

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 415 Hoschton Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Jefferson State GA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 30549-2770

County Jackson County

Telephone (706) 367-8242 Fax (706) 367-5405

Web site/URL
<https://www.jeffcityschools.org/jefferson-elementary/home> E-mail annette.beckwith@jeffcityschools.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* Dr. Donna McMullan E-mail donna.mcmullan@jeffcityschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Jefferson City School District Tel. (706) 367-2880

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 Ronnie Hopkins
(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):
- 2 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	79	84	163
K	111	138	249
1	141	141	282
2	160	134	294
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	491	497	988

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1.6 % Asian
 - 6.6 % Black or African American
 - 8.9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 77.2 % White
 - 5.4 % 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: 12%

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	77
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	37
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	114
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	988
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %

Total number students who qualify: 102

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 11 %
109 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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>54</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>83</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	49
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	28
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	33
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 22:1

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	95%	96%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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 Jefferson City Schools' mission statement is to "Graduate Fully Functional Adults." To personalize this at the primary level we layer on the motto, "Think, Reach, Shine!" Together these statements help set the stage for a school environment where we all work together to bring out the best in each other.

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

Please find our policy at this link: <https://www.jeffcityschools.org/Content2/nondiscrimination-notifications>

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

N/A

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

According to Wikipedia, hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include "Expect with confidence" and "To cherish a desire with anticipation." At Jefferson Elementary School, we face the future with hope because of the precious students we serve and the partnerships we experience between home, school, and community. It is our desire that as you read about what is happening at our school, you, too, will share in our joy of serving the high calling of being an educator. We have all faced much over the past several years, but our purpose remains the same-to help every person who enters our doors, "Think, Reach, and Shine!"

To help us meet our mission, we base our decisions on the ABCs of an effective school. We choose to focus on Academics, Behavior, and Culture. We want our students to learn the foundational skills that will lead them to later life success. Research tells us that a student not reading on level by grade 3 tends to struggle throughout their school career. This in turn increases dropout rates which plague our nation and inhibit personal achievement. Our mission is to have EVERY child reading on grade level before they leave us.

We also want each child to experience a safe and secure environment where behavior does not impede learning. We have clearly outlined our behavior expectations building-wide, teach them to mastery, and reward positive choices consistently.

Finally, we know the culture of a school colors everything we do. Leadership expert Jon Gordon states, "Culture is the reason why great organizations have sustained success. Culture drives expectations and beliefs. Expectations and beliefs drive behavior. Behavior drives habits. Habits create the future." We hope that as you continue your virtual visit to JES, you will see these threads of excellence woven into all that we do.

Jefferson Elementary School is a PreK-2nd grade public school located in Jefferson, Georgia. Jefferson is located near Atlanta and yet still has a small-town feel. Many people find this attribute, along with the top state school rankings year after year, a desirable attribute causing rapid growth. In the past ten years, our student enrollment has grown from 748 to 990 students this year. Our system has conducted a growth study and is making plans to accommodate the future by expanding our buildings. We are a Title 1 Targeted Assistance School, and our honors include:

- *Title 1 Distinguished School 3 Years in a Row
- *5 Star Climate Ranking 5 Years in a Row
- *Reader's Choice School of the Year (Multiple Years)
- *STAR Promises Practices in the Area of RTI/MTSS
- *High Ranking 3rd Grade Milestone Scores

We have included a short video created by our System Technology Specialist to give you a digital view of our school and system. We hope you enjoy learning about our school as you read about our efforts to provide a world-class education to every student who enters our doors!

Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4WmLvcAcvQ> What Does It Take to Build a Dragon?

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:

Visitors to Jefferson Elementary School find a wide variety of instructional methods in use throughout the school day. We are committed to continual research in order to employ the best methods of instruction. For example, while Jefferson Elementary teachers have been long-standing proponents of small group guided reading, they are also reflective on ways to bring better instructional practices to their students. The kindergarten team spearheaded the task of studying the Jan Richardson method of guided reading. They spent a year applying new thought processes to reading instruction. Their passion readily spread and new practices were implemented, both formally through professional development and informally because of teachers' enthusiasm for sharing.

Third-grade data noted gaps in students we sent to the Academy (the district's school for 3rd-5th graders). When analyzed, it was noted that the Foundations curriculum aligned to fill these gaps and thus was added to the second-grade literacy block several years ago. A statement from the Academy assistant principal stated, "Yesterday, I had the opportunity to sit in on our half-day planning with 3rd-grade teachers. I asked them to let me know if there was anything at all that JES could do to help prepare the students that come to them. They were quick to agree that their students are coming ready for 3rd grade! While I am not at all surprised, I just wanted to take a minute to remind you of the difference you make."

A final example includes the system preK-5 adoption of Eureka math. While our scores were high in math, our top-achieving student group was not growing. We want to reach the needs of ALL students. A search ensued to determine the next steps. Eureka develops conceptual understandings as opposed to promoting the memorization of a formula and we are seeing a difference in our data. As you can see, determining the best practices for children is an ongoing discussion. Teachers are encouraged to think, explore, and feel safe trying out new approaches. A continuous cycle of improvement for staff and students is the end result.

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

Reading is everywhere and highly valued at JES. Ninety minutes of the morning are devoted to reading instruction. A remarkable guided reading book collection allows teachers to provide exposure to a range of topics including science, history, and folklore. A love for books is communicated as classroom teachers regularly share their favorite texts for writing instruction and simply for enjoyment. Teachers use the Jan Richardson guided reading model selected for its Assess-Decide-Guide framework. Instruction begins with a mini-lesson for the whole class. Small group instruction follows while the other students are engaged in reading, writing, and listening rotations. An individualized computer program entitled iRead is one of the 20-minute rotations used daily. iRead meets every child right where they are to further differentiate instruction. Systematic assessments help teachers place students within flexible, small groups. Daily reflection focuses on "What will I need to teach this child/group today to help them be a better reader tomorrow?" Students engage in word work, reading comprehension, and written responses with their teachers. Additionally, Early Intervention teachers push into the classrooms to provide students who are not yet at grade level with two twenty-minute guided reading sessions. Access to this service is determined by our universal screener which is given three times per year by our testing team.

Teachers collaborate quarterly in data teams to review formative and summative reading and language assessments. Areas of strength and weaknesses are targeted, discussed, and action plans are put in place. Team members bring suggestions and strategies to ensure that all students are successful. Morning tutoring groups and small groups led by various staff members meet before school to target students not responding to the core curriculum.

Foundational reading skills are again emphasized during our 45-minute literacy block. Teachers utilize the

research-based curriculum Foundations to provide explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, word study, vocabulary development, and the application of strategies for understanding text. Direct teaching of handwriting and spelling is included also. Students in Tier 2 of the MTSS process receive Foundations in a small group as an intervention.

A formal 45-minute writing block grants teachers and students the opportunity to engage in a gradual release writing process. Teachers model writing pieces, write in tandem with their students and support independent writing with individual and small group conferences. Genres are introduced and returned to in a planned cycle. The Write Score program, aligned with state standards, provides tools for classroom writing instruction that meet the diverse needs of our students. Write Score guides our students to understand and practice a variety of writing forms to empower them with a greater selection of writing strategies. With Write Score, teachers are able to analyze a student's ability to apply knowledge in a performance writing task. In the end, our students have a greater selection of effective writing strategies to use for any writing assignment, no matter the genre. All of this together creates a literacy-rich environment that soaks our students in what they need to be successful!

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

As a part of our constant pursuit of excellence, our system adopted the Eureka Math program several years ago. This curriculum was chosen for its comprehensive, rigorous approach. According to greatminds.org, “Thoughtfully constructed and designed like a story, Eureka Math is meticulously coherent, with an intense focus on key concepts that layer over time, creating enduring knowledge. Students gain a complete body of math knowledge, not just a discrete set of skills. They use the same models and problem-solving methods from grade to grade, so math concepts stay with them, year after year.”

Despite the careful consideration of many curricula before choosing Eureka, the adoption was not left to chance. It called for a significant change in instructional approaches, which meant extensive professional development and support for our teachers. The system provided training via an overview of the program during the summer, and all teachers were paid a stipend for attending. Our JCS Board provided all needed materials: workbooks, assessments, teacher guides, and manipulative kits. Release times to watch the provided PD videos, a curriculum calendar created by grade level leaders, and quarterly check-ins with a trainer were all put in place. This wrap-around approach helped our teachers and students experience success during this change.

Each lesson contains four components: fluency practice, concept development, application problem, and student debrief. Together they create a cycle of learning that works!

*Fluency Practice: Almost all lessons begin with a practice that supports the development of fluency. The repeated practice promotes automaticity and confidence.

*Concept Development: New content is introduced, and time is allowed for discussion and practice through the differentiated problem set.

*Application Problem: During this time, students put to use the knowledge gained in novel settings through the use of word problems.

*Student Debrief: Every lesson closes with a whole-group discussion, challenging students to share their thinking thus solidifying learning instead of just rushing from topic to topic. The math lesson ends with an Exit Ticket students complete, which checks for understanding of essential learnings of the day and helps drive instruction.

With Eureka Math, students are given opportunities to improve on basic math skills through repeated practice and are also given countless opportunities to explore new math concepts using hands-on models and multiple strategies. Our students have become problem solvers in all areas since the adoption of Eureka Math. At the mid-year point, our STAR scores indicate that even with learning loss due to COVID 19 our students are thriving with only 8% below 25% and 54% at 75% and above. The curriculum is not only

challenging and rigorous, but our students love math. Many students state that math is their favorite part of the day!

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

At Jefferson Elementary, science instruction is approached in a variety of ways. Each grade level has worked collaboratively to create a pacing guide to ensure all science standards are taught for the school year. With the school's primary focus on literacy, many science standards are woven into reading instruction. The school's media specialist surveyed teachers, asking what specific subjects would be desired in non-fiction guided reading books. Providing science texts at multiple reading levels helps teachers allow more students to read texts tightly aligned with state science standards. Teachers integrate science standards into their guided reading lessons using these books. Teachers also plan interactive lessons throughout the school year, working on teaching the science standards in a way that connects the standards to real life.

The school system also employs a BioSTEAM coordinator. This individual works with our teachers to plan interactive lessons that are fun and engaging for our students while also addressing science standards. These lessons are often integrated into our specials rotation, allowing teachers to keep their classroom schedule uninterrupted. Through the BioSTEAM program, the school provides environmental and sustainability education linked to STEM/STEAM skills. Ongoing projects include classroom visits for activities related to water conservation, water quality, recycling, environmental stewardship, ecosystem diversity, wildlife conservation, forest functions, and many more. The annual BioSTEAM Family Day event is undertaken each spring and involves all K-2 students first participating in lessons about local wildlife and creating artwork to celebrate different ecosystems. The artwork is then displayed at a special art show along trails at the school wetlands property nearby the school. Students visit the wetlands during the Family Day event to view their artwork and learn about the ecosystem from local experts and volunteer groups that lead activities throughout the day.

A large initiative that will be implemented throughout the school shortly is the BioBuddies project, modeled on the Athens-Clarke County Little Lily's Pad Hop project that was piloted in the school with first-grade classes. The BioBuddies project fosters literacy skills, family involvement in education, and conservation practices. Each classroom preK-2nd will be provided with a kit including a stuffed animal mascot and themed books appropriate for each grade level. Students will bring the animal mascot and books home to read with their families. Also at home, students will work with their families to discuss a vital conservation issue related to the stories in their kit. For example, an otter stuffed animal will be part of the first-grade kits. At home, students will learn about ecosystems where a river otter can be found and how litter can affect our local rivers. Students will discuss how waste is created and ideas for stopping pollution.

An additional science resource is High Touch High Tech, a company that provides in-house "field trips." A scientist from the company comes to the school and teaches science standards selected by each grade level through interactive experiments and activities that are enjoyed by all.

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

Social studies and civic learning are intertwined in nearly every aspect of the day at JES. We are teaching students to be successful, contributing citizens of the community. Each grade follows a teacher-created pacing guide to ensure all social studies standards are taught throughout the year. Our teachers strive to develop well-rounded students who understand our history, where we live, and how we can create a better community for everyone. Many standards are integrated into our reading and writing instruction. JES is well-equipped with a multitude of texts that can be used to enrich social studies instruction. We have leveled books to provide students an opportunity to access texts about cultures around the world, as well as mentor texts used in writing. Our teachers provide hands-on learning experiences whenever possible. Students create landform models with food, classrooms transform into an ice cream shop to understand economic concepts, and students create personal timelines to understand vocabulary such as past, present, and future. Students also research famous individuals during our Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum class.

The school community lends itself to creating good citizens who strive to be their best and enrich the lives

of others. Each day, our students recite the Pledge of Allegiance and the school motto: “Jefferson Elementary School Dragons Roar! We are respectful, we are on task and ready, we are always safe, and we are responsible.” The ROAR motto is posted throughout the school, and teachers have access to teacher-created videos explicitly teaching correct behavior in all areas of the school. In addition to teaching good citizenship, JES exposes students to a variety of occupations to help them begin to envision their future. Pre-K and kindergarten classes invite community members to showcase their careers, including firefighters, dentists, electricians, and many more. This year, our school took on the One-Word Challenge. This focused on goal setting for each child and adult in the building as they chose their word to live by for 2022. The lesson began with a read-aloud lesson, followed by students and adults writing their words on a paper snowflake, which then became a huge display in our main hall. This was an inspiring sight to walk by each day! During lunch administrators often share a thought for the day such as setting intentions, a kindness challenge, and displaying good manners in all areas of the school. We want to equip students not only academically but for life as well.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

We are fortunate to have eight state-funded Georgia Bright from the Start Pre-K classrooms in our building. Our classrooms are very literacy-rich environments where students can explore, play, and learn. Students have literacy, phonics, math, science, and social studies instruction. In addition, they meet all of the requirements of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). The GELDS covers the following domains: Physical Development and Motor Skills, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Play and Learning, Communication, Language and Literacy, and Cognitive Development and General Knowledge.

We feel passionate about helping our youngest learners have a great start to their educational journey. Moreover, we believe that it is our responsibility to prepare them for the curriculum they will encounter as they move into our Kindergarten through second-grade classrooms. For this reason, we have aligned the curriculum we use with all Pre-K through 2nd-grade students. Our students have Foundations for their phonics/ phonemic awareness instruction and the Eureka math program for mathematics instruction. We also have access to the Jan Richardson Guided Reading program for ready learners. We believe that we must meet all of our students where they are and provide them with the best instructional support we can.

Over the years, we have discovered that early education has a powerful impact on school readiness and success in school. We have been gathering data in this area to move forward with an Early Learning Center concept to help us reach more students in these formative years. Our data analysis for three consecutive years shows that of the students who were ready and on target for kindergarten, 68% of them had attended our Pre-K program. We feel the urgency to help our students reach their full potential and guide them to a successful future.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

JES students K-2 participate in art and music classes once for each subject during a six-day specials rotation. Students and parents enjoy an art show where their drawings and pottery are displayed. All students participate in the Art in the Park contest, where winners are recognized at Hurricane Shoals Park during their annual festival. Second graders participate in the Daughters of the American Revolution history poster contest annually. This year, new to JES, is our “Starry Night,” a spring event where students will showcase their Van Gogh artwork in exhibit form. Furthering the arts, all students participate in one musical performance during the school year. Students work on grade-specific themed performances and showcase talents at our local high school performing arts center.

JES students K-2 participate in PE twice during a six-day rotation. Students can be seen moving to music with themed activities, such as the Ninja Jump Rope Challenge, Winter Olympics, Hot Lava Island, etc.

Students engage in healthy competition among grade-level classes. Rewards such as “Champion Belts” are given to classes to adorn their door. Additionally, students in Pre-K through 2 participate in the annual Dragon Dash, where students earn pledged amounts for laps run, and 100% of the profit goes back into the school. Wrapping up each school year, students participate in the Field Day activities where parents are invited to view the fun and our Jefferson High School JROTC students assist in leading the games making this a community event!

JES students K-2 participate in both technology and library classes during their rolling six-day specials rotation. Students learn to use Google Classroom and other Chromebook programs to engage in reading and writing in our Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum Class. Students can be found working on fun activities with the interactive panel or Chromebook. This year's example units include Monster Cause and Effect and Parts of a Story Pizzeria. The JES media center is open for students daily in addition to attending their scheduled class time. At any given time, you will find students perusing the shelves for special “Golden Tickets” on books, participating in the “i-Genre” or “Dewey Decimal Challenge.” Encouraging reading through challenges has been found to motivate students. Accelerated Reader (AR) is utilized K-2 and rewards students as a class and individually. Classes complete yearly themed AR programs such as “Reading Through Life.” Classes meet goals and earn rewards. Students in second-grade help lead the morning announcements and participate in the Library Helpers Program, where they learn the basics of running a library.

Character building and social supports implemented for students at JES include research-based Second Steps curriculum, monthly counseling lessons, access to the school counselor, behavior interventionist, school psychologists, student support services coordinator, mentor opportunities, after school and summer PLUS program, and partnership with Boys and Girls Club. Teachers implement SEL practices within their classrooms through morning meetings. Further enhancing character and strengthening social-emotional learning, all students participate in monthly read alouds by the Administration Team. Books selected encourage social and emotional development. Some of the books used this school year include: *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev; *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold; *Pick A Pine Tree* by Patricia Toht; and *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers.

Our BioSTEAM program provides environmental and sustainability education that is linked to STEM/STEAM skills and is described in detail in section 1d. Additionally, JES carries out annual STEAM nights where families come together for a free dinner, STEAM activities, and BioBus touring. This year we had over 200 people attend this event. We seek to find meaningful ways to invite our parents into our building to help build partnerships between the school and home.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

At Jefferson Elementary School, we are committed to being data-driven and using that data to best enhance our students' educational experiences. We begin by administering a Universal Screening tool to all Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Students three times per year. Our MTSS Coordinator then analyzes the data to determine which students fall in the at-risk category. As students are identified as needing additional support, we begin the MTSS Process and put Tier 2 interventions into place. Our Early Intervention staff implements the interventions and progress monitors those students monthly. Upon reviewing the progress monitoring data, we will change the intervention and continue to review progress if adequate progress is not made. If we are not making enough progress, we will move a student to Tier 3 support and monitor progress more frequently. We are fortunate to have eight Early Intervention teachers and one Title One teacher who are a driving force of intervention and progress monitoring throughout our building.

Additionally, we have students who are not quite at grade level but do not require intensive intervention at Tier 2 and Tier 3; these students are placed in an Early Intervention classroom. Our Early Intervention Classrooms have an Intervention teacher who pushes in to provide additional support for a 45-minute reading segment and a 45-minute math segment. We have found that giving that extra layer of support has

been integral in helping our students achieve academic success. We ended last school year at 7% at risk on our Dibels assessment on the heels of the learning loss we have experienced due to Covid.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Jefferson Elementary is a high-performing school with 67% of our student body performing above the benchmark on Dibels on the end-of-year universal screener. We understand that it is imperative that we not only strive to teach our most at-risk students but that we ensure our high-achieving and gifted students receive the instruction they need to succeed. At each grade level, we have multiple gifted certified teachers, and our gifted-identified students are placed in their homeroom. They are not only placed with a teacher who is qualified to teach them, but they are also with like-minded peers. Additionally, they receive homogeneous instruction during our pull-out literacy block for 45 minutes each day. This time allows them to work on gifted projects such as writing and authoring books; then students share their books with parents during a special night, research projects to include digital presentations they share with classmates, art projects to accompany research on animals followed-up by a unique field trip to a local "safari." All of these projects and learning opportunities help accelerate their learning and develop the academic skills needed as they mature in their learning. In their homerooms, we differentiate our instruction and use small flexible groups to meet all students' needs. These groups allow us to target each student's instruction and help develop our learners to achieve their highest potential.

3c. Special education:

At Jefferson Elementary School, we believe that by consistently providing a robust and research-based curriculum by teachers who have been trained, many learning gaps will be avoided. When they are noted, our MTSS process described above is implemented. Upon qualifying for special education, a variety of settings exist to meet the needs of our students. A three-year-old self-contained classroom is filled with children from our community identified as Significantly Developmentally Delayed. A coordinator works with our speech and language teachers to hold screenings monthly so that no child is overlooked.

As we move into PreK, we host a Bright for the Start inclusion class with a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, and a paraprofessional in a class capped at 18 students. In grades kindergarten through second, we have an inclusion class with two teachers and a supportive setting with a certified teacher and a special education paraprofessional. We seek to keep these classes at 18 or below as well to reduce the class size and therefore increase support. Due to growth, next year we are adding an additional inclusion class at each grade level.

Several years ago our data supported a need for increased support in the area of behavior. The district contracted with an outside behavior interventionist who visited all our classrooms. She then provided tiered professional development ranging from how to create solid routines and procedures across the building to very targeted training on safely de-escalating outbursts when they occur. A behavior resource class was added through this work which has successfully helped some of our most at-risk behavior students gain much-needed self-regulation strategies in a small group setting and have now transitioned back to the inclusion classroom. This is a victory we are celebrating!

Our students qualifying for an alternate curriculum are served in a resource setting by a certified teacher and several paraprofessionals, and our students are served by three school-based speech and language therapists. A district special education director and a school-based coordinator are always at hand to assist when needed and provide support for our teachers via a monthly special education teacher meeting. They also quarterly hold parent meetings to promote partnership and future support for our stakeholders. All of this together demonstrates that we seek to serve the needs of every student by meeting them where they are and helping each one meet their full potential.

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

Language Learners are placed with homeroom teachers who have the support of EL-certified teachers during their reading and math blocks. The EL certified teachers are available to support their learners and

scaffold the instruction to meet the needs of each student dependent on their English Language Proficiency scores. In addition to the daily support within the classroom, our ELL students have a weekly pull-out session with their peers. We have found that this environment allows for confidence to be built as our students are more comfortable with a small group of their peers. We have found that they are more willing to talk and share during this class period. The EL teachers have very targeted instruction in the four domains of Listening, Speaking, Writing, and Reading. We have two teachers who team together, one pair teaches the K-1 group, and the other teaches the second-grade group during the weekly pull-out sessions. Moreover, we plan a field trip specifically to a vocabulary-rich environment for our EL students to learn, grow, and explore new surroundings. If any of our EL students are part of the MTSS program, they receive additional intervention and support layered on top of any English Language services.

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

Jefferson City School System works with multiple agencies to ensure coordination efforts on behalf of migrant, immigrant, ELL, homeless, neglected, and at-risk students. Collaboration takes place with Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, Jackson County Family Connections, MEP Consortium Staff at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and regional office staff (GaDOE MEP Region 1 Office in Brooklet) education agency, DFCS, and other agencies to help monitor mobility and identify stakeholders to help meet the needs of individual families. As these students enter the school system, registrars ask a series of questions in conjunction with the Home Language Survey, Migrant Education Survey, and Student Residency Survey (McKinney-Vento Act) to assess the status of students' needs. Following the initial interview, the school counselor, intervention specialist, ESOL Coordinator, MTSS Coordinator, and/or the Student Support Specialist meets with the students, families, and appropriate area agencies to determine what student/family needs are and how best to meet those needs with the appropriate agency/service. Additionally, students are referred throughout the year on an ongoing basis as needs are identified. Educational services offered to these students include regular education, early intervention (EIP), remedial education, Title I, gifted, MTSS, special education, English Language Learner, mentoring, before/after school tutoring, and group/individual counseling services. Additional needs may consist of uniform assistance, weekend food bags, daily snacks, school supplies, gas cards, hotel accommodations, or whatever unmet needs are identified from the collaboration with the family, school, and community agencies.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

In March 2020, our district announced that all students were going home for a time of distance learning due to COVID 19. It was anticipated that this would be a two-week break, but as we all know, it extended to the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Our district planned for just such a type of situation by seeking to go 1:1 with technology over the past few years and by adding a Digital Learning Specialist (DLS) who serves all four schools. Even though we were not quite at that point, over one weekend all computer labs were dismantled, class sets were combined, and every student from kindergarten to 12 grade went home with a Chromebook. Multiple days and pick-up stations were offered to our parents to ensure every student K-12 had a device.

Previous professional development from our system DLS and our on-site digital specials teacher ensured our teachers were as well prepared as possible. Students were familiar with Google Classroom as it is used in our Digital Specials Class and by homeroom teachers. A format of online programs that students use at school (iRead for Reading and Phonics, Kids A-Z for Reading, and Zearn for math), homeroom teacher support via lessons and check-ins, and even distanced home visits when needed kept us all connected. Our system did not qualify for the free meals during the shutdown but our community gathered together and funded a breakfast and lunch program that was prepared by our cafeteria staff and delivered to our families in need by bus drivers and system staff. Due to this combined school, community, and family effort, our students' instruction remained strong. At the end of the year, iRead scores indicated our at-risk percentage increased by only 2% despite the shutdown.

Fast forward to the 2020-21 school year. Many schools remained closed or delayed start-up due to COVID 19. Studies were beginning to indicate the harmful effects of this decision on our students, especially the very young that our PreK-2 school educates and cares for. Our system leaders worked tirelessly over the summer with the CDC and DPH guidelines. They gathered information from local health officials and combined all of this into our COVID-19 Start-Up Protocol. We modified arrival and dismissal to reduce large crowds. We set our rooms up to promote social distancing. We ate in our rooms to reduce contacts and added additional custodial staff to ensure the cleaning of high-touch areas and well-stocked bathrooms. Strict contact tracing and quarantine procedures were implemented. The end result? One hundred and eighty days of face-to-face instruction with 95% student attendance. Now that is a story worth telling!

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The whole child is the center of JES, and this means we strongly believe Maslow's hierarchy of needs must be met for children to be successful. Support for the whole child and family includes our school clothes closet, Fostering Hope Clothing Resource, food ministries, mentoring, church partnerships, Mckenny Vento assistance, and Jackson County Connection Resources. The JES clothing closet encourages families to take gently used uniforms as needed. Families cycle through the uniforms during the school year, donating them back to the school. When students are in need, the school counselor contacts the family to see if sending uniforms home would be helpful and if any other resources are needed. JES works closely with Fostering Hope, which offers clothing assistance to the whole family. In addition, we give back to this organization through leftover lost and found items and advertising for them on social media when they are low in stock on certain items.

JES partners with the community to provide nutritional assistance to students identified to have limited resources. We offer the Dragon Snack program and Nutrition on the Weekend. The Dragon Snack program supplies fifty students with snacks on a daily basis. The Nutrition on the Weekend supports twenty-six of our school families with weekend breakfast, lunch, snacks, and dinner for the weekend. Our high school JROTC program adopts four of our pre-k through second-grade families to assist during the Thanksgiving season with a complete meal that is taken to their residence.

Our community mentoring program (Helping Hands) was paused during the Covid pandemic. However, we

worked with our high school to allow students interested in teaching to come into the school to help mentor students. Because we had to get creative, we implemented tutoring small groups led by administrators, paraprofessionals, and EI teachers.

JES partners with local churches who organize drives that donate back to the school with new socks, underwear, backpacks, school supplies, toothbrushes/toothpaste, etc. Additionally, these organizations help the school with school grounds and construction projects for the students in their playground areas.

JES works closely with our Student Support Specialist (SSS) to make sure family needs are met. Work includes identifying needs and finding local resources to help alleviate the needs. One specific example this year includes a local church adopting a mom in need to provide transitional housing until something permanent could be found. Additionally, the SSS helps run the McKenny Vento program, which has funds that support transportation, medical and housing costs for homeless families within our school.

JES also partners with Jackson County Family Connection, which offers families financial support, housing resources, and holiday gift assistance. Meetings with Jackson County Family Connection are attended once a month by the school counselor during our school system's Student Support Team meeting. Partnering with our stakeholders ensures we as a community meet the hierarchical needs that promote student success.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

In 2020, esteemed educators and researchers, including Pamela Cantor, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Karen Pittman, published a paper on the science of learning and development. They stated, "The presence and quality of our relationships may have more impact on learning and development than any other factor." Their words are substantiated at Jefferson Elementary as we have committed to addressing the sweeping impact of learning loss created by COVID 19. Upon enrollment, many parents stated at-home learning did not take place and they knew their children were going to need extra support.

In anticipation, JES school leaders ventured forward with a trial plan. Teachers were invited to note impacted students as demonstrated by data, teacher observation, and parent input. The literacy coach then completed an in-depth assessment of strengths and weaknesses utilizing the reading assessments provided with our Jan Richardson Guided Reading curriculum. These assessments pinpointed student gaps. An individualized academic plan was developed for each child, and students were thoughtfully assigned to an encouraging adult who provided one-on-one or small group instruction.

Fast-forward to the 2021 school year. Currently, 51 students are meeting four days a week for 15-30 minute reading lessons with an adult who is committed to helping them achieve grade-level reading results. This has required all hands on deck. The principal, assistant principals, paraprofessionals, teachers, bookkeepers - all are needed, and the impact is clear. Students eagerly look forward to meeting with their adults. In some cases, they have even asked for an additional time! Our STAR Reading results speak for themselves as to the effectiveness of this plan. We have moved from 25% to only 12% in the bottom quartile and from 33% to 52% in the top quartile! These are not numbers; they are children who have moved from being unsuccessful readers to proficient. Perhaps most revealing about the plan's effectiveness is that teachers continue to ask for student support for additional students. Teachers have been positively affected as well, knowing they are not alone in addressing student needs. We are all in this together!

4. School Leadership:

We believe in distributed leadership. This is implemented through the heavy reliance on the leadership team and committee chairs. The JES leadership team is composed of three administrators and ten additional elected grade/department heads. We meet monthly to review school improvement goals and overall school functioning. At each meeting, information is shared from the administration to take back to grade levels, and actual plans are formulated to better our school. Celebrations and concerns are freely aired, and problems are solved as a group. A summer day-long retreat each year helps focus this team on our purpose for the upcoming year. This past summer, after COVID shut down and then a year of quarantines, we wanted to do everything possible to set our school and students up for success. As a group, we audited our

five system school improvement goals to determine:

1. Where are we strong and how do we know?
2. What next steps exist for us in each area?
3. What will we commit to doing to address the next steps?

Our district Director of Communications worked with us to design a wraparound communications plan to help our parents stay connected even when they were not allowed in the building for the second year in a row. Our parent surveys reflect they appreciate the daily contact via agendas, weekly communication through the homework folder and grade level newsletter, and a monthly school newsletter. We also created communication guidelines for effective emails and the use of Facebook to tell our story. This entire plan was developed at the summer leadership retreat!

In addition, we have nine committees aligned with our school improvement goals. Staff members sign up for the committees of their choice and together they create an action plan for how their committee can best serve our school. Each committee has two co-chairs which again provides additional opportunities for service and leadership. Staff members are encouraged to dream their dreams and use their gifts to enrich the lives of our staff and students. Presentations and workshops on cultural sensitivity, stress management, and school-wide STEAM lessons were all created and implemented through our committees. A Learning Loss plan that assigned at-risk students to staff members and created morning tutoring groups is another example. Last but not least A Starry Night Book Fair Extravaganza, where the entire school was decorated, parents invited, and food trucks were available on the front lawn is another example of what we can do when we lead and work together!

The leadership team continually seeks to grow their own skills as they participate in book studies of various books such as *The Advantage*, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *The Power of Positive Leadership*, and *The Culture Code*. As we embrace being lifelong learners, we model this important life skill to our students, peers, and parents.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Interpersonal relationships are significant to our school climate. At JES, we recognize the importance and value of our students' diverse backgrounds and needs. Together we stand for each other and we stand for our students. JES thrives because of our commitment to being a family. Our character of being a family goes well beyond the walls of JES. Our JES family reaches deep into our neighborhoods and even extends into the world. JES offers a variety of support for students, their families, and staff.

JES is located in an agriculturally rich area, which draws in many English learners. Students of diverse populations are centered around a positive school climate that offers the opportunity to grow without fear of judgment. JES employs highly trained ESOL certified teachers who partner with classroom teachers to create positive classroom communities that embrace diversity. At JES, you will see an openness and respect for continually working towards cultural and self-awareness. Resources are readily available to staff for implementing cultural awareness within the classroom. JES also strives to create a diverse staff body. Our diverse staff makeup includes differences in race, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, and religious orientation. This allows for students to view diversity in multiple career roles and fosters how diversity is celebrated and respected throughout the school community.

Due to current economic trends and lack of housing resources, we have many families doubling up or who are considered homeless. Counselors for the entire system attended a poverty summit to help understand how poverty affects the family as a whole. Counselors walked away with first-hand knowledge and valuable resources to share with their school families.

Support for staff includes a list of free or low-cost resources, which can be viewed inside a resource letter. JES staff have confidential access to our Jefferson City Schools Student Support Services Coordinator, who

can connect staff with counselors within or outside of the community. Staff receive weekly Wellness Wednesday Newsletters that offer a variety of support and assistance, from health to financial wellbeing. Staff are encouraged to build relationships within their grade level and participate in functions outside of the school. Staff are supported and encouraged to take days off as needed. Staff morale is supported with frequent jeans/yoga pants days, daily coffee/snack bar, catered luncheons, school spirit shirts, monthly read alouds that offer staff an extra break in the day, flexible arrival and leave times, and money for class supplies. Staff experience the support of community stakeholders who frequently provide lunch and breakfast throughout the school year.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Author Jeff Henderson in his book For states, "In a hypercritical, cynical world, one that is often known for what it is against, let us be a group of people known for who and what we are FOR." It is our ardent desire that, through our words, you have gained insight into our passion FOR our students, families, and community. We believe warmth is the necessary ingredient that enables all growth to take place. Yes, we pursue excellence. Yes, we analyze data. Yes, we continually improve. But, what we really seek to make come alive FOR every adult and child is the knowledge that they are accepted FOR who they are, they will be called forward to become their best, and we are FOR them! The words we received from a parent say it better than we ever could. We thank you for this opportunity for reflection and hope you have enjoyed our story.

[JES Principal],

Nine years ago I dropped off my first child at Jefferson Elementary for his first day of preschool. Today, I dropped off my last child for her last day at Jefferson Elementary School. July 2012 was the first time I entered your school, and today will be the last day I leave your school. Over the past nine years, I have trusted you and your staff with my babies. During good days, bad weather days, no heat days, cranky kid days, field days, broken arm days, sick days, global pandemic days, and approximately 1,620 days in between, I have been able to drop off, go to work, focus on my job, and return to pick up happy, healthy and smiling kids. Every school day since then, I have been grateful to you, your teachers, support staff, cafeteria staff, maintenance, and janitorial staff for putting the needs of my kids, and hundreds of others first. I haven't said thank you nearly enough. So please let me say it now to you and your staff for all that you have done for the entire nine years, a Cofer kid has been in your care, especially this year with so many uncertainties.

I hate that during the pandemic, I missed the opportunity to walk in and laugh with you, sit down in the parent cafe for one last JES lunch to hear all about the school day, and watch my last little move about the hallways that used to be so big and wide and long. Nevertheless, I have great memories of JES, and my children do as well. We entered Jefferson Elementary School for the first time anxious and uncertain, and we leave today knowing that our children could not have received a better education from a more dedicated group of people than at JES.

The calendar moves forward whether I am ready for it or not. Thank you for all that your school has done, and all that you have prepared our children for. We love JES and will always be grateful to you.

Love,

The Cofer Family,

David, Maggie, Austin, and Avery