Progress monitoring tools include Star Reading and Math, mCLASS, and Educational Software for Guiding Instruction (ESGI). The PST then uses the data to identify students working below grade level. Students are placed in Tier II and Tier III groups according to their performance level. The problem-solving team is constantly working to close the achievement gap between White and African American subgroups. In reading, Tier II students receive an additional 30 minutes of small group explicit phonic instruction daily from their classroom teacher. They also participate in letter naming fluency and whole-word reading fluency boot camps. These lessons are filled with activities such as "Tap it, Map it, Graph it," where students tap the sounds in words, push counters to represent the phonemes, then write the letters that correspond with the sounds. They use multisensory techniques to help their brains mature in the world of phonics. Tier III students receive an additional 30 minutes of small group intervention focusing on critical skills not mastered. Many of them also participate in a dyslexic-specific intervention program. In math, students are pulled in small groups for 30 minutes daily, which also incorporates strategic teaching in

hands-on games that require the kids to move around and manipulate math tools to enhance student learning. In addition to supporting students below grade level, our principal and school counselor meet with the students individually who have a failing grade on their report card to identify the unmet needs of the student further and work with the students to set goals.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Teachers identify students performing above grade level and use educational tools and plans to allow them growth opportunities in all subjects. Teachers use strategic teaching to reach all students in multi-tiers to ensure they are growing and challenged in all areas. Multi-sensory teaching allows students to learn in an environment with unconditional positive regard. Teacher-created assessments focus on depth of knowledge (DOK). For example, the depth of knowledge provides teachers understanding of student achievement and student needs. For our students performing above grade level, levels three and four DOK questions would allow them to use critical thinking skills and complex problem solving to challenge them.

Teachers are also encouraged to embed open-ended tasks into daily assignments and assessments. These tasks allow students to extend and apply what they have already learned and usually include more complex problem-solving. In reading, teachers plan tasks that require higher-level thinking and require the students to analyze, evaluate and synthesize.

One service we have at Walter Jackson is grade and subject acceleration. This year we have a first-grade student who tested above grade level. We introduced subject acceleration, and he thrived in the second grade standards and setting. This student was a candidate for grade acceleration. After testing and meetings, this student moved to the second grade, where he is progressing. To ensure our accelerated student reaches the desired goals set, we have meetings to check his progress. In addition, Child Find identifies gifted students starting in the second grade and assesses them for the gifted program. Students who are accepted into the gifted program start receiving gifted services in third grade. Students in grade third through fifth grade are pulled out for services three hours weekly. All teachers must complete gifted compliance training annually to ensure our students above grade level are receiving the services they need to flourish.

3c. Special education:

The referral process focuses on the whole child. We are experiencing a rise of students battling social and emotional issues which affect academic progress. The referral process assesses students academically and behaviorally. At Walter Jackson, several team members serve during the IEP meetings, such as the special education teacher, psychometrist, principal, school counselor, teacher, and parents. Students accepted into the special education program are serviced daily according to their IEP. In addition to the special education program, Walter Jackson offers 504 plans and speech individualized education plans. Students referred for a 504 plan go through a similar process as an IEP. Evaluations may include occupational therapy, behavioral and attention scales, and many other impairments. 504s are provided for students with disabilities and impairments that limit daily activities inside and outside the classroom. Students evaluated for speech and eligible can receive a speech individualized education plan to receive services weekly at school. Our certified special education teacher and two paraprofessionals provide services to our students. We also have two full-time interventionists who assist with students who fall in Tier III but did not qualify for an IEP. These programs meet the various needs of students at Walter Jackson and assist in closing achievement and social-emotional gaps.

As we service the English language learners, we use our paraprofessionals and special area teachers to allow additional time for them to read and reach independent reading goals. They also receive instruction once a week from the EL teacher that includes acquiring skills necessary to succeed in reading and writing.

Inclusion for our special populations is a goal we strive to meet. Ensuring that students are in their least restrictive environment, they receive a high level of tactile learning and multisensory experiences.

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

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Walter Jackson takes pride in the classroom lessons and school initiatives that keep students excelling through high levels of engagement and motivation. Setting high expectations and supporting students while celebrating their achievements are embedded in the culture. Students in all grade levels are motivated to reach state standards that address fact fluency in mathematics. To become a "Math Master," students must reach set goals for each grade level. The requirement is to master addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Specific amounts of facts and time for each grade are required. After earning all four MasterCards, students earn their Math Master Medal. A rally takes place every six weeks to award students and to continue to motivate them to reach their set goals, especially after watching their friends achieve their goals. After becoming a math master, students earn points for their house system. Everyone wants to be a valuable member of their house family and earn points for excelling in any way they can contribute. The environment set at "The Jackson" is positive and entails a culture defined from the front to the back of the building and known by all who enter the halls.

The character education program stems from the house system. The "Jackson Five" focuses on honesty, perseverance, responsibility, compassion, and respect. Students caught exemplifying the characteristics that make up the Jackson Five receive gold coins. Coins are collected for their house and counted weekly. The house points are displayed on the television screen in the main lobby, and housemates encourage each other to be the winning house for the week. Students strive to exhibit character, not only for a reward, but because they have been taught, it is right.

Reading is the foundation of everything done at Walter Jackson. Using the program Accelerated Reader, teachers set goals for students based on their independent reading level. Every nine weeks, they read books independently and take comprehension tests to earn points applied to their goal. Students must pass with 80% accuracy to receive points. They celebrate with a themed party for students who reach their goals every nine weeks. If they reach their goal all four nine weeks of the year, they participate in the overall party, a huge "WATER DAY!" Students are motivated because the school climate includes continuous encouragement. The culture creates an atmosphere that supports students through successes and failures. They are reminded that failure is motivation. Learning from mistakes, setting new goals, and working hard to accomplish them is essential.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Working with the community and family are significant partnerships that assist overall student success and school improvement. Our Partner in Education, Peoples Bank, is a local bank that contributes to the well-being of the school by providing financial support and volunteering in the school. Our partner provided the requested funds to start our Accelerated Reader (AR) Store this year. Students can buy fantastic prizes with all the points they earn on AR tests. Our partner also supplies and presents recognition plaques for the Student of the Month program, highlighting students who demonstrate specific character traits each month.

Our local youth services also find time to mentor our young boys. This year a small group of minority boys in fifth grade were part of a book study. Led by a distinguished minority gentleman, the students were able to have a mentor in their corner and there to encourage them.

The Walter Jackson community understands students experience hardships at home that can affect their academics. A local church partnership allows us to feed 5% of our student population over the weekend. The Backpack Program, sponsored by First United Methodist Church of Decatur, supplies food staples and kid-friendly items that can be prepared with little to no adult supervision. The church graciously provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the weekend and school vacations.

Through Facebook and our school website, we reach parents with reminders, volunteer opportunities, activities within our school, and share successes. Teachers also communicate through Remind101, Class

Dojo, Google Classroom, and personal emails. Conferences are offered for all students at least once a year and are available anytime by parent request. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is top-notch. Their efforts to support our teachers and the many initiatives we have are unmeasurable.

To continue to educate our parents and remind them that they are a vital piece of the learning process, we host a Parent University Math Night and Literacy Night. Parents receive valuable information about how and when students will be assessed and the standards their child will be learning in their current grade. Teachers even create a take-home activity that parents can use with their child to practice a specific skill relevant to the grade level. When parents gain this information, they can help their children at home. When teachers and families are on the same page about their child's learning, student achievement soars!

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We believe in continuous professional development for our teachers and support staff in their specific service areas. Teachers, paraprofessionals, media specialists, bookkeepers, and nurses all receive yearly training and development to keep their skills polished and current. We believe that teachers are learners too and work daily to improve their craft. Over 60% of our teachers have graduate degrees, with a few currently enrolled, including our principal, that sets the tone. Decatur City Schools is committed to continuing education and encourages teachers through partnerships with universities in nearby cities. This opportunity offers teachers discounted tuition and automatic withdrawals for payments through the virtual approach.

Each year, our district starts off by providing days of professional development that include training in alignment with the upcoming school year goals. For example, we adopted a new math curriculum, and all teachers were paid a daily stipend to attend training. We also require that teachers and various staff positions receive required training annually, such as CPR, Suicide Prevention, Homeless Act, and Department of Human Resources Mandatory Reporting. All teachers in grades kindergarten through third grade are currently enrolled or have completed the state science of reading training. Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training is a two-year professional development course that empowers teachers to understand the what, why, and how of literacy instruction based on scientific research. The new Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts will take effect in the Fall of 2022.

Integration of technology instruction has made a positive impact in our classroom. As a school with one-to-one devices on all grade levels, it is necessary to keep our teachers trained on the latest trends in technology and how to ensure proper usage by students and themselves. Professional development is provided through constant teacher collaboration and offerings of mini-sessions where teachers share new and exciting ways to integrate technology into their instruction. Our media specialist is tuned into the needs of our teachers and arranges training as needed on the latest and greatest tech tools. We can not forget our talented district technology specialist that sends weekly emails that teachers can use as a resource. Along with all the professional development that we have in place, our technology specialist is the final piece of the puzzle that keeps us on track in preparation for the successful implementation of technology instruction.

4. School Leadership:

Our principal is a leader to over 250 students and 40 faculty members. To assist teachers in reading and serving in a leadership role, we also have our reading specialist. Each grade level has a specific teacher who serves as the grade level chair and creates the Building Leadership Team (BLT). Monthly meetings are held with the BLT to develop the Annual Continuous Improvement Plan (ACIP), discuss upcoming professional development, attend to school-wide data and determine needs for improvement in all areas.

Leadership philosophies are the foundation for developing one's leadership style. Walter Jackson strives to portray a leadership structure built upon the belief that teachers will set high expectations for all students. If students are supported and make mistakes along the way, they will learn from those mistakes in preparation for the real world. Our principal's role and philosophy directly match the level of success that we continue to reach here at "The Jackson." Her leadership style is authentic. She is true to her character, true to herself, and she expresses emotions and does not hide the real person she is.

Her values thrive on empowerment, personal development, inspiration, vision, and flexibility. The vision is evident daily as she sets high expectations for students and faculty while supporting them to the end. Our principal is motivated to make authentic decisions that are true to the larger purpose to see results. Our principal has a team following. We are on board with her leadership and vision. She is sincere, and we trust that her vision is realistic and truly valued in her daily leadership walk. Her visibility is key to the relationships that she builds with teachers and students.

Understanding that her philosophy has gained her this role, she is destined to continue to fulfill the position for a long time. She demonstrates her fight for the cause, and aims to motivate children and teachers at all times. As she currently pursues another higher education degree, three teachers are now graduating with a master's, and two more are enrolled. Leading by example, showing the trials along the way, and cheering on everyone is an accurate picture of our leader.

The level of academic achievement is present at Walter Jackson because her team follows her lead, and we believe in all students and their ability to grow. Everything that happens, every activity, and every conversation is intentional, and it is intentional in focus to meet the vision that will continue to excel in our academic achievement.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Walter Jackson Elementary, we know that culturally responsive teaching is a vital step in closing the achievement gap. Teachers understand the cultural differences that cause a breakdown in student achievement and are proactive in addressing barriers as they arise. As part of our diversity plan, the faculty and staff continuously self-reflect. We do this by addressing any stereotypes or unintentional attitudes to understand the cultural nuances that cause a relationship to break down.

Teachers dive deeply into their classroom libraries and daily curricula to ensure that students have access to books that contain diverse characters. Activities like Read Across America week promote diversity and inclusion as students read a variety of diverse and culturally relevant books. Our school library has also grown over the last few years, and the focus is on purchasing new books that represent various cultures and celebrate diversity. Students feel safe in our building and classrooms, and they understand this is their safe place where we share ideas and learn from each other without any judgment. A characteristic that makes Walter Jackson unique is that students are not just a number when they walk through the door; instead, teachers know their stories, family, background, and more. Teachers learn about the different cultures that make up their classroom family.

The month of February acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of African Americans. At Walter Jackson, we have a Black History program that aligns with third and fourth-grade state standards. The theme each year coincides with our school-wide theme, and this year we dove into the lives of famous African American architects. Our second-grade students study the Liberty Learning Foundation program, which has a simple goal: to improve the child, community, and country. It encourages students to take a deeper look into the diversity of our nation and how together we make up the great states of America. Studies Weekly addresses current events and social movements in all grades, creating cultural awareness and allowing all students to enhance their beliefs and expand their knowledge.

The music department at Walter Jackson is second to none! Our music teacher intentionally provides cultural awareness by including various multicultural music, instruments, and dances. In partnership with Representative Terri Collins, Decatur Schools Foundation provided funds used to purchase a collection of tubano drums. This donation enabled the music department to better implement the World Music Drumming curriculum. In addition, each grade level presents a musical production during the school year that incorporates a variety of genres and songs to celebrate diversity.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One instrumental strategy in enriching overall student growth is the positive reinforcement purposely provided by relationships within the school. Walter Jackson is a family that prides themselves on the interpersonal relationships in the school as an attempt to ensure everyone feels welcome. The positive correlation between staff, students, parents, and the community offers a collaborative approach to building relationships in our students' best interests.

Walter Jackson focuses on building and strengthening relationships. We achieve this by buying into the house system, greeting students before school, honoring cultural differences, planning ways that families can be involved, and serving the community with various service projects.

The house system builds upon the concept of family. We incorporate family values, manners, and a feeling of belonging throughout our classrooms and school. Each house has a specific symbol, hand signal, and color. The students love to represent their house positively. Every morning teachers and staff welcome students by name into the building with a greeting and a smile. This initiative allows students to enter the building with a positive mindset and begin the school day knowing they are known, and they are essential. Culture is critical to the members of the Jackson family. We strive to honor differences and ensure all feel welcome by respecting all who enter the building and expressing support for the ethnic backgrounds of our students. Family involvement is a big part of the Walter Jackson community. Families at Walter Jackson attend academic assemblies and assist with special events such as Field Day, Sock Hop, and House Olympics. Community service allows students to give back to the community by learning social skills, compassion, and building relationships. These implementations contribute to our overall academic success by enabling the students to build relationships and grow as individuals.

Relationships are powerful at Walter Jackson, and we feel that this is a solid contribution to our overall success. When we have transient students arrive, there is an adjustment period due to the differences between our school and their past school. Once students adjust, they thrive in the favorable environment set for them in their classroom and school. Many students struggle with trust due to past homelife experiences, but they know they belong to our jaguar family. The effectiveness of our relationships will continue to impact them their whole life. We believe...."Once a jaguar, always a jaguar."