

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

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

School Mailing Address 607 East Jefferson
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Mount Ayr State IA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 50854-2200

County Ringgold County

Telephone (641) 464-0537 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.mtayschools.org E-mail chris.elwood@mtayschools.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Jason Shaffer E-mail jason.shaffer@mtayschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Mount Ayr Community School District Tel. (641) 464-0506

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. Brandi Shay
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	27	17	44
K	27	24	51
1	26	14	40
2	25	13	38
3	24	27	51
4	24	16	40
5	17	16	33
6	33	20	53
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	203	147	350

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0.9 % Asian
 - 0.9 % Black or African American
 - 1.7 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 95.9 % White
 - 0.6 % 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: 4%

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	282
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 51 %

Total number students who qualify: 177

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 14 %
48 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>7</u> Autism | <u>24</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>21</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</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: 10
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.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

In partnership with families and community, Mount Ayr Community School District will provide a caring and creative environment where all students are encouraged to reach their full social, emotional, ethical, physical and intellectual potential through academic, service learning and extra-curricular activities. Mount Ayr Community School District's vision strives to create excellence in education. Mount Ayr Community School District encourages our students to be responsible, respectful, and productive citizens of the world.

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

It is the policy of the Mount Ayr Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability status, protected veteran status, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training.

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

The Mount Ayr Community School District is made up of the town of Mount Ayr and eight rural towns in Ringgold and Taylor counties. The district covers 405 square miles, which is geographically the fourth largest in the state of Iowa. The Mount Ayr Community School District is made up of approximately 650 students in Preschool through 12th grade. The district currently employs 63 teachers and three administrators. The district is in south central Iowa, twenty miles from the Missouri border. It has a significant number of students of low SES, as over half of our students qualify for free or reduced meals. Although poverty may present obstacles to learning and often makes our job more challenging, we don't let it keep us from maximizing the potential of our students.

Mount Ayr Elementary School strives to create excellence in education for all students. We encourage our students to be responsible, respectful, and productive citizens of the world. In partnership with families and community, Mount Ayr Elementary School provides a caring and creative environment where all students are encouraged to reach their full social, emotional, ethical, physical, and intellectual potential through academic and extra-curricular activities. We believe for the educational process to be successful, there needs to be a family, school, and community partnership. We consistently model the characteristics of fairness, caring, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, and citizenship. We realize that character counts at Mount Ayr Elementary School. Mount Ayr Elementary School has been recognized as a “High-Performing” building for the last four years on the Iowa School Performance Profile. Only 13% of almost 1,300 school buildings in Iowa achieve this designation. Achieving this designation four years in a row shows the amount of hard work and determination from our students and staff.

Mount Ayr Elementary School is composed of grades Preschool through 6th grade. We have three sections for Preschool and Kindergarten, and two sections of 2nd grade through 6th grade. We have approximately 350 students enrolled in our building, including the Little Raider Preschool, which moved into the elementary building at the beginning of this school year. Our students have access to 1-to-1 technology in our classrooms with iPads or laptop computers. All classrooms have state of the art smart panel boards to enhance the learning process through interactive lessons.

Mount Ayr Elementary School students benefit from the utilization of multi-tiered system of supports. Each grade-level has 30 minutes a day of MTSS that is protected with fidelity. During this 30-minute time frame, students are put into small groups based on their skill level. Title I teachers, grade-level teachers, and SPED teachers are utilized during MTSS. Mount Ayr Elementary School has implemented Love and Logic strategies throughout the building to build strong relationships between students and staff. With these strategies, students grow through their mistakes and learn from the consequences of their choices. At the same time, adults set firm limits in loving ways without anger, lecture, threats, or repeated warnings.

Mount Ayr Elementary School has a very successful Teacher Leadership Program that was implemented six years ago. The program utilizes peer observations in a nonthreatening way to improve instruction, which will in turn improve student achievement. At Mount Ayr Elementary School, we realize that the mental health of students is a priority and have made strides to address these needs. We increased our services to provide a full-time Guidance Counselor and a full-time Social Worker. Due to these increased services, Mount Ayr Elementary School can provide class-wide guidance lessons, as well as individual and small group counseling. Our students also have the opportunity each week to participate in library, health, music, art, physical education, and exploratory classes.

Mount Ayr Elementary School strives to provide the best educational experience possible for our students. We want our students to not only succeed academically, but to also become productive citizens. Mount Ayr Elementary School is an exemplary school where meeting the needs of ALL students is the number one priority.

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:

Iowa Common Core Standards provide the framework that guides instructional decisions at Mount Ayr Elementary School. The Iowa Department of Education ensures that standards meet these expectations are measurable, focused, challenging, synchronized, connected, and specific. Iowa Common Core Standards provide yearly expectations against which student progress toward learning goals can be measured. Teachers need a clear sense of what students must know and be able to do to measure their progress. Content area standards support consistent assessment of student learning across schools and districts. The Iowa Common Core Standards are aimed at preparing students for the rigorous challenges in postsecondary education and careers. They demonstrate priorities about the concepts and skills that are required learning in our K-12 system. Standards must build in complexity so that by the end of high school, students are prepared for post-secondary education and the workforce. Standards outline the level of thinking that is appropriate for the content and expected developmental level. At the same time, it must be considered that students develop skills and conceptual understandings at different rates. In Iowa, standards are synchronized across grade levels and spans. The concepts and skills required across disciplines are coordinated so students are not required to know information in one discipline not yet learned in another. For example, in learning a science standard, students would not be asked to perform a mathematics concept not yet learned. To support educators in continual improvement, the Iowa Department of Education has developed many resources, networks, and communication tools.

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

Our reading and language arts curriculum aligns with the Iowa Common Core Standards. We utilize research-based programs that help our teachers reach the needs of our students.

We have implemented the Wilson Language phonics program, Foundations, in Preschool-3rd grade. We identified that our phonics instruction was an area that needed improvement. We chose Foundations, due to its researched-based strategies and philosophy. This curriculum provides a multi-sensory learning approach including the use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways. We invested resources for training and professional development to learn the Foundations system and be able to deliver it with fidelity. As new staff is hired, they are fully trained on the curriculum as well. Having all teachers sufficiently trained has ensured that students have a solid foundational base of reading instruction.

Our Title I staff utilizes the intervention component of the Foundations curriculum. These interventions are designed to meet the individual needs of students within a small group setting. The pace of the instruction can be modified to meet the needs of our students.

Our building uses the Making Meaning Curriculum by Collaborative Classrooms for our reading comprehension instruction. This curriculum offers a wide range of genres to work on comprehension. It also focuses on vocabulary while using increasingly complex text. The program promotes the development of social skills, communication, and verbal skills. Students have explicit vocabulary instruction, read-aloud text to practice listening comprehension, independent reading practice, and conferring with the teacher. Students are given the opportunity to choose their own books for independent practice.

One aspect of our reading program that has been very beneficial is our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for all grades Preschool-6th grade. Each grade-level has a thirty minute protected time block each day to support students in targeted, small group instruction. We use student data from our FAST screenings, Fountas and Pinnell reading benchmark assessments, decoding surveys, and informal assessments. These groups are ever changing based on student needs. MTSS provides all students the opportunity for growth and enrichment.

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

Mount Ayr Elementary School uses Saxon Math in K- 6th grade to cover the Iowa Common Core Standards in Math. Saxon Math has provided two important strategies not always found in other math curriculum – spiraling and an emphasis on manipulatives. Saxon Math provides a hands-on approach in K-2nd grades utilizing the manipulatives. The Saxon Math program spirals, meaning each day covers a new topic, while continually building on previous knowledge and reviewing concepts that have been previously learned. Children in K-2nd grade use manipulatives in a variety of ways – real world experiences, games, creating charts and graphs, or making patterns. In 3rd-6th grades, students learn a variety of strategies to help them with computation and have “Explorations” every 10 lessons to help understand more abstract concepts in depth.

Saxon Math does not have a dedicated “chapter” system. Formative assessments occur after a specific number of lessons, depending on the grade-level of the child. The assessments can take the form of oral or paper-pencil. Math facts are taught beginning in 1st grade and progress through the elementary years. Saxon Math also provides summative assessments at the beginning of the year, mid-year, and at the end of the year.

In addition to using Saxon Math as our general education curriculum, other prescriptive measures have been used when necessary. When time and staffing allow, we provided Title I Math to K-3rd grade students. The students are provide opportunities to compose and decompose numbers and develop number sense in order to close the achievement gap. Students are screened with the FAST, Early Math Screener to identify those who need Title I math services.

When creating online lessons became necessary in the spring of 2020, teachers continued to use Saxon Math curriculum as the starting point. These lessons were transformed by being embedded into SeeSaw (K-3rd) and Google Classroom (4th-6th). In some instances, “Bitmoji” classrooms were utilized to provide resources or enrichment activities for students. Teachers also created instructional videos of key math concepts, conducted whole class Zoom meetings, and one-on-one Zoom or Facetime calls to help students with concepts they had difficulty understanding.

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

Mount Ayr Elementary School uses the Next Generation Science Standards as a framework for Science curriculum. The NGSS provides clear and organized performance expectations that are broken down by Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, and Crosscutting Concepts. It includes Iowa Common Core Standard connections as well, which results in a richly developed, vertical curriculum alignment.

Mount Ayr Elementary School uses several inquiry-based programs for delivery of instruction that are also aligned with Iowa Common Core standards. Mystery Science is widely used as our main instructional tool in K-4th grades. Students watch interesting videos, engaged in comprehension activities, perform hands-on experiments, and are formatively assessed with end of lesson assessments that focus on explaining their thinking. Generation Genius and Mystery Doug are other web-based tools utilized at Mount Ayr Elementary School. We include Science Spin from Scholastic as a fun reading comprehension tie-in. Ranger Kate, our county Park Ranger, provides programing in our school for community and real-life exposure.

To advance and challenge the upper grades, students use an online program called Discovery Science. It is rigorous and prepares students for the transition necessary to middle school. Since these grades are departmentalized, we have one teacher devoted to science instruction. This teacher collaborates with the middle school science department to ensure all standards are covered. To further enhance instruction, we have added exploratory classes where the focus is on coding and technology.

Additionally, we have been awarded many STEM Grants which have provided a varieties of STEM kits in the elementary. Mount Ayr Elementary School staff take advantage of their opportunities to incorporate STEM activities throughout the day.

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

Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement is an increasingly important area in today's school as we prepare our students to be successful in a global society. At Mount Ayr Elementary School, we have the Iowa Common Core Social Studies Standards as our guiding principles for instruction. Each grade-level team works together to ensure that standards are being introduced, taught, and assessed. Formative and summative assessments play an important role in our social studies instruction, helping ensure our students are mastering the necessary skills and concepts.

Currently, we are utilizing the Impact Social Studies series by McGraw Hill in our elementary classrooms. Each unit is based on a theme, with vocabulary and personal stories through literature connections. These personal connections with literature help increase students understanding of the outside world. Also, each chapter includes an inquiry project that provides student opportunities to explore project-based learning. In addition, Scholastic News is provided to students and enhances student engagement in current events.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

Little Raiders Preschool serves our four year old students and a limited number of three year old students. Our preschool program is housed in our elementary building and has three sections. Little Raiders Preschool partners with Head Start and follows their standards for accreditation purposes. Preschool classrooms are aligned to the Iowa Early Learning Standards as well as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes. Creative Curriculum resources are used to incorporate literacy, math, social-emotional development, language development, gross and fine motor, science, and technology. Our program uses the Wilson Language Phonics program Foundations that is a steppingstone for our phonics programs in K-3rd grade. Our preschool students are provided with assistance from our Title 1 teachers during the school day. It has been a huge benefit to have our preschool housed at the elementary building because it has allowed preschool staff to collaborate frequently with our kindergarten teachers. Due to this collaboration, students have a smooth transition to kindergarten. Our program offers full-day preschool with small class sizes of 18 or fewer children. We are proud of the fact that the student to teacher ratio stays low and more individual attention can be given. The full day allows flexible scheduling with teachers and more time for social, emotional, outdoor play, and academic focus.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Mount Ayr Elementary School is invested in core academic subjects as well as several other curricula areas. We understand for a child to have a well-rounded educational experience they need to have experiences in other areas. At our elementary building, we offer Art, Music, Physical Education, Band, Library, Exploratory, Health, Guidance, and Technology classes.

Art classes are provided for preschool through 6th grade. Preschool art is provided in the classroom by the classroom teacher. Kindergarten through 6th grade art is offered once a week by a certified art teacher. Music and movement are a large part of the daily preschool curriculum within their classroom. Music class is scheduled for twice a week for students K-6th grade. Band is offered to students in 5th and 6th grade if they choose to participate. Physical Education classes are offered twice a week for grades K-6th. All activity classes are a thirty-minute time block with 3rd-6th grade Art being extended to a 45-minute time period.

All grade levels have a weekly, thirty-minute library class. Mount Ayr Elementary School feels strongly it is vital to allow students time and access to all genres and types of books and literature. Many of our students come from low-income households where they do not have access to books and resources. Our library materials are available for check out to all students so they can enjoy them at home as well. Students can check out new books daily before and after school, in addition to their weekly library time. Our 5th and 6th grade students receive coursework in digital citizenship during their library classes, which addresses critical

skills in the world we live in today. We want to prepare students with 21st-century skills and help them make smart choices for their digital footprint.

All students in grades K-6th have a weekly class-wide guidance class that uses the Second Step curriculum. This program encompasses all areas of social emotional learning using age-appropriate content. Mount Ayr Elementary School also provides a weekly Health class for students using The Great Body Shop curriculum. This is an evidenced-based, comprehensive health education curricular resource for teachers, students, and families in grades K-6th grade. The Great Body Shop promotes wellness through the integration of ten health content strands including substance abuse and violence prevention, injury and personal safety, fitness and nutrition, disease and illness prevention, body systems, growth & development, illness & disease prevention and consumer and environmental health. Social and emotional learning, as well as substance abuse and violence prevention skills and messages, are integrated into every unit.

Mount Ayr Elementary School provides access to iPads and laptop computers for all students. Technology has become an integral part of how we work and live. Teaching students how to use technology to learn, research, collaborate, and solve problems from an early age will better prepare them for their careers. Mount Ayr Elementary provides a basic keyboarding class starting in 4th grade. This provides the foundation to keyboarding skills and basic operations and functions needed in using their laptop. Technology instruction continues through exploratory classes in 5th-6th grade. The exploratory classes include technology, computer skills, robotics, and coding. All classrooms at Mount Ayr Elementary School are equipped with Smart interactive panels. This technology tool allows teachers to create more interest and motivation among students, display attractive graphics, improve lectures with audio-visual tools, provide better instructional materials, and caters to all learning styles.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Instruction and intervention are tailored to individual student needs. All students are given the FAST (Formative Assessment System for Teachers) screening tool to determine if they are at risk in the areas of reading or math. Students who are at risk at any grade level in reading are given additional assessments, including decoding surveys and phonemic awareness screeners, to determine if their intervention needs and deficit areas are rooted in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency only, or comprehension only. English Language Learner (ELL) students are also given additional assessments to determine individual language interventions and support to be provided in addition to the MTSS (Multi Tiered Systems of Support) intervention. Speech pathologists provide speech and language assessments and interventions for individual students if it is determined that there are needs to be addressed in these areas in addition to the areas in literacy. Based upon all the data collected, it is then analyzed to form MTSS groups of students who have the same needs so that instruction can be more skill targeted and individualized.

Mount Ayr Elementary is a school-wide Title I school. All low-achieving students, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to specialized instruction tailored to individual needs, with the goal of closing the achievement gap. Title I funds are utilized to provide summer interventions and programming to extend the amount of instructional time these students receive. Title I funds are also utilized to provide texts for at home reading for these students.

Math interventions are based on the results of the Early Math Screener, Number Sense Screener, and fact fluency screeners.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students performing above grade level in each subject area are identified based on FAST scores and ISASP (Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress) scores. These students are provided enrichment activities in each individual subject in which they excel. These activities are provided through a combination of TAG (Talented and Gifted) programming, if students qualify, classroom differentiation, subject acceleration, and/or grade acceleration.

Prior to middle school, 6th grade students performing at the 90th percentile or above on grade level assessments, are given the I-Excel Assessment, an above grade level assessment that is designed and normed for 8th grade students. This helps determine their academic skill level in relation to academic skills of older peers. This information is used to drive middle school subject acceleration and honors coursework for individual students.

3c. Special education:

Our special education department utilizes multiple curricula and assessment options to meet our learning standards. When a student is identified in need of services, we use formative and summative assessments. We utilize Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST), AimswebPlus, Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST), Beginning and Advanced Decoding Surveys, curriculum-based assessments, as well as observations and interviews. These formative and summative assessments not only help us determine the area of concern, but also the specific skill needs.

Our school will begin with interventions within the general education classroom while monitoring student progress, then proceed to assistance from Title I, and continue until referral for special education. When a student qualifies for services, the optimal and preferred learning methods, as well as an understanding of each student's developmental stage, are taken into consideration when determining their goal areas, individual goals, and the best curricula to address their needs. All goals are aligned with the Iowa Common Core Standards. Our SPED department has over 20 curricula for instruction including reading, writing, math, and social-emotional learning. Having multiple options provides us with a variety of ways to address learning modes and allows us to differentiate for each learner. Many of our curricula includes a manipulative piece to address the concrete stage of learning, a written piece for their representative stage of learning, and a demonstration/application piece for the abstract stage of learning. Our district has invested in technology components for several of our programs. Explicit instruction with a sequenced and systematic approach are key components to our department. We train our teachers in all our curricula to ensure explicit instruction is done with fidelity to keep the integrity of the program.

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

Mount Ayr Elementary School offers an English Language Learners (ELL) program for any student that qualifies. A home language survey is sent home with all students when they enroll at Mount Ayr Elementary School. If the student's family designates that a second language is spoken in the home, then an ELL screener is given to the child. The data from the screener will determine whether further instruction in English is needed. Our ELL instructor works closely with the classroom teacher on the greatest concerns and areas needing addressed. The curriculum Avenues is used in our ELL program. This curriculum aligns with the Iowa Common Core Standards. Students in the program are re-evaluated frequently to determine whether services are still necessary, or mastery has been met.

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

Mount Ayr Elementary School employs a homeless coordinator for our district. We have interventions in place if a student would be in a homeless situation. We would provide transportation to and from school, so no learning is lost due to lack of transportation. We would also put them in contact with our local Matura Action Corporation. This organization partners with the community to provide quality programming for families and individuals in need, assisting them in achieving self-sufficiency, in strengthening families, and in improving their quality of life.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Mount Ayr Elementary School engages students through hands-on learning and through motivating instructional practices. Our staff takes pride in creating and planning lessons that cultivate student interests and encourages students to take ownership of their own learning. Our older students are peer helpers to our younger students, which is a great motivational piece for everyone involved. Peer helpers listen to students read, help with academic work, or simply engage with them socially at recess or during activity time.

Mount Ayr Elementary School has a Student of the Month Award. The last Friday of each month, we hold a schoolwide assembly where each classroom has a student recognized as being Student of the Month. This student is chosen by the classroom teacher for showing great character and citizenship inside and outside of the classroom. Our school has partnered with a local pizza business to award the recipients with a free pizza for being selected as the Student of the Month.

Mount Ayr Elementary school staff members have been trained in Love and Logic strategies. We make a concerted effort daily to build meaningful relationships with all students. Providing opportunities for students to build positive relationships with other students and staff members is vital to their academic success while providing a safe place for learning. We have implemented a “check in, check out” system for students needing extra support. Those students are assigned an adult in our building to “check in” with each morning prior to school beginning and complete a “check out” before they leave for the day. This allows for daily adult support and feedback and allows the student time to self-monitor and reflect.

When students were required to learn remotely during the pandemic, we utilized and provided technology to engage student learning. Either an iPad or laptop computer was delivered to the homes of all quarantined students along with all other necessary learning materials. Families were also provided with a hotspot if internet access was needed in their home. Our staff used Google Meet, Zoom, SeeSaw and other platforms so students could stay connected to their peers and teachers. Students learning in the remote environment also had contact with their teachers through phone calls, text, emails, or video conferencing.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Mount Ayr Elementary School works to create partnerships with families, businesses, and the community. Engaging families and community builds trust and enhances the culture of the school. Our District Study Committee is one way we connect the school with our families and community. This committee is comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. These quarterly meetings are a great communication piece between the school, parents, and the community members. District Study members can ask questions and bring up concerns they might have. School wide district goals are discussed and set each year by the members of this committee.

Mount Ayr Elementary School offers different ways to involve families in our building and in their child’s education. We hold parent-teacher conferences twice a year with two evening/nights provided each time. To accommodate differing schedules of our working parents, we offer scheduled appointments from early afternoon until late evening. We begin our school year with an open house the night before school starts. This is an opportunity for students, parents, and community members to tour our building and meet their teacher for the upcoming year. Mount Ayr Elementary School has an outstanding facility, and we are always eager to welcome people to our building. Our Raider Reading program is an at-home reading program which encourages families to read with their children fifteen minutes or more per night. We have various incentives and rewards set up for students reaching their quarterly and yearly goals. We realize the importance of fostering the love of reading in school and at home. Our music department offers music programs during the day and in the evening. Our daytime programs also guarantee all students can participate. We always have outstanding attendance at our music programs by parents, grandparents, and community members.

As an outreach into our community, the Mount Ayr Elementary School holds a food drive annually that aids our local food pantry. We have students assist in collecting the goods, boxing them up, and the delivery of the items to the pantry. As a district, we participate in a day of community wide clean up. Students are assigned to different projects and areas throughout the community and assist with spring cleanup or community betterment projects. The 101 Donations Club was created by a local foundation that wanted to support students and teacher's classrooms. The mission is to reach out and help our students and teachers by finding 101 or more men, women, businesses, or organizations to each contribute \$100 once a year. In the six years of existence, the group has donated over \$85,000 to our classrooms here at Mount Ayr Community Schools.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Creating a professional culture where our teachers and staff feel valued and supported is a priority at Mount Ayr Elementary School. Staff that feel valued and supported are more productive and engaged in their work, which directly influences academic achievement of students. Mount Ayr Elementary School implements the state's Teacher Leadership and Compensation Program. This is comprised of an instructional coach, six model teachers and a mentor teacher. The instructional coach conducts bi-weekly cluster meetings with each grade level. These meetings allow time for the team to examine student data, engage in collaborative planning, and discuss instructional strategies that have proven successful in their classrooms. The System for Teachers and Student Advancement (TAP) is used as a comprehensive educator effectiveness program that aims to improve student achievement through supports and incentives that attract, retain, develop, and motivate effective teachers. The TAP teaching standards rubric is divided into four domains: planning, environment, instruction, and professionalism. During cluster meetings and school wide professional development, time is allowed to expose educators to new delivery methods, evaluation styles and collaboration time with peers.

In addition, we conduct intervention meetings once a month throughout the school year. Our intervention team consists of the principal, instructional coach, a title I teacher, and the special education coordinator. All classroom teachers are allowed to bring students they have concerns about, whether they be academic, behavioral, or social-emotional. The team listens to the teacher's concerns and looks over the data collected for the student. This time allows the team to collaborate and brainstorm ideas that might be beneficial for the student.

As a building, we practice the Love and Logic approach as a staff. We feel this character-building program has been very successful for both our educators and students. This program focuses on respect and appreciation for all parties, freedom and motivation to problem solve independently, and showing empathy and compassion. We have invested many of our professional development hours to training and working with staff on Love and Logic procedures. It has proven to be beneficial that all staff uses common language and procedures in the day-to-day operations with students.

Mount Ayr Elementary School has an active climate committee that organizes and holds different events to support staff members and boost morale. The last Friday of each month we celebrate birthdays for that month by bringing treats to the work room. The committee hosts wedding and baby showers for staff members as well as fun contests for jeans coupons to continuously build positive culture within the building.

4. School Leadership:

School leadership at Mount Ayr Elementary School has three main areas of focus to keep our building running and performing at an optimal level. Our focus areas are collaborative leadership, communication, and visibility.

Mount Ayr Elementary School consistently utilizes collaborative leadership throughout the building daily. Effective collaborative leadership provides teachers opportunities for improved practices through increased leadership opportunities and a feeling of being valued in a school environment. Our staff members respect each other and acknowledge individual skills, which results in a fun and positive learning environment for our students and staff. Collaborative leadership is more than leading a meeting, sharing lessons, or having a

common planning-time. Collaborative leadership requires transparency, honesty, dependability, accountability, and educators' commitment to shared goals. A school that supports collaborative leadership must be fostered and supported by administration for lasting success.

School leadership at Mount Ayr Elementary School makes communication a top priority. The building administrator and instructional coach are in constant contact with staff to make sure everyone is on the same page, and no one is left "in the dark". Our communication comes in many forms. Communication may be through internal emails, individual conversations, small group meetings, or full staff meetings. The purpose of these conversations is to be transparent and reduce any misinformation about what was decided, why, and by whom. We also make it a point to not micromanage staff in our building. Mount Ayr Elementary School realizes our staff members can make tough decisions and trust them to do so. Trust between school leadership and the building staff is the glue that holds collaborative leadership together.

Mount Ayr Elementary School believes that visibility of school leadership is a must. You will find the building administrator outside each morning during student arrival time welcoming students and directing traffic. At the same time, the instructional coach is inside the front doors also welcoming students and making sure everyone is headed in the right direction. During the school day, school leadership is consistently in classrooms and in the hallways to observe and visit with students and staff. The building administrator and the instructional coach have open door policies, and staff members feel comfortable visiting them whenever they have a question or need to vent. At the conclusion of the school day, school leadership can be found outside helping students get on the correct bus or into their family vehicle.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Mount Ayr Elementary School believes in educating students about different cultures. This allows students to interact in a wider range of social groups and feel more confident in themselves as well as their interactions with others. Mount Ayr Community School District has a high percent of low-income families who come with a wide range of family dynamics. Many of our students are living in single parent homes, being raised by grandparents or other family members, living in multi-family households, and in foster care situations. Using the Second Step curriculum in grades K-6, students learn about empathy and learn to appreciate their own cultures as well as those of others. They can gain perspective, increase social-emotional development, and establish a growth mindset.

All staff continually work on developing a growth mindset with students at Mount Ayr Elementary School. We are continually working on resiliency with students so they can succeed despite roadblocks and see these roadblocks as a steppingstone in the learning process. Many times, we not only work on educating the child, but educating the family members as well. In conversations, we talk about how cultural diversity helps us recognize and respect "ways of being" that we are unfamiliar with. We hope this open-mindedness will help students be able to interact with other cultures successfully. Mount Ayr Elementary School provides ways to build trust, respect, and understanding across all cultures.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The strategy that has proven most beneficial to the success of students at Mount Ayr Elementary School is our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Our MTSS process begins by collecting several data points for every student in our building. After all the data is collected, a collaborative team of classroom, Title I, and SPED teachers meet to create our MTSS groups. These groups are based on student needs. These needs vary greatly from skill deficits that need to be addressed to close the achievement gap, to finding challenging material to accelerate high achieving students. The students for each grade-level are split into seven or eight groups, depending on whether the grade-level has two or three sections. Each grade-level has a protected MTSS time of 30 minutes. These MTSS groups are ever-changing based on ongoing assessment and data collection, which drives our instructional decision making. Instructional strategies for MTSS are also continuously researched, implemented, and monitored to determine effectiveness in improving student performance. This 30-minute block of intensive instruction has proven to be very effective for increasing our student achievement at all grade-levels. Mount Ayr Elementary School has been identified as a high-performing building for the last five years, and this distinction was achieved after the implementation of our MTSS program.