

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 4400 First Division Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fort Riley State KS Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 66442-1016

County Geary County

Telephone (785) 717-4650 Fax (785) 717-4651

Web site/URL http://morrishillelementary.usd475.org E-mail melisaburgess@usd475.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Reginald Eggleston E-mail reginaldeggleston@usd475.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Geary County School District Tel. (785) 717-4000

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Ronald Johnson
(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.

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

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

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 12 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 16 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	36	27	63
K	21	22	43
1	21	18	39
2	24	22	46
3	21	10	31
4	17	17	34
5	14	9	23
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	154	125	279

*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):
- 2.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3.2 % Asian
 - 14 % Black or African American
 - 25.5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 4.6 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39.8 % White
 - 10.6 % 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: 59%

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

Morris Hill Elementary is located on a military base.

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	18
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	110
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	128
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	216
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.59
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	59

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

Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Japanese, French, Burmese, Marshallese, Samoan, Tongan

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9 %
26 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %

Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 18 %
51 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>5</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>7</u> Developmental Delay | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>35</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	95%	96%	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. 2007

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

A place where students, families, teachers, and community work together in a partnership to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment, ensuring the highest levels of achievement and the development of productive citizens who are lifelong learners.

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

<http://www.usd475.org/notice-of-nondiscrimination/>

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

Morris Hill Elementary is home of the Panthers and one of four elementary schools on the military installation of Fort Riley, Kansas. Fort Riley is an army installation located in north central Kansas between the communities of Junction City and Manhattan. Junction City is a community of approximately twenty-three thousand people and Manhattan is a community of approximately fifty-five thousand people. Our school was established in 1957 and serves as home to the children and spouses of enlisted soldiers and federal employees. We are one of twelve elementary schools in the Geary County School district. The school consists of ninety percent military dependents who are part of the nearly thirty thousand soldiers and their families that work on the installation. The remaining students have at least one parent working as a Department of Defense (DOD) employee on the installation. We are the neighboring school to Fort Riley Middle School.

Morris Hill's mission statement focuses on the importance of developing a safe and nurturing environment for our students to reach their highest potential as learners. We also want to guide them to become productive citizens and lifelong learners. Many visitors state they feel the warm welcome and friendliness of our school as soon as they step in the front door. We are the smallest school on the military installation allowing staff to know the names of each individual student.

Enrollment numbers at Morris Hill have typically been between two hundred and two hundred fifty students. We provide instruction to students in grades K-5 and a satellite Early Childhood Program for three and four-year-olds. The school's configuration includes two half-day early childhood classes, two full-day early childhood classes, and three full-day kindergarten classrooms with one being devoted to our English Language Learners. There were three first grades, two second grades, two third grades, one fourth grade, one combination class of fourth and fifth grades, and one fifth grade classroom.

Music and physical education classes occurred four times a week for thirty minutes each. Students also received technology lessons once a week for an hour. One-to-one devices have been provided to K-5th graders since 2014. Services are provided for English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education students. The following services are provided: Gifted/Extended Learning, Speech/Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Work, and Counseling. Struggling students who do not qualify for additional support are given assistance through the Student Intervention Program, tutoring, and Instructional Coach. Supports for social-emotional needs include our Mentor Program and our student employment opportunities. We have a full-time counselor to provide social/emotional support.

Staff was familiar with our math curriculum, Eureka Math. We have been teaching from this curriculum since 2017. Last year was our first year implementing the Wonders curriculum to teach English language arts (ELA). It was also the first year implementing our math and ELA screener – FastBridge. Our technology platform, Schoology, was an essential asset that supported both remote and brick-and-mortar learners. Zoom strengthened communication and trust with our families, and DocuSign allowed for electronic signatures to occur and timelines to be met. Weekly professional learning communities (PLC) continued with our grade-level teams, instructional coach, and principal. Quarterly data reviews were completed to ensure adequate student progress. Positive behavior incentives included PAWS stickers and recognition for students.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Morris Hill Elementary kept the school doors open all year for in-person learning. Remote learning was also an option for families. We had twenty-eight students enrolled in remote learning during the first semester and twelve enrolled during the second semester as many students returned to the building for in-person learning. One highlight included our special needs students. There were twenty-six students receiving SPED academic support during the 20-21 school year, all twenty-six students attended in-person learning. Our school calendar was adjusted due to COVID-19 protocols. We started school later in the year and ended our year in June versus May. Time was allotted for staff trainings and professional development regarding COVID-19 protocols and new curriculum and screeners. Despite pandemic challenges and staff and student quarantines, quality instruction continued through our online platform and in-person learning.

Despite the challenges of high mobility rates of military families, staff turn-over, and COVID-19 protocols Morris Hill teachers provide a stable and nurturing environment in which students learn and grow. Our staff is dedicated to educating each child to his or her full potential by focusing on one child at a time. Recently our school has been recognized with the Purple Star award. This award celebrates schools that serve military families and their unique needs. We feel privileged for the opportunity to have such an impact on students from across our great nation. Military students and their families are resilient and persevere through many challenges.

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:

Morris Hill has been dedicated to boosting student achievement and equipping a highly effective staff with research-based resources that support state standard aligned instruction. The school and district leaders presented learning opportunities for staff to learn and apply the gradual release model (I Do, We Do, You All Do, You Do) to all content area instruction. Moreover, school and district leaders supplied opportunities for teachers to explore the impact of hands-on learning strategies, which included the use of manipulatives in all content areas. The school and district leaders also offered opportunities for staff to learn and implement cooperative learning strategies to facilitate accountable student talk.

Data driven instruction has also been an essential practice at Morris Hill Elementary that has improved student achievement. Teachers meet in professional learning communities weekly to review progress monitoring, formative, and summative assessment data. The building leadership team utilized school data to analyze the effectiveness of instruction as well as student achievement. The team then provided professional learning for staff to support instruction and close learning gaps. Furthermore, teachers met with building leaders quarterly to evaluate student growth and professional needs. This process ensured that students were on track to meet end of year grade level standards.

Staff had high expectations for all learners and believed all students could meet both academic and behavioral expectations. Our guidelines for success encouraged students to show their personal best, always be a leader, work well with others, and show pride. Students earned PAWS stickers and awards that recognized positive behaviors. These skills helped students become leaders in the school community and will help students become successful leaders in the future. In addition, staff believed that students learned best in a positive learning environment with meaningful relationships. A positive learning environment was cultivated to encourage independent thinkers and decision makers. One of the ways the staff at Morris Hill promoted positive learning environments was through morning and sunset meetings. Staff refined the implementation of Safe and Civil Schools proactive and positive approach to classroom management. Our school believed that when students were clear on behavioral expectations, learning the academic content came easier to students.

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

At Morris Hill Elementary, we have applied the Kansas College and Career Readiness Standards (KCCRS) with fidelity to English language arts instruction. Admittedly, there are numerous KCCRS standards, so our team of dedicated educators worked with district leaders to identify each standard as a priority or supporting standard. While supporting standards are addressed and assessed in each grade level, instructional emphasis is placed on the priority standards for each grade. Furthermore, our teachers worked with district leaders to identify when priority and supporting standards would be taught and assessed throughout the year, giving students multiple occasions to demonstrate understanding.

In 2020, the Geary County school district recognized the need to adopt a new English language arts curriculum that would meet the diverse needs of our students in prekindergarten through sixth grades. The district established a textbook adoption committee comprised of steering chairs, administrators, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers of which several Morris Hill staff participated in. Committee members evaluated two reading curriculums that were highly rated on EdReports and selected Wonders 2020 as the new program. The district trained teachers in the new program and instructional approaches in the spring and summer of 2020 so that staff members could provide highly effective reading instruction. Using the National Reading Panel's recommendations, reading instruction focused on the big five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Students were exposed to all types of literature as the curriculum includes narrative, expository, persuasive, and technical

texts. Graphic organizers were utilized as well throughout the curriculum. Daily writing lessons and practice are embedded in the Wonders ELA curriculum. Students are exposed to all genres and purposes of writing.

Through the adoption of the new reading program, classroom teachers continued to provide research-based instruction utilizing Kagan (cooperative learning) strategies, scaffolding, gradual release model, and multi-tiered systems of support to promote effective English language arts instruction. One of the biggest instructional shifts for classroom teachers was implementing small group instruction. The school and district leadership teams provided training in how to manage small groups as well as how to plan meaningful small group instruction. Small group instruction enabled teachers to provide differentiated instruction utilizing tiered instructional materials to meet the needs of all learners. Small group instruction focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension skills and strategies instruction, and fluency. During small groups, students worked online with the Wonders standard-based games and activities. These online phonemic awareness, phonics and comprehension skill games supported the instruction in class.

Classroom teachers utilized screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment data to analyze student learning. Each classroom teacher administered the Wonders Placement and Diagnostic assessment to each student so that they could receive explicit small group and whole group instruction. PLCs then analyzed those results and identified students that needed further diagnostic testing. The instructional coach administered diagnostics that identified learning gaps. These learning gaps were addressed through intervention and evaluated through weekly progress monitoring assessments. Teachers also administered formative assessments through the Wonders 2020 program. Teams analyzed these results in their professional learning community meetings and adjusted instruction to meet the needs of students. In this way, teachers provided data-driven instruction in their classrooms. In addition, teachers used their observations during small group instruction to guide planning. Summative reading data was also collected and analyzed through unit and benchmark assessments in the Wonders program. Interim assessments were also administered throughout the year to predict how students would perform on the state assessment. Teachers used this data to refine which standards required further instruction.

Our school did have to adapt curriculum and instruction due to COVID-19 protocols. For example, accommodations were implemented to allow for social distancing. Small groups were allowed to meet for ten minutes with social distancing. Groups were not as fluid due to contact tracing protocols. Moreover, students were not seated in cooperative teams due to COVID-19 regulations. Teachers and students were resilient and creative so that collaboration and differentiated instruction were able to occur. For instance, teachers used online resources such as Schoology and Zoom to allow students to interact with one another and provide feedback in break-out rooms.

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

At Morris Hill Elementary we adopted the Eureka Math curriculum. This is a curriculum that sequences mathematical progressions in crafted modules that have a mid-module assessment and an end of module assessment, while checking for understanding after every lesson through exit tickets. With the use of manipulatives, cooperative learning, and learning the reasoning behind it all, made math engaging and interactive. Parent letters and communication were provided before every unit was taught.

In our building we realize that students need to know more than rote memorization but the focus in the classroom should be on students gaining a deeper understanding of the why behind the numbers. This allows students to be successful in all math applications in their future learning. Teachers and students responded well to the Eureka Math daily routine. Each lesson started with fluency practice in order for students to build their mental math and apply basic number facts. Next, is the application problem for students to apply their prior knowledge from previous days and activate their thinking for what they will be applying to their previous learning. Then there is whole group instruction (concept development) when the teacher introduces new vocabulary and concepts to the whole class. Guided practice is then used so the students could work in groups to share their knowledge and solidify the concepts of what they have learned. The teacher then debriefs with the class and clears up any misconceptions. Lastly, students complete an exit ticket which is used as a quick assessment to check for understanding.

In order to implement Eureka Math with fidelity, teachers used the online suite to watch teacher videos that demonstrated a teacher teaching the actual lesson. These videos allowed the teacher to be prepared with the needed materials and knowledge of the lesson and content beforehand. It also cleared up any misconceptions on the skill. To support our learning through Eureka Math teachers use Zearn to supplement the student learning. Zearn is aligned with Eureka Math and was used in small groups for pre-teaching, re-teaching, or if students missed core instruction due to an absence. The Zearn platform has the same components as Eureka Math but in an online platform that students enjoyed.

Freckle was a differentiated computer program that adapted to the needs of each individual student. Teachers used this program to fill in any missing gaps from previous years. Assignments could be given at different grade levels and the program was adaptive and met the students at their level of mastery. It was a great tool to know exactly what skills needed to be reinforced.

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

Our science curriculum, Full Option Science System (FOSS), is based on the Next Generation Science Standards. FOSS was the tool we used for inquiry-based instruction with hands on learning. With the use of science notebooks, students became active investigators and not just onlookers from their desks. FOSS allowed students to think as if they were scientists while using all their senses to explore the concepts. Students observed and notated what was happening in the classroom investigations, and the world around them while using questioning and inquiry to better understand why things happen the way they do. With the FOSS online component, students completed I-checks to assess their knowledge. In all grades, students were taught how to consistently plan and conduct investigations. Through trial-and-error students became successful with planning and following an investigation from beginning to end.

In the kindergarten Life science unit, the students were taught to independently communicate how to care for all living things. The students consistently used the scientific process to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive. In the Earth science unit, they learned about trees, weather, and what causes the different seasons. In Physical science they learned the concepts of motion and matter and explored the movement of objects. In first through fifth grades, the themes of Life science, Physical science, and Earth science continued. The modules built on the foundational skills taught in the prior years. Students learned about the world around them through hands-on exploration of rocks, water, sounds, lights, and live creatures such as worms and crawfish. Students were able to study characteristics of certain living and non-living elements around them in nature and manipulate them to find different outcomes. FOSS exposed students to the scientific process with hands-on engaging learning.

Science assessments included I-checks that teachers used to formally assess students' understanding. Classrooms also utilized the science notebooks, observations, and exit tickets as informal assessments. Students completed performance assessments during experiments and our fifth graders participated in the Kansas State Science Assessment.

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

Our social studies curriculum consists of embedded Wonders units and a resource provided by the district called 180 Days of Social Studies by Shell Education for each grade level. The district also provided access to online resources such as NEWSOLA and Discovery Education. This ensured students could have materials at their fingertips and gain knowledge that addressed Kansas standards for history, government, and social studies (HGSS). By using Kansas State standards our district created priority standards that needed to be met by each grade by quarter. Teachers utilized the district scope and sequence provided to plan future lessons. The reading curriculum Wonders was also used to address the Kansas HGSS standards. The five components of the HGSS standards are Choices have Consequences; Individuals have Rights and Responsibilities; Societies are Shaped by Identities Beliefs and Practices of Individuals; Societies Experience Continuity and Change Over time; Relationships among People, Places, Ideas, and Environments are Dynamic. Common themes included citizenship and communities (working together), world traditions and cultures, government (voting and legislation), learning about historical events, and landmarks from around the world. Teachers used the Wonders Social Studies workstation activity cards

during centers. The cards kept the students engaged with cooperative learning. Educators made the standards come alive with projects such as famous Kansans and past inventors.

Standards that were not met through Wonders were met through supplemental curricula such as 180 Days of Social Studies, NEWSELA, and Discovery Education. 180 Days of Social Studies provided short texts and questions to assess student knowledge. NEWSELA is an online platform that is updated daily on world current events. The online platform was useful for finding information on certain topics. NEWSELA provided differentiated texts so that every student had equitable access at their fingertips. Discovery Education was personalized according to student choices. Discovery education allowed students to view informational videos and articles on designated topics.

Social Studies assessments included classroom projects and presentations, exit tickets, and observations. For example, our fourth graders researched famous Kansans and presented to their peers. Teachers used rubrics to assess students' presentations.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

Morris Hill Elementary has several preschool classes for three and four-year old students. All opportunities within the Early Childhood Program are offered at no cost to families. USD 475 is proud to ensure financial burden is never an obstacle families face when making decisions about their children attending a high-quality preschool program. In the surrounding community, unfortunately, there are extremely limited opportunities for families to engage with the community. This tends to force families to make decisions about who will work and who will stay home with the kids due to lack of childcare or early learning opportunities. In addition, the cost of private preschool programs can be out of reach for many families already facing economic hardship. For many years, USD 475 has been providing free preschool for students with developmental needs, at risk factors, English Language Learners, and those that are typically developing. Approximately 700 of our community's young learners will be given the opportunity of an early learning experience without any cost incurred by our families.

The Geary County USD 475 Early Childhood Program implements McGraw Hill's World of Wonders curriculum in all classrooms for literacy instruction. World of Wonders (WoW) is a comprehensive, thematic-based program that builds a strong foundation in early literacy skills and provides developmentally appropriate instruction for learners ages three to five. WoW includes cross-curricular activities and a strong focus on social-emotional development through the framework developed by Fred Rodgers Center. The learning outcomes within WoW align with the National Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework as well as the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Standards of High-Quality Early Childhood Education. World of Wonders addresses the growth of the whole child, including learning experiences that engage all developmental domains to ensure preparation for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Pre-Kindergarten curriculum is implemented in all Geary County USD 475 classrooms as a supplemental program to World of Wonders. Lessons are taught daily consisting of explicit teacher modeling and scaffolded support to build ten basic phonemic awareness skills vital to kindergarten readiness. Additionally, students are introduced to a repertoire of nursery rhymes, songs, and games to encourage oral language development and comprehension. Students are exposed to a variety of levels of complexity in their work on hearing sounds in words to the task of manipulating sounds in words in preparation for independent reading.

Eureka Math is implemented in all USD 475's Early Childhood Program classrooms. Eureka Math, which is constructed to be meticulously coherent, is the most widely used mathematics curriculum in the United States. The sequence and progression of skills taught provide an intense focus on key concepts layering 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.

The Early Childhood Program implements Conscious Discipline in all classrooms. Conscious Discipline is an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach to teaching young children self-awareness and emotional regulation. It is recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) and received high ratings in eight of ten categories in a Harvard analysis of the nation's top twenty-five social-emotional learning programs. Staff engage in on-going professional development related to focusing on the Internal Brain State Model to understand the internal components of emotion as it relates to behavior. This approach fosters children's ability to build skills such as self-regulation and problem-solving during times of distress that are critical throughout life.

The Early Childhood Program Progress Report is utilized as the universal screener for literacy, math and social-emotional progress monitoring of three-year-olds. The tool has been developed locally and is aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards. All staff receive initial training for the Progress Report process, and ongoing support through monthly Collaborative Team meetings to ensure fidelity. The program will continue to research possible evidence-based universal screeners for three-year-olds through the upcoming year. In addition, the My IGDI's assessment is given for four-year-olds three times per year to assess literacy and math skills. Feedback from those three tests are shared with stake holders such as parents, teachers, and district leadership. My IGDI's results demonstrate significant growth with our four-year olds in both literacy (94%) and numeracy (93%) for students tested on at least two data points (398 students).

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students at Morris Hill Elementary received quality art instruction on a monthly basis from a highly certified teacher. Art supplies were provided by the school or district, and through these lessons students were exposed to a variety of artists and styles of art.

Morris Hill Elementary kindergarten-fifth grade students participate in physical education and music four times a week for thirty minutes each. Skills addressed during physical education include dexterity/reaction time, muscular and cardiovascular strength and endurance, and good sportsmanship. Adapted plans and routines included providing activities that required minimal or no equipment, taking classes outside as much as possible, focusing on numerous cardiovascular activities that gave students a chance to run and move in their own personal space, and making the effort to sanitize equipment after student usage. Our PE teacher participated in weekly Zoom meetings with other PE teachers across the state of Kansas. This time was provided by the Kansas Department of Education. Music skills addressed included rhythm reading/clapping/playing, beat anticipation, and key/time signature. During the 20-21 school year teachers used creative ways to plan lessons without breaching COVID-19 protocols. Our students received additional nutrition lessons from Kansas State University via Zoom. The food was provided to students prior to the lesson and were taught about wellness and nutritional values and exposed to new and lifelong healthy eating habits.

Our Health curriculum has been designed by educators and diverse members of the community using guidelines outlined by the Kansas Department of Education. The focus of the program is respect for self and others and teaches age-appropriate concepts, responsible decision-making skills, and develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will increase the probability for a healthy lifestyle.

Specific technology skills were taught every week for one hour to all students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Each student was assigned a district device allowing them to work at their own level. The program used to support technology is Learning.com. This program takes students through the technology progression of skills.

All Students were exposed to and given the opportunity to select quality literature for independent reading throughout the 20-21 school year. Due to COVID-19 protocols books were brought to the classrooms. Once students returned books, they were quarantined for one week before going back into circulation. Students

also had weekly read aloud and activities in their classroom with the Library Media Specialist. This included the reading of William Allen White award nominated books in grades 3-5. The Media Specialist worked to integrate core content areas to support current standards teachers were covering. This was accomplished through co-teaching lessons, professional resources provided to the teacher, and introducing new technology. Classroom teachers and the Media Specialist collaboratively developed integrated lessons. Students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade received internet safety and civics lessons (to include Constitution Day and election and voting lessons). Students in third through fifth grades also had lessons using Breakout Edu, (online escape room and lock box) as part of test prep lessons. This helped students to see the importance of slowing down while working and focusing on each aspect of a question.

Social and emotional lessons were provided whole-class at least two times a week for grades kindergarten through fifth grade. These lessons included covering topics such as anti-bullying, problem and solution, and character building. Students were recognized for displaying character building: Personal Best, Always Be a Leader, Working Well with Others, and Showing Pride.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Morris Hill Elementary implemented the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment (MTSS) framework. The Kansas MTSS framework is a set of evidence-based practices implemented across a system to meet the needs of all learners. The system established protocols for prevention, early intervention, and supports to ensure that all students are learning from the instruction. During these intervention blocks, students were provided additional learning opportunities at their instructional level. Classroom teachers provided remediation utilizing research-based instructional strategies and resources. Additional school personnel also provided one-on-one or small group tutoring opportunities for students that needed further support. After-school tutoring was also available for students at risk of not meeting grade level standards.

Morris Hill Elementary used screening, formative, and summative assessment data to improve student and school performance. All students in kindergarten through fifth grades completed a reading and math screener on FastBridge. Teams analyzed the data and identified students that were at risk of not meeting end of grade level expectations. Classroom teachers and the instructional coach administered further reading and math diagnostics to identify the specific learning gap. Then, professional learning communities designed an intervention plan for each student considered “at-risk.” Teachers collected progress monitoring data to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. This allowed for adjustments to be made to instruction that met students’ needs and increased learning.

The School Improvement Team (SIT) team included certified general education teacher(s), school psychologist, special education teacher, team leaders, instructional coach, parents, and principal. The team consulted the English Language Learner teacher, school counselor, social worker, special education, and speech and language pathologist for their expertise in their areas. Students that were performing below grade level were referred to the SIT team if current classroom interventions were not meeting students' individual needs. The SIT team devoted every Thursday to reviewing student progress and developing remediation plans. Formal SIT plans were created for individual students and accommodations were put into place. These plans included students’ strengths and academic needs/goals, interventions and how they will be monitored. When students did not make adequate progress towards their goal with multiple interventions, students were referred for further evaluation.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students that performed above grade level on screeners and summative assessments were also referred to the SIT team. At SIT, the team created a formal SIT plan. Extension opportunities were created in the general education classroom. For example, classroom teachers provided occasions for students to participate in research and inquiry projects and literature circles. Students also were able to extend their mathematical practice through extension lessons on web-based programs such as Freckle. Teachers offered choice board activities during small group instruction which motivated students. Additionally, teachers monitored

students' progress and brought the progress monitoring to the SIT meeting. If the data showed that the student would benefit from gifted screening, then they referred the student to the gifted facilitator. If the gifted screening data showed that further academic testing would be appropriate, then the student would complete a formal special education evaluation. Regardless of the outcome of gifted testing, students were still challenged academically.

Facilitators for the gifted program coordinated with staff, parents, and students to make available appropriate curriculum, instruction and learning opportunities that supported academically and intellectually talented students. The gifted program looked different in the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Unfortunately, the student(s) were unable to travel to the gifted program that was located at a different Geary County elementary school. In previous years, students would go to the central location for a four-to-five-hour block of service time once per week. Instead, the gifted facilitator traveled to Morris Hill Elementary and provided instruction for the student(s) enrolled in the gifted program. During this time, the students worked with the gifted facilitator on an independent or small group project. In addition, the classroom teacher collaborated with the district gift facilitator to determine what modifications would be best in the general education classroom.

3c. Special education:

During the 2020-2021 school year, nearly twenty-five percent of our students received special education services through a 504 plan or an individualized education plan (IEP). Our Special Education team includes our social worker, speech pathologist, physical and occupational therapist, school psychologist, gifted facilitator, special education teacher, and paraprofessionals. The Morris Hill Elementary special education team tailored instruction, interventions, and assessments for in-person and online learning to meet the needs of special education students in various ways. One way we customized our instruction was by using a modified curriculum for students who were performing two and three years below grade level. This included pulling appropriate instructional material based on screening and diagnostic assessments. In addition, appropriate adaptations were implemented to meet student needs.

For the students who were attending school remotely, they utilized online programs for phonemic awareness, phonics, and basic math skills. Students would have a paraprofessional or special education teacher participate in live instruction via Zoom similar to how students had been supported in the traditional classroom. Paraprofessionals would then follow up with students one-on-one to address any misconceptions and reteach. Special education students still received pull out time as indicated in their IEP to work on prior skills in a small group or independent setting via Zoom. Interventions were implemented during online instruction to address IEP goals as well as the support during in class for students. Professional development for paraprofessionals on interventions occurred and helped paraprofessionals provide interventions to those identified students.

For brick and mortar (BAM) students, the special education services remained the same. Students received high-quality in-class and out of class support from the special education team. Strong teacher-student relationships were critical to the growth we saw in students. Paraprofessionals and the special education teacher worked diligently to build and maintain meaningful connections with students. Additionally, teachers were aware of each individual student's needs and accommodations through an IEP at-a-glance document, daily communication with department staff, and progress monitoring data. Staff utilized the differentiated instructional materials provided by the school curricula to teach students at their instructional level. Moreover, the special education teacher provided general education teachers with interventions, enrichment opportunities, and behavior data tracking forms.

Parent-teacher relationships also played a pivotal role in student growth. The special education staff embraced the idea that parents are our students' first and most important advocate. Parents could confidently contact special education staff and receive timely, genuine feedback on their child's IEP progress. Our families were assured that their student was cared for and valued at Morris Hill. Special education staff saw the whole child and helped students use their strengths to reach their full potential academically and socially.

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

At Morris Hill we take pride in embracing diversity! If a second language has significantly impacted the development of English skills, we offered our English Language Learners (ELL) support to build those skills. Students whose parents indicated that they have been exposed to a second language on their enrollment form were screened using Pre-LAS and LAS (Links Language Assessment System) to determine if they qualified for ELL (English Language Learners) support. Parents of children who qualified were notified by a phone call and written communication. Students remain in the ELL program until they meet the exit criteria. The Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) is used for determining if students meet the criteria for exiting the language program. To exit the program, students must also demonstrate proficiency in grade level standards. Students are supported in classrooms by the ELL teacher and the instructional assistant. Through observations and baseline data support is individualized to reflect the specific needs of each student as documented in the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). Depending on the needs of the student, support was provided in a whole class, small group, or individualized setting. Our goal is that all ELL students master the same Kansas Standards as their English-speaking peers while developing their English reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to a fluent level. Meeting the students where they are is important as students come to us with knowledge; however, they may not know how to express it in the English language. Our staff recognizes the importance of the use of their first language. Aides are provided in the classroom during the teaching of core content material. If translation is required for the student to be successful, the aide may do so. Visuals, hand gestures, personal drawings, math manipulatives, and reading materials in their native language are all examples of accommodations teachers use to help ELL students be successful. If the students are below grade level they receive small group instruction to work on specific skills, closing the academic and language barriers.

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

Our building and district have multiple support systems in place to address our homeless and migrant populations. Our Transitional Services Program is provided out of the McKinney-Vento Act. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was the first, and only, major federal legislative response to homelessness and our district is proud to offer this service to our community. Families that are considered homeless are provided free shelter, transportation, and food.

Several systems are in place to support students and families of deployed soldiers. The Military Family Life Counselor (MFLAC) provides small groups and family support. For example, once a week "deployment groups" occurred. Students may work on care packages for returning parents. When facing a deployment or reintegration period MFLAC personnel provide coping strategies and resources.

Our school partners with the Family Advocacy Program (FAP), this organization works with and supports families in need. An example would include free parenting and nutrition classes. They also conduct home visits and connect families with therapy services

We work closely with Fort Riley, partnering to provide behavioral health and counseling services. Recently these services have been provided in the school setting to minimize student absences. Fort Riley Behavioral Health personnel are in the schools, providing therapy during the day. This provides an impactful moment to work with teachers and share strategies that may work in the classroom.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Morris Hill engaged, motivated, and provided students with a positive environment that supported their academic, social and emotional growth, and college and career readiness. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were not permitted to gather in the gymnasium for schoolwide assemblies, but our Morris Hill pride remained steadfast. Every morning students started the day by chanting our school guidelines for success during morning announcements. These guidelines echoed throughout the hallways and encouraged students to show their personal best, always be a leader, work well with others, and show pride. Each Morris Hill classroom began the day with a morning meeting which strengthened the classroom community. Students' relationships with their peers and adults were reinforced through greeting, sharing, completing a group activity, and a morning message to set a daily goal. Admittedly, the greeting and activities looked different due to COVID-19 restrictions, but students were engaged in a caring community.

In prekindergarten through fifth grades, there was an emphasis placed on social and emotional skills. Our building established several programs or structures to promote social and emotional wellness. Students received weekly lessons through the Second Step program and the school counselor, who helped them identify their feelings, work through social issues, and become effective problem solvers. Classroom teachers reinforced these skills throughout the school day. The counselor was also able to meet with individual students and provide additional support to struggling students. Our school had a mentor program for students that needed additional connections to adults outside of their classroom. Our school created a meaningful work program that provided jobs for students that needed extra motivation. Classroom teachers implemented individual, small group, and whole group reinforcement systems. For example, in a fifth-grade classroom students were placed in houses (teams). Students were then able to earn points for their house as well as their whole class. These points could be redeemed for special opportunities such as eating lunch with the teacher. Positive behavior support systems were implemented at the building level as well. Non-contingent and contingent breaks were also utilized to motivate students to engage in content learning. Students had the opportunity to earn PAWS stickers for demonstrating building guidelines. The stickers enabled all building staff to provide positive feedback to students. These students were recognized by the principal at virtual assemblies and placed on the BINGO board. When a BINGO was made, the students gathered and recorded a video to be shared schoolwide.

At Morris Hill Elementary, teachers were strategic and intentional as they planned instruction and responded to behavior. The instructional coach and building administrator provided frequent feedback to classroom teachers regarding their percentage of student engagement and positive to corrective ratio. This feedback allowed teachers to implement targeted instructional strategies that increased student engagement and improved the classroom environment. Classroom teachers focused on implementing cooperative learning structures such as think-pair-share or quiz-quiz trade to engage and motivate students. Teachers implemented Whole Brain Teaching strategies such as “Teach, okay” to give students additional opportunities to respond and interact with grade level content.

Remote learners received support to address academic and social/emotional needs. Live instruction was provided through platforms such as Zoom and Schoology. Our district provided hot spots for families that did not have access to the internet. Brick and mortar (BAM) students took home their devices each night in case classrooms, or the school were closed due to COVID-19. Additionally, classroom teachers utilized Schoology for lesson planning so that in a moment's notice, instruction could occur virtually.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Morris Hill we have always taken pride in the fact that we have engaged our families within the community to support student growth and learning. By doing this, we promoted a warm and inviting atmosphere that encourages positivity and family involvement. We have always welcomed parent and community volunteers to assist our teachers and students in many ways. We look for ways to support our families outside of the school building throughout the year. One way we do this is through the Food for

Kids Program, which allows us to send food home with students who may not otherwise have essential items available to them. Soldiers from our partner battalion the 82nd EN BN 2ABCT supported our building in many ways such as providing crossing guards to ensure student safety.

We had our annual Freedom Walk to commemorate 9/11, our Walk a Mile for physical fitness, and our beginning of the year Welcome/Scavenger Hunt. We had a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and a SITE Council at Morris Hill to support our school educationally with fundraisers and school supply donations.

Our school also keeps our parents and community informed by using social media. We have a district and a school Facebook page. Our school page not only shares information to parents and our community, but also shares photographs of various activities happening within our classrooms. Our district has a web page, and each building has a page dedicated to their individual building. Our web page shares important updates, information, and monthly newsletters with our families and community; as well as pictures of various activities happening in our building. Both our Facebook page and Web Page are kept up to date by the library media specialist, who collaborates with teachers and staff to communicate classroom events and pictures. Every teacher in our building actively used Class Tag to communicate with families and keep them updated to various activities in the classroom. The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way that we engaged our families and community. Due to these changes, we had to utilize social media and the Class Tag application more to keep families and our community in touch with our day-to-day activities. We added more pictures to our social media platforms, as well as videos as often as possible to help our families and communities feel as involved as possible, even without the option of being inside the actual building. Parent/teacher conferences and meet and greet activities continued but with adaptations. For example, academic progress conferences and the welcome back to school activities were conducted via Zoom.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The staff at Morris Hill feels more like a family than a group of colleagues. With a small school environment and staff connections, a feeling of family strengthens our relationships and helps us to support one another. Our weekly staff meetings rotated between certified staff only, all staff, and our leadership team; each meeting started with celebrations and success, both personal and professional. We came together during these times to seek input and advice from other staff members for issues we found ourselves facing. The teacher's lounge was somewhere staff visited for a quiet moment or support. We had birthdays posted on the wall and gathered each month to celebrate. There was a shout-out board on the wall, where staff could give credit to other staff who had done something to make another feel valued. The purpose of the shout outs were to ensure that all staff felt seen, appreciated, and valued. Adaptations to meet COVID-19 protocols included social-distancing regulations. We understood the importance of fellowship among our staff, so lunch gatherings occurred in the library.

Professional development (PD) was delivered in a variety of ways and was on-going. Sometimes it occurred during a weekly grade level PLC meeting, where specific grade level data and standards were addressed. Professional development was also provided during our weekly staff meetings, in addition our staff received monthly district trainings. PD topics included Dyslexia training, ALICE (active shooter) training, math and reading instruction, social emotional support, etc. Collaboration occurred regularly between the instructional coach, library staff, ELL staff, SpEd staff, and grade level partners. Our team quickly adapted the "new normal" of meetings being held via Zoom, as everyone recognized the importance of PD.

Covid-19 changed our school and district enrollment procedures. In our district, parents were offered a choice of in person (BAM-brick and mortar) or online (remote) learning. At Morris Hill we had multiple students that opted for the online version of learning. While we did not have a virtual teacher assigned to our building, we were responsible for gathering materials needed by our remote learners. The positive climate in the building made the process quicker and easier to manage. The principal was informed each quarter as to what supplies remote students required. The library media specialist would collaborate with library staff and classroom teachers to collect materials for parent pick up. Morris Hill staff then contacted parents to coordinate a time for the family to come to Morris Hill for material drop-off and pick up. Everyone worked together to make this process successful for all involved.

4. School Leadership:

The school principal is a strong instructional leader at Morris Hill Elementary. She is well-informed regarding school data and maintains consistent forms of monitoring student progress. Our principal ensures district policies stay focused on supporting student achievement. One example of this is serving on several district committees. Attending and serving on committees such as the reading adoption panel allowed our school to have a voice in the decision-making process that impacted teacher future instruction. The team approach to decision-making is what our principal models, involving staff when deciding on strategies to increase student achievement. Our principal distributes leadership to other staff members. Several teachers are committee chairs for both the building and the district. Leadership encourages and empowers stakeholders to have a voice in the Morris Hill community. Our team leaders engage in professional conversations and learning with their colleagues to create the best instructional strategies to impact student achievement. Our leadership team plans and leads professional development to both classified and certified staff. A focus for professional development was the importance of having a growth mindset.

Morris Hill has a legacy of building leadership and educational excellence. The Morris Hill principal encourages all staff to be lifelong learners. We have a strong partnership with surrounding colleges that provide us with student teachers, who often begin their career with our district. Over the years, numerous staff, both classified and certified, have pursued higher education courses and degrees. Morris Hill teachers and staff are positive role models in the school and within the community and that starts at the top of our leadership team. Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with students is the priority at Morris Hill. The principal establishes the foundation to support positive based intervention strategies building wide. An example of this would include the Panther Mentor program. School staff served as mentors for students, resulting in another trusted adult outside of the classroom teacher. Assigned mentors would check-in daily with students, increasing the amount of positive adult interactions.

Administrative roles shifted during the 2020-2021 school year in response to COVID-19 protocols. A few examples include: all students and staff being required to wear masks, guests not permitted in school buildings, all students and staff required to have their temperature taken prior to entering the school building, and social distancing required for all. Our principal maintained a safe, yet positive environment. Our school provided free breakfast and lunch, masks for any student or staff that did not have their own, hand sanitizer throughout the building, and water bottle refilling stations. As one can imagine, there were differing opinions regarding this mandate. The leadership message from our principal was one of grace and patience. She worked hard at alleviating any anxiety people may have felt about returning to face-to-face learning.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The first thing that we do at Morris Hill is greet each new family with open arms. No matter where the student has come from, he/she becomes a Morris Hill Panther. Students in our building come from all over the United States and many overseas countries. For example, we are the only school on Fort Riley to have a sheltered kindergarten classroom for non-English speaking students. It is important to our staff that each family feels welcomed and valued in our school community.

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a research-based approach to teaching. In our district we pride ourselves on implementing research-based practices that make a positive impact on student learning. Teachers connected cultures, languages, and life experiences within the standards being taught which made the content more relevant. Teachers also adapted their teaching style to match students' learning capabilities to provide an equitable learning environment.

At Morris Hill, we build relationships by identifying things we had in common. We all may look and sound different, and have different beliefs, but being a military school, we have a very strong commonality. Over eighty percent of our students have at least one parent that serves in the military. The military recognizes the unique needs of a military child and has provided both a Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC) and behavioral health therapist to our building. The behavior health therapist met with students in our building which kept students in school. The MFLC had an office space in our building and could meet with

individual students or small groups as needed throughout the day as needs arose.

Our Wonders reading curriculum supports a culturally responsive approach by providing research-based instruction that develops all domains of literacy for all students. Resources included exploring equity, diversity, and social justice issues. We believe this work is critical in every child's education because it helps students and teachers build a strong community. This mindset values empathy, understanding, justice, equity, and social action. For example, there were reading units that focused on immigration, Hispanic, and African American cultures. Learning becomes more personalized and impactful when a child makes connections to the main character of a story or feels strongly about a political topic that is presented. The students not only succeeded academically but developed a stronger sense of self. Additionally, teachers in our building allowed students to draw their own conclusions and form their own opinions.

Morning and sunset meetings were a time for students to address current events and social movements that the students had been exposed to at home. Students often came to school with preconceptions about things happening in the world and by sharing with peers, it helped them realize others felt the same way. Moreover, morning and sunset meetings also provided teachers and students time to make meaningful connections. Teachers also utilized Kagan activities such as “Find someone who” so that students could recognize commonalities.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice at Morris Hill Elementary that was the most instrumental during the 2020-2021 school year was cultivating and nurturing positive relationships among students and staff. As students and staff returned to the school building in the Fall of 2020, emotions were high, and many felt unrest. Creating a safe environment for staff occurred first, including time for staff to receive training on safety protocols and adjust their teaching and classroom procedures. This additional time allowed teachers to problem solve and collaborate with colleagues so that they could meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers adapted previous strategies to meet new challenges in student collaboration, morning meetings, classroom design and building scheduling. An example of this includes our weekly PLC meetings where the focus was on continuing with research-based Kagan strategies while abiding by safety protocols. We also maintained relationships with remote learners and their families by providing live instruction and office hours.

Staff at Morris Hill were aware of academic gaps due to the disruption of learning in the Spring of 2020. Data was shared with teachers prior to school starting to allow proactive planning to address these gaps before students entered the building. Teachers were preparing to review the previous years' standards that may not have been mastered, while continuing to expose students to grade level material. In addition, students struggled with the lack of social engagement with both peers and adults. Morris Hill staff recognized this need and built-in additional opportunities to work together building academic and social skills. An example of this would include students working with their assigned mentor. COVID-19 adaptations did not eliminate the human connection established each day. Staff greeted students by name each morning and provided a safe and welcoming environment conducive to learning.

Parents and guardians continued to trust the Morris Hill staff with their child's education despite not having access to the building. The school website included teacher biographies, welcome information, and classroom video tours. Teachers used technology more than ever during this school year as a communication tool. Zoom meetings, phone calls, Class Tag application, and face-to-face connections cultivated and nurtured relationships with our parents. The schoolwide family feel continued as we held book fairs, fundraisers, and family events by utilizing a different approach with an online component. Other events such as fifth grade promotion were held outside to adapt to safety protocols.

Building and maintaining positive relationships with staff, students, and their families continues to be the focus at Morris Hill Elementary.