

Mesquite Elementary School 2009 – 2010 A+ Schools of Excellence Program

Part II - Vision/Mission Statement

Mesquite's Vision/Mission:

At Mesquite, we follow a code of ethics that encapsulates our vision; an inclusive vision that seeks high student achievement, excellence in instruction, and an actively involved community. We pride ourselves in making a difference by exploring the future. We strive for excellence and quest for knowledge. We teach peace by developing caring relationships. We believe in extending ourselves to others in the community.

It is the mission of Mesquite Elementary School to provide a positive and safe environment in order to nurture academic achievement, self-leadership, and the understanding of our diverse community. Our success depends upon the partnership between parents, students, staff and the community.

At Mesquite we believe in the following:

A Safe School that fosters a climate where values are instilled through our character development pillars of responsibility, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, caring and citizenship.

Nurturing Academic Achievement and recognition through a challenging curriculum utilizing strong technology, research based measures and best practices that focus on student learning.

Self Leadership of the students begins with teaching children to think for themselves. Students are academically devoted and held accountable for maximizing their potential academic growth.

A Diverse Community that involves the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), volunteer programs, and strong educational programs that extends outside the school which foster a sense of belonging. We actively seek community involvement and respond to community needs.

Success begins with the commitment that every student is expected to master the standards. It is **our** (Students, Teachers, Parents) responsibility to see that it happens.

Goal Setting is key to the achievement of our students. Each year our staff selects three goals that positively impact student learning. These goals are approved by our site council and implemented by staff.

Rooted in Vail, Mesquite Elementary School continues to ensure our school motto of **“Bridge to the Past and Branch to the Future.”** We cherish the atmosphere at Mesquite. It has a small school feel which cultivates the seeds of a positive and healthy community. The District **ACT** statement guides this vision. At Mesquite, “We **are** respectful and trustworthy, **care** about each other and **take** responsibility.” The Mesquite staff truly cares about our students and our families.

Part III - Summary

Welcome to Mesquite Elementary School, where we excel in Bell to Bell Learning. The seed of our mission statement was planted well before the school opened by an interim site council made of parents, community members, and staff. As we celebrated our tenth anniversary, our commitment to nurture our guiding vision/mission continues as the heart of our practice. As you arrive on Mesquite's campus, you will see a bridge leading children to school as well as murals, representing our school motto, "Bridge to the Past, Branch to the Future." You will observe a dynamic staff which embraces and models researched based best practices.

Mesquite's Community and the Students Served:

Our community is involved in enriching the learning of each child. We have dedicated volunteers who illustrate our community's commitment to the education of **our** children. The student population at Mesquite is diverse and rises to our high expectations. We instill community values in our students, shown by their participation in extra curricular activities and school-wide events.

Mesquite's Traditions and Milestones:

Mesquite's traditions of high standards resulted in our Excelling School label in 2004. We have maintained this Excelling label for the past six years. We value high academic standards, character education, and parent communication. We embrace a culture of academic excellence and community involvement. We look forward to the challenges that the changing face of education will bring.

Mesquite's Strengths, Key Initiatives, and Accomplishments:

A key strength is our principal who leads Mesquite in our sustained excellence. By knowing her staff, Mrs. Dabney recognizes strengths, utilizing them in leadership roles to make our success a collaborative effort. Our teacher-initiated programs are based on the changing needs of our students. Proven programs include: Reteach/Enrich, V.E.R.B., the Media Enrichment Center Program, Standards Based Reporting, Positive Behavior Supports Program, and our Bell to Bell Learning culture. To positively impact the lives of our students, we constantly strive for improvement.

Mesquite's Recognitions/and Awards

We have expectations of excellence. We celebrate our recognitions and achievements. Awards displayed in our office include the ASBA Golden Bell Award (2004), the A+ Schools of Excellence Award (2005), and the Spotlight on Success (2005). We are often recognized as a model school. Mesquite has many successful individuals, staff, and students who have been recognized for individual achievements as well.

Mesquite's Unique Qualities that Make Us a Successful Place:

In the last ten years, Mesquite has become a leader in the educational community. We have nurtured a vision/mission that strives for excellence and have developed a culture of high expectations for academic achievement. We have risen to challenges and changes to successfully prepare our students for the 21st century.

Mesquite's School Facilities:

We take pride in our beautiful campus maintaining a professional and appealing environment. Our student maintained gardens were initially funded by a grant. Student designed artwork displayed throughout the campus unifies and beautifies the school. Current technology helps to facilitate instruction and enhance academic success.

A. School Organization and Culture

At Mesquite there is a positive climate that exists in the minds and actions of our staff and students. The climate can be recognized by any visitor entering our school. The community and its leaders value our students and staff. The students at Mesquite believe they are the true heroes of their school. Our school is personalized with many student-created artistic touches, which illustrates our positive school climate. The first year Mesquite was opened a mural was created in the multipurpose room. It is a Mesquite Tree with our school motto: “Bridge to the past, branch to the future.” Each student that attended Mesquite the first year put a handprint on the wall that will stay there forever. Outside each classroom, display cases are filled with evidence of student learning. Every classroom at Mesquite shows student ownership of their environment with colorful classroom displays, which reflect student learning.

A1. What are the school’s underlying values, beliefs, and traditions that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems and confront challenges?

When one enters Mesquite’s campus, the six pillars of character posted along the breezeway are noticeable. On these columns you will see the words *Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trustworthiness, Citizenship, and Fairness*. These six pillars are the foundation of our school’s culture. The Mesquite staff has added to this foundation with the use of “Gilly Spots” and “always” statements. For example, at Mesquite we would say, “We always walk in the halls”, instead of “no running.” Gilly Spots are handed out to those students who demonstrate exemplary behavior while on campus. The students place their Gilly Spots in a box in the library for a Friday drawing. Character education encompasses Mesquite’s philosophy of positive discipline as well as a positive way to build relationships between staff and students. Our school focuses on Bell to Bell Learning. Within this program, students and staff concentrate on utilizing every minute of every day for learning. Each classroom displays a Bell to Bell Learning poster, illustrating how our students are engaged in the learning process from the morning bell to the dismissal bell. Mesquite also focuses on the ACT and REACH statements daily. The ACT statement is a simple but powerful statement, describing expectations for student behavior. The REACH statement was created to provide parents with a clear understanding of what is expected in the classroom. It identifies the critical components of Mesquite’s expectations of instruction. In our educational world of high stakes testing, Mesquite recognizes students who achieve and improve academically. At the end of every school year, we honor student accomplishments. Students receive ribbons and trophies based on AIMS achievements. One of the things visitors will notice about Mesquite is our passionate Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). Unlike other associations or PTA’s, our PTSA’s key ingredient is our student involvement. Students are actively involved in each PTSA event. Our PTSA is active in decisions involving fundraising and community events. An example of one community event is the Fall Festival, a fun, safe event for families.

A2. How does the school foster positive interactions and respect between students and adults, and promote a healthy peer climate among students?

Caring relationships at Mesquite are fostered by positive interactions between students, staff, community, and visitors. Visitors are immediately welcomed with a warm smile and friendly greeting. Many teachers at Mesquite participate in a Home Visit Program. They visit student homes or attend special events to build relationships. We hold Meet

the Teacher Night before the start of school, where families can meet their new teachers. All grade levels hold curriculum nights where teachers address curriculum and class expectations. With regular communication, the staff keeps parents involved and informed. Newsletters are sent home weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly to provide information regarding what students are learning. To foster positive communication, each teacher makes at least three positive parent contacts weekly. We believe parent communication is a tool to celebrate a child's achievements socially and academically. In fact, the staff at Mesquite has written a school performance goal for the past several years focused on parent communication. We believe parent contact is key to our positive climate. With these contacts, we are able to target families that are not actively involved and build better rapport with them. Students are taught how to maintain caring relationships with peers and the school staff. Mesquite also offers several after school clubs to enrich learning as well as a way to develop relationships. Students understand the benefits that come from positive conflict resolution practices. By modeling respect an environment is created in which students feel safe to share their own ideas.

A3. What is the school's plan for school-wide safety, discipline, and drug prevention?

Mesquite utilizes the District Emergency Plan Handbook, which is updated yearly. To promote a healthy and safe environment, Mesquite is involved in a variety of programs such as AIDS Awareness, Tobacco Free Education, and Red Ribbon Week. Fire drill and lockdown procedures are practiced throughout the year. Mesquite has also implemented a PBS program to promote positive behavior in all areas of the school. Mesquite utilizes a referral process when dealing with discipline issues. Each referral is dealt with in a case by case manner with teacher/administration collaboration. Mesquite's physical education teachers have also created activity zones for the students during recess. These zones have decreased the number of referrals on the playground. A safe school is critical for learning, and promoting parental confidence.

A4. How does your school foster a sense of cooperation and collaboration among adults and students?

Mesquite fosters a sense of cooperation and collaboration among the entire school population through a variety of methods. These methods include: "Gilly Spots", the PBS model, PTSA meetings, Site Council, professional development, staff, Data Team, and Team Leader Meetings. These methods enable the entire school community to work together to create a positive learning environment that is safe and nurturing for everyone involved. When it comes to decision making, all of Mesquite stakeholders are involved. The Site Council supports our commitment to high student achievement. Any stakeholder is welcome to address our site council. The Mesquite Staff is very involved in the decision making process. At bi-monthly faculty meetings, teachers come together to discuss important issues and recognize Mesquite's accomplishments. A tradition that all staff members look forward to every year is the Mesquite Retreat. At the beginning of each year, the staff comes together to celebrate the successes of the previous year and look forward to the upcoming year. Relationships between colleagues are nurtured and developed at this time. Mesquite's culture is centered on all aspects of student learning. One such example of our learning-centered culture is our Media Center Enrichment Program. Each month, students complete a series of centers once a week in the Media Center. These activities encourage a higher level of thinking.

B. Student Focus and Support

The school attendance boundaries include students from the Rita Ranch neighborhood. Our population is made up of students from households ranging from stay at home parents to two income families needing both before and after school child care. Many of our students come from military families, as we are located near Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. We also have the IBM/University of Arizona Science and Technology Center within our attendance boundaries. IBM and Raytheon are major employers of many of our families. Families can apply to attend Mesquite under the open enrollment policy. Mesquite currently serves 594 students, Kindergarten through 5th grades.

B1. How is the school's population best described?

At Mesquite, we serve students with a variety of ability ranges including gifted, special needs, ELL, and a diverse general education population. The Mesquite staff provides many programs that are both academic and non-academic to ensure the additional support needed by our student population. To best meet the academic needs of all our students, we use a variety of instructional practices. Some of these instructional practices include: differentiated instruction (i.e. Balanced Literacy), Balanced Math, Model Products, Curriculum Based Measures (CBMs), school-wide enrichment activities, the Extended Learning Program (ELP), Math Reteach/Enrich, Vocabulary Enrichment Reading Block (V.E.R.B.), standards-specific after school tutoring, and intersession. These practices will be discussed in Section D and E. To ensure Mesquite students are meeting the standards, various assessments are used to monitor academic progress. These assessments will be discussed in Section H. The Mesquite staff also supports students' non-academic needs. Programs such as Early Childhood Enrichment promote social skills and play for our pre-K population. We offer a variety of after school programs. We have on-site before and after school care, including KIDCO and Kindercottage. Educational Enrichment Plans (EEPs) provide students with various extra curricular opportunities.

B2. How is your school structured to meet the varied needs of your student population?

At Mesquite, we offer many extended learning activities, both academic and nonacademic.

Mesquite's Academic opportunities include:

Advanced Math Placement Classes are offered for students from second through fifth grade. Students are identified for placement in advanced math classes by teacher recommendation and standardized test scores. (2nd-5th Grade, 36 students)

Reading Interventions are provided by a reading specialist for first and second grade students. (1st and 2nd Grade, 43 1st Grade students, 25 2nd Grade students)

Reading Heroes consists of adult members from the local business community who mentor individual students through reading activities. (2nd Grade, 32 students)

Reading and Writing are Fun Club is an after school club in which Kindergarten and first grade students meet weekly to complete reading and writing related activities. (K-1st Grade, 45 students)

OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring Program is a program in which retired community members tutor students using materials and curriculum based on state reading standards. OASIS volunteers receive specialized training. (K-5th Grade, 10 students, 10 tutors)

Math Reteach/Enrich is a block of time reserved for ensuring mastery of state math

standards. Each day from 12:30 - 1:00 p.m., students are either retaught or enriched on a specific standard through differentiated instruction and spiral review. Formative assessments are administered. These assessments are administered after specific state standards have been thoroughly taught. Students performing at or above 80% are considered to be at mastery. Mastery students are placed in enrichment classes to revisit the standards using higher level thinking skills, including logic and reasoning. Students not mastering skills are targeted for Reteach. Students in Reteach receive instruction specific to their needs. High student engagement activities such as Kagan structures are used to actively engage students throughout the class. After Reteach lessons, students are reassessed. If a student does not achieve mastery, that student is targeted for individualized intervention such as after school tutoring. (1st-5th Grade, 499 students)

Headsprout is an intervention program for students in kindergarten and first grade. It is an intensive phonics based reading program aimed toward students who fall far below grade level in reading. Students are identified for this program based on their performance using CBM data. Students who rank in the bottom 16% of first grade reading scores are placed into the Headsprout Program. Kindergarten students who are identified as at-risk are placed in the Headsprout program. (K-1st Grade, 37 students)

Study Island (AIMS Test Preparation) is an online program that was created to improve students' understanding of the state academic standards. Students can access Study Island from any computer on campus. Students work at their own pace to complete essential standards in math and reading. (2nd-5th Grade, 406 students)

Science Fair provides school wide opportunities for students, parents, and the community to engage in activities that enhance our current science curriculum. The science fair is open to all grade levels and is mandatory for fourth and fifth grade students. (K-5th Grade, 594 students)

Junior Achievement(JA) is a program that introduces economic, financial, and business concepts to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. JA is taught over five weeks by volunteers from the business community. (K-5th Grade, 594 students)

Mesquite Non-Academic Support Activities include:

Gilly's Garden Club-Members tend to the school garden and plant seasonal vegetation. (K-5th Grade, 10 students)

GNN Broadcasting (Gilly's News Network)-The broadcast team is open to all fifth grade students. It is a closed circuit student broadcast that is seen every Monday, Wednesday and Friday on campus. In order to participate in this activity, students must maintain a B average and be a model student. (5th Grade, 45 students)

Beginning Band-Students learn to play musical instruments and participate in music programs throughout the school year. They meet weekly and perform twice a year. (4th-5th Grade, 40 students)

Advanced Band-A weekly club for advanced band students. (4th-5th Grade, 15 students)

Beginning Orchestra - This weekly club performs twice a year. (4th-5th Grade, 15 students)

Advanced Orchestra-This club meets weekly and performs twice a year. (4th-5th Grade, 13 students)

Choir-Mesquite's choir practices weekly and performs at school functions. (4th-5th Grade, 40 students)

Computer Club-Students in grades 1st-5th meet weekly to learn innovative technology

skills. (1st-5th Grade, 30 students)

Accelerated Reader-An online reading program for students to read books at their targeted reading level and earn points. Parents and students can access the tests and check out library books during school hours. (K-5th Grade, 594 students)

Talent Show - Students audition and perform in a spring production. Approximately 100 students audition for the school wide talent show. (1st-5th Grade, 499 students)

Jump Rope for Heart-An annual activity sponsored by the American Heart Association in which all students participate. (K-5th Grade, 594 students)

Math Bowl-This math competition takes place at Vail Pride Day (VPD). This worldwide Olympia competition for fourth and fifth grade students focuses on critical and higher level thinking strategies. An ongoing activity throughout the year is the Problem of the Week presented on broadcast for students to solve. Students can go to the display outside the advanced math class to check the solution. (4th-5th Grade, 10 students)

Mileage Club-Students first through fifth grade can participate. The club is designed for students to enjoy activities that encourage good health during lunch recess. Students track their distance using mileage cards and earn prizes. (1st-5th Grade, 594 students)

Student Council-Student officers and class representatives from grades three through five meet monthly. Their focus this school year is on community with students having led several efforts already this year, including a canned food drive. (3rd-5th Grade, 35 students)

Family Nights-Family Nights enable families to become a part of their students' learning process. Families participate in many hands-on learning activities. They take these ideas home to help their children learn outside of school. (Kindergarten, 50-80 students)

Field Day-Students participate in games from all over the world, exposing students to sports and games played outside of the United States, enriching our students with a diverse cultural understanding of other countries. (K-5th Grade, 594 students)

EEP plans are written based on Arizona State Standards. These programs are based both on student needs and interests. Involvement in these after school activities provides students with a sense of belonging. At Mesquite our best practices approach encompasses diverse student needs, learning styles, and abilities. We utilize research based best practices, such as cooperative learning, Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies, and student engagement, to give our students the best opportunity for success. With yearly classroom assignments, students are assigned to teachers for a variety of different reasons. Teachers meet as grade level teams to equitably place students in classes for the following year. Great care is taken during this process to ensure students are placed with teachers who are most able to meet their academic, social, and behavioral needs, and ensure that classes are balanced with varying achievement levels.

B3. How does the school address students' physical, social and emotional needs, and intervene when student personal needs are preventing academic success?

At Mesquite, we strongly believe that education is not only about teaching academic standards. We value an environment that is safe and welcoming for all of our students. With character education and our Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) Program, we ensure that our students are adept in their emotional and academic abilities.

Behavior Specialist-We have a behavior specialist on our campus two days a week. He assists with child behavior modifications and works closely with students and teachers.

Six Pillars of Character-These pillars of character are incorporated in our culture, and

the common language is used daily. GNN broadcasts teach valuable lessons that foster these values in our students.

Student Support Team-Currently, at Mesquite, the process to gain extra support for a student is called a “Child Study.” The Child Study Team is composed of classroom teachers and support specialists. Teachers are able to refer students to the Child Study Team for evaluation. Data is analyzed, along with classroom performance, and parent feedback. Once the team has evaluated all pertinent data, interventions are put into place. Our district leadership has chosen Mesquite to pilot the future “Student Support Team.” Teachers will be able to refer concerns regarding student academics, behavior, attendance, and health. It will be a more comprehensive process. New students are given a tour of the campus where they meet the principal, the librarian, lunch staff, and their teacher. Once in the classroom, buddies are assigned to help ease the transition.

B4. How has your school demonstrated a commitment to addressing the accessibility of its facilities and programs to students with disabilities?

PBS-Our Positive Behavior Support Team was developed through a grant and partnership with the University of Arizona. PBS is a structured and unified behavioral management plan. We have a team of core members which meets monthly to evaluate our programs. Using data we are able to evaluate referrals and track students who may need behavior plans or interventions.

Paraprofessionals-Our school employs paraprofessionals to assist students with physical disabilities to access the campus. The school is outfitted with handicapped accessible restrooms. The stage area in the multipurpose room is accessible to disabled students by a ramp.

Parent drop-off/ pick-up-At the beginning of each year teachers are assigned to before school and after school duty. An important duty is the monitoring of the parent pick-up and drop-off areas. The rules for these areas are communicated in our school newsletter.

Crossing Guards-We have four crossing guards, three that cross students on neighborhood streets near our school, and one in our parking lot. Street crossing guards arrive 45 minutes before the start of school, and do not leave until 45 minutes after the bell. Our crossing guards have phones in case of an emergency.

Closed Campus-Recently we have adjusted the gates surrounding our school to create a closed campus. The gates around our school are locked promptly at 7:50 a.m. Anyone entering our campus after the gates are locked must go through the office and sign in. Volunteers are given badges and must have fingerprints and notarized forms on file before they are able to volunteer.

Drills-We practice fire drills, lock downs, and bus evacuations on a regular basis.

C. Professional Learning Communities

Motivation for Mesquite’s professional learning communities comes from our desire to create success for all of our students and teachers. Teamwork and team building opportunities contribute to Professional Learning Communities. We are convinced that effective team collaboration is the key that allows our school to excel! Each year, the Mesquite faculty works as a team to review and update our goals, principles, and vision. Faculty members spend time defining culture by agreeing upon team norms and expectations.

C1. What opportunities do teachers/other staff have to participate in professional

learning communities that enhances their ability to support student learning?

In 1998, Mesquite became one of the first schools in the Vail School District specifically designed for teacher collaboration. At Mesquite, grade level teams share a common workspace or pod. These pods are used as small group teaching spaces and teacher planning areas. The master schedule is also a contributing factor in promoting Professional Learning Communities. Grade levels have an assigned period to plan, collaborate, and analyze data. During Data Team meetings, the achievement teacher, enrichment teacher, and principal come prepared for the forty minute meetings. Team members analyze their data to make connections between performance and instruction. Enrichment and interventions are implemented based on student data. The Site Council serves in an advisory capacity to the principal. The Site Council meets once a month after school to discuss strategic goals, issues, and concerns. It is made up of a group of teachers, parents, and classified employees that work with the principal to develop, review and evaluate school improvement programs. The principal will seek formal advice from the council on a variety of issues. Beyond Textbooks (described in Section D) creates a revolutionary way to increase teacher effectiveness and increase students' academic achievement.

C2. How does a coherent approach to professional development ensure ongoing learning for staff?

A coherent approach to professional development is critically important to ensure the ongoing learning for staff. At Mesquite we are continually improving. We are never content with the status quo in our operations or in our curriculum methods. We are constantly looking for better and more efficient ways to accomplish our mission. This guiding principle directly applies to the emphasis of professional development at Mesquite. Mesquite's principal routinely completes weekly classroom walkthroughs. Data is collected from those observations and areas of refinement are discussed during Data Team meetings. Much time is spent addressing the Nine Marzano Instructional Strategies. Teachers are provided with resources and examples of how to implement effective best practices in the classroom. Bi-monthly staff meetings focus on professional development. Kagan structures are modeled during staff meetings and teachers consistently share best practices during that time. Mesquite's culture is one of student and teacher achievement. Meaningful professional development makes high teacher achievement possible. Professional development is specially tailored to meet the needs of all teachers. New teachers participate in New Teacher Induction, a two year program where they are exposed to various instructional programs, district and school expectations, and policies. New Teacher Induction focuses on the Essential Elements of Instruction, lesson planning, classroom management, cooperative learning, questioning techniques, higher order thinking, and program instruction for Reteach/Enrich and CBMs. Teachers spend a total of nine days receiving direct instruction on these important elements of professional development. For two years, new teachers are assigned to a Cognitive Coach, a master teacher, who have demonstrated a conceptual understanding of best practices. Cognitive Coaches observe new teachers three times a year. Cognitive Coaches guide new teachers through a self-reflective process. New teachers also receive a Balanced Math and Balanced Literacy Coach for one year. Balanced Math and Balanced Literacy coaches serve as mentors to new teachers, providing them with resources and ideas, while conducting two formal observations. At

Mesquite, there are also professional development opportunities for teachers experiencing challenges. As the need arises, teachers can be reassigned a coach. Mesquite works closely with the district curriculum department to ensure teachers are successful in the classroom. Instructional Team Leaders serve as mentors. Teachers experiencing challenges can shadow master teachers at Mesquite or within the district. Teachers also receive support when they experience changes in responsibilities. Some of the various trainings teachers can receive include standards based reporting, balanced math, balanced literacy, cognitive coaching, writing scoring, site council, Instructional Team Leader retreats, STEEP/RTI, and Model Products training. We never implement programs or add teacher responsibilities without providing the necessary support. The Mesquite staff is effective and dedicated. We have many teacher leaders and master teachers. Showcasing these teachers' expertise is critically important to the development of our staff. Teachers can share their expertise in a variety of ways. We often have teachers highlight effective strategies in staff and data team meetings, and at staff retreats. In fact, as a school we have implemented a school wide editing program for writing. The C.U.P.S (capitalization, using powerful words, punctuation, and spelling) program was the idea of one of our fifth grade teachers. His expertise resulted in a better understanding of how to teach writing. Since the implementation of C.U.P.S., we have seen an increase in our writing scores. We are also proud of the many professional development opportunities for our non-teaching staff. Paraprofessionals are required to attend trainings throughout the year. They also have monthly staff meetings with the principal where they discuss issues pertaining to the school. Paraprofessionals receive a yearly evaluation completed by the classroom teacher and administration. Mesquite recognizes the vital role that continuous professional development plays in insuring the quality of our educational environment. Classified staff members are trained and mentored by the Mesquite Office Manager and other staff. We have a few classified staff members who have taken advantage of The Vail Academy. It begins each year with a cohort of classified staff members. The cohort takes education classes until their AA is earned. The Vail School District pays for the classified staff members who participate. Teachers and certified staff members can also continue their education by obtaining advanced degrees. The Vail School District has a partnership with NAU. Teachers can join the Vail Cohort and obtain a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership. This program is partially subsidized by the Vail School District. Seven Mesquite teachers have earned a Master's Degree through the Vail Cohort with NAU. We are committed to the fiscal responsibility of our school. We are entrusted with using public resources to provide a quality education for our students. We carefully develop priorities based on student needs, legal responsibilities and cost-effective methods. This includes professional development. Teachers may attend one professional conference per year, which is subsidized by the school. Teachers are given a classroom budget based on their class sizes that they can use on instructional resources and professional growth opportunities. There are four half-day inservices for certified staff dedicated to professional development. Mesquite staff meetings and data team meetings are also used for professional development.

C3. How has teacher professional development improved teaching, school culture, and student achievement/success?

The Mesquite staff strives to be the best educators we can be. We are willing to accept new strategies, programs, and curriculum to meet the needs of students and state

standards. Each teacher believes that when we better ourselves professionally we become more effective in the classroom. **It's all about the kids!** Staff and administration are committed to implementing new strategies and practices to successfully deliver curriculum to our students. Mesquite won the first place Golden Bell Award for our teacher created program, Bell to Bell Learning. Another example of our commitment to improvement was seen when a group of our teachers visited a school district whose AIMS test scores rose dramatically within a two-year period. We wanted to know what they were doing to enhance test scores, and what we could do to implement this program. After observing, the Mesquite staff decided to pilot Math Reteach/Enrich and the rest of the district has now followed in our footsteps. Other districts frequently now come to **observe us!** This year, Mesquite contracted with West Ed, a national educational consultation company. To continue our professional growth for all staff, West Ed conducted a site visit where areas of strengths and areas of refinement were identified. The visit yielded remarkable results in the areas of student engagement, instructional strategies, and standards based learning. The West Ed data provided excellent feedback for our teachers. Teachers also receive feedback through our evaluation process. Each year teachers with four or more years of experience in the Vail School District receive one formal evaluation while non-continuing status teachers receive two evaluations a year. Each evaluation begins with a pre-conference where teacher goals are discussed and student work is shared. The observation is then completed with the teacher providing a formal lesson plan. A post-conference is then conducted. During the post-conference, the Mesquite administration shares feedback of the lesson. Teachers are also provided feedback several times a year with a walkthrough form listing teacher actions and engagement strategies. We are constantly evaluating teacher data, student data and modifying instruction in accordance with results. Data is used in order to meet the needs of every student. Mesquite staff members are recognized for their achievements, participation, expertise, and accomplishments in many ways. **We celebrate our successes!** We value our employees. We carefully select our staff on the basis of their ability to carry out our mission and guiding principles. We respect their expertise and depend on them to work with parents to make our vision for a community of learners a reality. Recognizing the hard work of staff helps promote this positive culture. At each staff meeting, teachers and paraprofessionals have the opportunity to publicly acknowledge a colleague. Teachers and staff are also recognized during Site Council Meetings. These recognitions are printed in our monthly newsletter, The Mesquite Messenger. Staff members also receive "Mesquite Bucks" for going above and beyond. The bucks are used to purchase items from our Teacher Treasure Box. Mesquite administration uses the book, Looking Forward to Monday Morning, by Diane Hodges to find creative ways to celebrate staff and their accomplishments. This year we held an "Excelling State of Mind" barbecue to celebrate six consecutive years of being an excelling school. As stated by one of Mesquite teachers, "We feel like we're appreciated. Mesquite is a place where we want to be."

D. Active Teaching and Learning

D1. How are teaching Practices and learning experiences consistent with current knowledge/research about successful teaching and learning?

Consistency with curriculum and lesson planning across grade levels is achieved by

developing lessons based upon the Arizona State Standards. Teachers utilize the Beyond Textbooks Website where curriculum calendars and resources are posted. Teachers are able to collaborate with their peers throughout the district by posting their own lessons and by accessing lessons posted by others. Each grade level meets twice weekly with their team to collaborate on lesson planning for Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. All teachers recognize that the state standards are the minimum of our expectations for academic achievement. High expectations for student achievement is demonstrated in many practices at Mesquite. The use of Model Products and rubrics are used to ensure both students and teachers understand the expectations for the learning process and the finished products. New teachers are required to attend the district's New Teacher Induction as explained in Section C, which sets clear instructional expectations. The high expectations are demonstrated in every classroom as teachers at Mesquite are required to post the standards and objectives they are teaching. Another practice is the manner in which students are questioned in the classroom. Students are instructed to think first, then give a signal "when" they have an answer. The expectation is that all students will answer. One hundred percent engagement all the time is the communicated expectation. The desire for engagement is one reason we consulted with West Ed. We also consulted with West Ed to gain feedback on our use of Robert Marzano's Nine Instructional Strategies. To encourage higher level thinking skills teachers are expected to use Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning in planning. West Ed confirmed that we are successfully promoting higher level and critical thinking skills. Balanced Literacy (as referenced in sections C and E) is the means to ensure that our students have the critical literacy skills necessary to be successful learners. The Mesquite staff is involved in supporting student learning everywhere on school campus through Bell to Bell Learning. This philosophy emphasizes that every minute spent on campus is used for student learning. In classrooms, transitions are kept to less than one minute, instruction continues until the end of each period of time, and students are engaged and learning at all times. On the playground, schedules are actively adhered to making sure that time is not lost or wasted. Specialist teachers are prompt in picking up and returning students to their primary classroom teachers. The office staff assists by limiting the amount of classroom interruptions.

D2. What does the school do to accelerate the learning of students who fall below basic standards, and/or mastery?

Mesquite's belief that students need a deep understanding of content, context, and not just a covering of materials is the reason why we incorporate strategies such as those demonstrated by Kagan Cooperative Learning. Teachers are encouraged to use structures to enhance student engagement and increase critical thinking skills. All students including those with different learning styles and those having difficulty benefit from these structures. As students work in cooperative groups, ELL students are able to use language that improves comprehension and acquisition of the English language. The high achieving students generally perform as well or better in cooperative classrooms than they do in traditional classrooms. Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. are two of Mesquite's programs designed to assure the mastery of content. Mesquite employs a multitude of assessments as well to ensure that standards are mastered.

D3. What processes, strategies and management systems are used to assure a safe and orderly school/classroom environment?

At Mesquite, classroom management is believed to be a key ingredient to the performance of our students. Upon walking into a classroom, one will note the routines and procedures in place to keep all students actively involved. As noted in other sections, Mesquite has a high rate of student engagement which contributes to the low number of behavior issues. When problems do arise, we refer to the Vail ACT statement and the PBS statements. The Mesquite staff firmly believes that it is important for students to have the opportunity to make choices. Behavior is one of those choices. Our Bell to Bell Learning philosophy encourages students to make wise decisions about the use of class time. Teachers structure their classrooms to allow student choice in decisions with regards to choosing learning centers coupled with the expectations of accountability and student engagement. Students are involved in the decision process when it comes to Model Product assignments. Model Products demonstrate expectations but still allow the freedom to make choices about the activity.

D4. What opportunities do students have to apply learning to real world situations?

At Mesquite, the application of real world skills is highly valued. Opportunities to apply these skills are provided in both in-school and after school activities. In the classroom, our focus on cooperative learning helps to develop the life long skills of being able to work with and get along with others. As an inclusion district, our students are exposed to students with learning and physical disabilities allowing them to develop skills of acceptance and tolerance. Other in-school opportunities include Biz Town, the Science Fair, Junior Achievement, GNN Broadcast, and Student Council. Mesquite students are given opportunities to integrate experiential learning skills into real world situations. Many of the clubs as well as Student Council participate in fundraising activities throughout the year requiring students to apply skills learned in Junior Achievement and Biz Town. What better example of integrating skills learned at school than the Wright Flight Club! Students who meet their academic goals and accomplish the flight training are able to fly a real plane! The Physical Fitness Club helps students to realize a balance between academics and good health. Our band and orchestra provide students with the foundation for future life experiences in the musical field. The Media Center Enrichment Program has offered students real life skills such as voting for the President of the United States and understanding the need for a global effort to rid our world of pollution. The Mesquite Student Council offers real life experiences in the democratic process. Representatives are selected from each classroom. Officers are elected with a school wide election. Candidates prepare speeches and campaign like their real life counterparts. Student Council organizes the Mesquite recycling program, assists at the Fall Festival, leads community service projects, and plans spirit week.

D5. How are resources made available to teachers and students for instruction, gathering information and sharing the results of their efforts?

At Mesquite, all classes are scheduled weekly for a 45-minute time period in the Media Center. During this time, students are able to check out books, take Accelerated Reader tests, and participate in 30-minute Media Center activities. There are approximately ten computers available to students in the Media Center for their use. Teachers have a section designated with curriculum resources to augment their instruction. These resources include educational videos, math and science manipulatives, teacher resource books, and class sets of literature books. Beyond the Media Center, the entire Mesquite campus has Internet access. Teachers have their own desktop computers, projectors, document

cameras, TV, VCR, DVD, and some have interactive white boards. Each pod shares a bank of computers. There is also a mobile computer lab consisting of 30 laptops available for check out. The computer lab is attached to the Media Center, which is visited by classes on a weekly basis.

D6. What technology applications is the school using? How do they relate to the curricular goals, and how do they support teaching and learning?

Mesquite places a high value on the community effort of educating our students. This effort is supported through consistent communication with our families. One of our communication tools is our school website. Parents can visit the website to get current information regarding school events. There are links to educational websites, parent resources, the district website, and archived GNN broadcasts. Parents can also email teachers through the links posted on the school website. Mesquite's Site Technology Coordinator is responsible for updating and maintaining the website. As new technology is acquired, it is distributed on a greatest needs basis determined by the principal. For example, the second grade team decided to forgo ordering workbooks for math and spelling in favor of acquiring a document camera for each second grade teacher. One unique way for teachers to obtain desired technology is the new Vail tax credit website. Teachers can identify a specific technology need for their classroom, and parents can donate to that specific teacher. Students have access to pod, Media Center, and computer lab computers daily. Internet access allows teachers almost unlimited resources to identify different tools to support classroom instruction. The Beyond Textbooks Website provides curriculum calendars and other resources. The ATI website gives access to immediate benchmark data. This data drives classroom instruction and allows teachers to easily identify students for intervention and differentiated instruction. Student learning is enhanced through the use of projectors because of the ability to bring real life, real time situations into the classroom. For example, a fifth grade class studying the weather could follow the developing hurricane, and its projected path in real time. Teachers are trained on new technology and programs. Mesquite places a high priority on staff and students being fluent in current technology. The district allows principals autonomy in budgeting their funds. Mesquite's principal, Mrs. Dabney, made the acquisition of new technology the highest priority. Along with the required training, as new technology is acquired at Mesquite, teachers are encouraged to attend voluntary trainings. Students in 3rd through 5th grade participate in the Type to Learn Program. Mesquite has a computer lab technician who instructs technology skills such as Internet access, slideshow presentation, and word processing.

E. Challenging Standards and Curriculum

E1. Describe the core content curriculum for each of the following areas; describe the scope and sequence, high-quality, integration of content areas, and how skills are integrated across grades.

The content areas addressed at Mesquite are Reading/Language Arts, Science, Technology, Mathematics, Social Studies, the Arts (Music and Art), and Physical Education/Health.

Reading/Language Arts (Balanced Literacy)

Mesquite teachers utilize a program called Balanced Literacy to address the core content curriculum in the areas of reading and language arts. Students must acquire a foundation of skills and strategies that can be applied in all visual, written and oral communications. Mesquite's Balanced Literacy instruction includes:

- Differentiated ability groups to instruct reading (Balanced Literacy)
- Daily engagement in reading and writing activities (Independent, Guided and Shared Reading)
- A foundation of phonics skills at the primary level, and spelling instruction
- Accelerated Reader (Computer Based Reading Comprehension Program)
- The Writing Process of the Six Traits of Writing
- Daily Oral Language (DOL) and grammatical writing practice
- V.E.R.B. (Vocabulary Enrichment Reading Block) and Academic Vocabulary
- Headsprout: Intensive Phonics Based Reading Computer program for early intervention (K-1st).

Math

At Mesquite, we use Balanced Math, which includes daily spiral review, a conceptual lesson, daily math fact practice, mental math, and a problem of the week focusing on problem solving strategies. Over the previous five years, math instruction has become a priority at Mesquite. With the addition of Math Reteach/Enrich, we have focused on mastery of essential standards. Students who do not meet the standards are retaught until skills are mastered. Students who achieve mastery are enriched on the same standard, but at a higher level of rigor. Mesquite's math instruction goes beyond skills practice. It uses the best practices of teaching conceptual understanding, which applies a hands-on learning approach. Mesquite's math instruction utilizes a variety of resources and programs. There is not a set resource adopted by the district, we use various resources to aid our instruction.

Science

We strive to cultivate our students' natural curiosity about the world around them, offering learning activities that are inquiry-based, authentic, meaningful, and fun. Students are responsible for taking an active role in their own education. They are expected to seek knowledge, develop skills, ask questions, engage in scientific inquiry, conduct independent research, contribute ideas, solve problems, share discoveries, and demonstrate understanding. Science instruction is supported through field trips, the Science Fair, Project Astro Sky Nights, and the Garden and Technology Clubs.

Social Studies

Mesquite believes Social Studies encompasses history, geography, civics/government, and economics. A thorough introduction to these subjects broadens our students' understanding of the world around them, while developing the life skills necessary to become productive citizens in a multicultural society. Mesquite's instruction includes state standards, a multicultural approach to art, Biz Town, and Junior Achievement.

Arts

Visual Arts education is essential to the quality of our culture. Students describe, interpret, and evaluate works of art created by themselves and others. Students show appreciation of art and artists within the context of the past and present cultures. Mesquite's art instruction includes state standards, student Art shows, including the Pima County Fair, Vail Pride Day, and one of the Media Center Enrichment centers. Music is

a discipline that is evident in all facets of life. The study of music raises levels of appreciation, and promotes understanding of cultural heritage and diversity. It also provides an outlet for creativity, self-expression and emotional awareness, fostering opportunities for personal success and high self-esteem. Music instruction is supported by activities such as Beginning and Advanced Band, Beginning Orchestra, and Choir.

Technology

Technology is important to the instruction and culture of Mesquite. There are many ways we use technology. Technology at Mesquite includes document cameras, projectors, audio enhancement systems, responders, interactive white boards, iMacs, personal laptops, and a mobile laptop lab. All students have a personal account to access their own files from any computer in the school. A variety of software and approved website resources are available to provide students the tools they need to be successful technology users. Mesquite's technology instruction includes weekly scheduled lab access for all grades.

Physical Education/Health

Physical education is essential in developing the physical, social, emotional, and mental health of students. While many physical fitness programs are being reduced in size in public education, we have expanded our program by adding a second full time P.E. teacher. Basic health education is incorporated in our physical education instruction. Knowledge about the relationship of physical activity and health can lead to the prevention of health problems in the future. Mesquite's physical education program includes instruction based on the state standards using the following components: motor development, movement exploration, fitness development, rhythmic movement, organized games and sports, prevention and control of diseases, the use of Playground Zones, and encouraging students to make healthy food choices.

E2. Select two of the above content areas that should be highlighted because of their central importance to the school's vision/mission, and the special significance to the school.

Schools in the Vail School District have certain programs that once recognized as successful, are duplicated throughout the district. Mesquite often pilots new programs, as well as developing our own. In this section, we will highlight two innovative programs developed at Mesquite. One is V.E.R.B., which complements our Balanced Literacy program. It was modeled after the success achieved with Balanced Math and the Math Reteach/Enrich Program. The Mesquite Media Center Enrichment Program is another unique program designed to enrich instruction in the core content areas of math, writing, technology, and art. Both of these curriculum programs align with Mesquite's vision/mission by "nurturing academic achievement and recognition through a challenging curriculum, utilizing strong technology, research based measures, and best practices that focus on student learning."

One of our unique curriculum models is V.E.R.B., a complimentary program to Balanced Literacy. State standards taught in Balanced Literacy are monitored weekly using formative assessments. V.E.R.B. stands for Vocabulary Enrichment Reading Block. The V.E.R.B. period takes place from 10:30 to 11:00, Monday through Thursday in grades 2nd-5th. Students who master the reading standards at 80% on the formatives are placed in an enrichment period, much the same as our Math Reteach/Enrich model. Students not mastering the formatives are retaught and retested. Along with reading instruction,

Academic Vocabulary is implemented during V.E.R.B. lessons. Academic Vocabulary is a way to integrate vocabulary across the curriculum. Students must define and illustrate vocabulary words. The V.E.R.B. instruction period has the flexibility to incorporate writing and communication skills when necessary. The objective behind the development of the V.E.R.B. period continues to go beyond state/minimum standards and ensure that students achieve at high levels, establish rigorous curriculum standards, and high expectations for all students. Data has shown that the V.E.R.B. model has increased our reading scores by 33% in the “Exceeds” category in our 3rd – 5th grade scores. One example of the success we have seen with V.E.R.B. is evident in our 3rd Grade AIMS reading scores. The year prior to implementing V.E.R.B., (07-08), 28% of 3rd Grade students “Exceeded” in reading. The following year (08-09), 40% of 3rd Grade students “Exceeded” in reading.

Another program unique to Mesquite is the Media Center Enrichment Program. This program began with the vision of extending enrichment to the entire student population. Consistent trends in AIMS, Benchmark, and Terra Nova data identified the need to challenge higher achieving students. Mesquite has been labeled Excelling for the previous six years. A team was formed to create a plan with goals, objectives, and outcomes. The goals of the program are to enhance student learning, maximize student learning time, increase writing skills, and to utilize the library facility in a more effective manner. The Mesquite Enrichment Team desired to promote enrichment opportunities school wide. The Mesquite Media Center Enrichment Program uses standards based instruction in the curriculum areas of reading, writing, math, art, and technology. The expected objectives are to conduct in- depth investigations, address multiple intelligences, provide unique enrichment opportunities, and involve the community through volunteers and funding. The expected outcome was for students to participate in learning opportunities that culminate with a product or performance, utilizing written language, math, artistic creativity, or technology. In conclusion, we here at Mesquite have embraced these two programs, and believe our two programs, V.E.R.B. and the Media Center Enrichment Program, will leave a powerful and lasting imprint on each student giving them a life long love of learning.

E3. How does your curriculum address 21st century content; including civic literacy, financial, economic and business literacy; global awareness; health/wellness?

The skills required of a 21st Century Learner such as civic, financial, economic, and business literacy are addressed through the Media Center Enrichment Program. Some examples include the Kids Vote Program and studying the preservation of natural resources. Junior Achievement and Biz Town address financial, economic, and business literacy. The skills of global awareness, health, and wellness are important too. One of the activities that support a growing global awareness is our Student Council recycling program. Through our Physical Education Program, wellness and health are addressed by several specific programs: Jump Rope for Heart, the Mileage Club, Red Ribbon Week, and the Tobacco Free Program. Mesquite desires to ensure students’ future success in all areas, including the 21st Century. We incorporate critical thinking skills by providing students with base knowledge and provide opportunities for students to apply that knowledge in real world situations. An example of this would be Biz Town, a replica of a small city located in a large warehouse that is run by visiting 5th Grade students.

Students must interview for a position. The student learns all the skills necessary to perform the job. When they are ready, students attend Biz Town, performing their assigned jobs and running the city. Our students' practical skills are based on the application of prior knowledge gained through instruction on state standards. Some ways students gain practical skills are through the creation of Science Fair projects, the math problem of the week, the Media Center activities, Student Council, Fitness Club, Technology Club, and the Garden Club. Our specialty classes provide all students with the understanding of practical, personal, health/ wellness, physical, and cultural skills.

E4. How is the curriculum in each content area and grade level developed, monitored, evaluated, and improved at your school?

Mesquite uses district initiated curriculum calendars to guide instruction. All schools in the district use the same calendars to ensure consistency across the district, as well as a fluid transition to feeder schools. The calendars are created using essential state standards through a collaborative process with district staff. Teachers are also involved in the writing of school and district formatives and participate in Benchmark reviews. Benchmark data is used to monitor and adjust instruction appropriately. Clear articulation and collaboration across and within grade levels occurs during weekly planning sessions and Data Team meetings. Reteach /Enrich, V.E.R.B., Beyond Textbooks, and the Media Center Enrichment Program are contributing features which make Mesquite unique, exemplary, and innovative. A unique feature to the Vail School District is that all teachers have the opportunity to assist in the development of curriculum. The Beyond Textbooks Website allows all teachers the ability to add lessons and activities to the website. Mrs. Dabney encourages teachers to "post lessons" on the website. The innovative program allows for collaboration across the district and with several neighboring districts, thereby supporting professional development.

E5. What requirements must be satisfied before a student is promoted to the next grade or level of schooling?

The Vail School Board adopted a policy called "Raising Expectations" to assist teachers in determining whether a student should be promoted. The policy applies to all schools in the district. Students who receive a failing grade in a core academic subject are required to take 12 hours of remediation for each failing grade. Students who do not meet this requirement can be retained. Students must also master Benchmark assessments. The same remediation requirement applies to Benchmarks and attendance. Teachers fill out a retention packet to support the potential retention. This packet can be presented to the Child Study Team. If parents object to retention, it goes before the school board. Students can receive advanced placement or acceleration on a case-by-case basis at Mesquite. Just as we want to meet the needs of struggling students, we also want to meet the needs of our excelling students.

E6. How does the school ensure that all students, including learners with unique needs have the opportunity to learn challenging content and achieve at high levels?

- **Extended Learning Program- ELP (Gifted)** At Mesquite, we have an ELP Specialist to meet the needs of the gifted population. Students are identified as gifted by the COGAT test. Identified students are serviced in a pullout model.
- **ELL Program** – The state has mandated that English Language Learners who are not proficient on the AZELLA must receive four hours of intense language instruction daily. Our district interprets the state requirement to include the time spent in

Balanced Literacy instruction. An ELL specialist then works with the students daily. Last year, Mesquite had the highest reclassification rate in the district for ELLs. 77% of our English Language Learners were reclassified to monitoring status.

- **Resource Students (remedial)** Students with identified learning disabilities are given resource services by the Resource Teacher. Students attend a pullout program based on their specific Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans. The resource teacher collaborates closely with the classroom teacher.
- **Inclusion Students/ Special Education** – The Vail School District embraces an inclusion model that calls for the instruction of all students in the least restrictive environment. This model is embraced at Mesquite. IEPs can be used to specify the need for individual resource time and one-to-one paraprofessional support.
- **Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B.** is an intervention for ensuring mastery in math and reading standards. Most of Mesquite’s certified and classified staff members are involved. Each day students are either retaught or enriched on a specific standard.

F. Leadership and Educational Vitality

"Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall." **Stephen R. Covey**

Mrs. Dabney, our principal has leadership abilities that create the base for our sound ladder of learning and professionalism. The walls in which we choose to lean our ladder, are based on a solid philosophy of education. This philosophy has allowed us to maintain the expectations of an A+ school.

F1. What is the role of the principal as instructional leader and lead learner?

Mrs. Dabney expresses her role as principal by stating, “My job is to provide teachers with research and instructional support to do their job the best that they can.” She continues to attend to her own professional growth through conferences and professional development. Mrs. Dabney supports the basis of her leadership mentality on Marzano’s School Leadership Model. She also refers to Todd Whitaker’s, What Great Principals Do Differently: 15 Things That Matter Most. Mrs. Dabney believes that there are three keys to her role as principal: visibility, positive relationships, and instructional leadership. Mrs. Dabney recognizes that by being visible on campus and in the classrooms she can identify areas of growth as well as areas of strength in which professional development opportunities can arise. She builds positive relationships with staff, students, and parents daily. Through our Site Council meetings, she develops a close relationship with parents and community members. The Site council is designed to represent and include all areas of the Mesquite culture. Mrs. Dabney continues to stay up to date on the latest leadership research. Mesquite has established Instructional Team Leaders that keep communication flowing easily between the principal and the teaching staff. Mrs. Dabney holds annual retreats to reflect on the past year’s successes and areas in need of improvement. She meets with the PTSA regularly to plan out the year’s goals and events. Our Student Council plays an active role in determining where student monies will be allocated. Our annual PBS survey allows everyone to provide feedback regarding issues dealing with school safety, health, and leadership. Staff members meet regularly with Mrs. Dabney for professional development and collaboration on school wide activities.

F2. How is the school improvement process organized and managed to ensure the school is always moving forward?

Our school improvement process is closely monitored, adjusted, and modified to meet the changing needs of our student population, staff, and state curriculum. We use Data Teams, student achievement teachers, and data driven instruction to maintain, modify and continually meet the needs of our students. The data from formative, benchmark, and state assessments are used to identify strengths and areas for improvement in our instruction. Interventions such as Math Reteach/Enrich, V.E.R.B., tutoring, full day kindergarten, and reading interventions ensure that struggling students are given the necessary attention to allow them to be successful. Mesquite identifies necessary resources needed to meet the state standards as evident in our AIMS scores. With Beyond Textbooks, Data Team meetings, and planning days, we are able to collaborate not only with teachers at Mesquite, but also with other teachers in the district. We are continually gathering and analyzing data. We conduct Data Team meetings to analyze classroom data. Through our consultation with the West Ed Corporation, we were better able to recognize areas that need improvement as well as specific areas of success. For example, one of the identified areas for improvement was that of utilizing multiple student engagement strategies. We tend to use the same strategies throughout the school. Mrs. Dabney began to model new engagement strategies in faculty and Data Team meetings. High expectations begin with Mrs. Dabney and resonate through the staff, students, and community.

F3. How does the school engage its staff, teachers, students, parents, and the wider community in formulating the schools vision/mission, goals and priorities?

Historically, Mesquite values input from all stakeholders, including staff, parents, students, and community members. A major area for input is in goal setting. One of the ways teachers are engaged in the goal setting process is the requirement of two professional goals to be discussed with Mrs. Dabney during formal observations. Each year, the faculty discusses and sets school goals as well. Goals often include parent communication, community involvement, contributions to Beyond Textbooks, as well as curriculum-based goals for reading, writing, and math. The Site Council reviews and approves the school goals. The Site Council supports the mission/vision of Mesquite by helping to develop “a partnership between parents, students, staff, and the community.” Another joint effort is our Positive Behavior Support Team (PBS). Mesquite engages students by allowing students to contribute to the PBS efforts by acting in character videos presented school wide via the GNN broadcasts and through Student Council where students engage in making decisions that affect the student population. Parents, teachers, and students can join the PTSA which actively supports our school culture through its fundraisers and family events.

F4. How does the school leadership model the use of 21st century tools and applications in the roles of principal/manager, and teacher/staff leaders?

The principal uses a Servant Leadership approach as highlighted by Steven Covey. She empowers others to take on leadership roles as well. The principal chooses Instructional Team Leaders carefully. At Mesquite it is our belief that technology motivates students. There has been a real focus to bring technology into the classroom. Tax credit initiatives are strongly pushed in order to obtain the latest in technology for all classrooms. All classroom teachers have document cameras and projectors to enhance their teaching and better facilitate student learning. We also have interactive white boards available for check out, and class room responder systems to share amongst the staff. Our Beyond

Textbook and iCal programs are used by teachers to find curriculum resources. Students are given many opportunities to use technology. Type to Learn is an example discussed previously. Teachers use PowerSchool to update grades, allowing parents to check student grades regularly online. We have a listserv of parent e-mails that is used to update the community of school-wide activities and events. Some teachers also employ the use of websites to communicate expectations to parents. We strongly emphasize data as a means to guide teachers' instruction and interventions. STEEP assessments are one example of using data for intervention and special education services.

F5. How is a long-range Strategic Plan developed and how does it drive and target school improvement efforts?

Collaboration is key to Mesquite's success. To make decisions, we conduct Data Teams, staff, and Instructional Team Leader meetings. Our strategic plan to improve student achievement is based on our analysis of data. We are able to effectively evaluate data consistently from grade level to grade level. We use benchmark data analyzed by ATI, as well as data from STEEP assessments to create strategic improvement plans. Our goals and objectives have led to consistent improvements in our school's practices. We have demonstrated exceptional AIMS and Benchmark scores. One of our recent accomplishments was the increase in ELP students receiving services from 13 to 56 in one year, a 330.77% increase. Another achievement, was the dramatic decrease of our ELL students from 26 to 3 students in one year. This decrease of 77% was the highest in the district. School wide Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. are programs that resulted from our use of data. The Student Achievement Teacher plays a vital role in the management and analysis of data.

G. School, Family and Community Partnerships

Mesquite believes in involving parents and community members. This philosophy of "Partners in Education" contributes to our success in educating children. For this partnership to occur, there must be consistent communication, parent and community involvement, and a shared mission.

G1 What community collaborative alliances and partnerships are in place at your school? How do these relationships result in the school being a respected and valued partner?

The goals and priorities of this school, family and community partnership are that each child benefit from all three sources to get the best education possible. In each classroom, a "triangle" that represents our belief in this partnership of parent, child, and teacher is displayed. The school goals are collaboratively developed through several organizational structures such as the Parent Teacher Student Association and the Site Council.

Here are some examples of the activities and projects conducted within the Mesquite Community:

Parent Curriculum Night-Parent curriculum night outlines academic expectations for students at Mesquite. A parent said, "It is an informative night. It helps me to understand the challenges that my children may face in their educational efforts."

Welcome Back-to-School Night-This year the event, for parents and students, kicked-off our Media Center Enrichment Program with its theme of "Blasting Off to New Heights: Exploring Our Universe." Membership in the PTSA is encouraged at this event.

Welcome Back-to-School Night has an average attendance of 800 people.

Fall Festival-Mesquite hosts an annual Fall Festival for the Rita Ranch Community.

Activities occur in every classroom, as well as on the field and playground area. These activities include: a Haunted House, games, challenges, entertainment, and a silent auction. Students receive prizes and candy. The Student Council members participate in the event by handing out candy. Our festival also provides community outreach that involves the Tucson Police, Fire Department, and the United States Air Force. Local food vendors also participate for profit, but share a portion of that profit with the school. This year's estimated attendance was more than 2,000 people.

Last Blast-This is an end-of-year celebration. Students receive their Mesquite Yearbook at this time. This event averages more than 1,000 people.

Other PTSA Events and Duties-The contributions include: Teacher Appreciation Week, the Valentine Flower Sale, Book Fairs, Gilly's Gift Shop, Teacher Treasure Box, snacks/drinks for standardized testing, and help with Art fundraisers. On any given school day, our PTSA enhance our students' educational experience by working in classrooms, the library, the computer lab, and the workroom.

G2. How does your school involve all families in their children's education and student support programs?

There are many ways Mesquite involves all families in their children's education. One way is to encourage Family Nights where families come to watch a free movie and have popcorn. We have fundraiser nights, such as McTeacher Night, Baskin-Robbins Night, and Papa John's Night. These fundraisers provide new playground equipment and new technology for classrooms. The Specialists sponsor an annual, "Skate Country Night," where families meet the Art, P.E., and Music teachers and participate in exciting activities. We celebrate Grandparent's Day by welcoming them to our classes and providing them special treats. The Mesquite staff maintains clear, consistent, and open communication between parents and teachers. This is accomplished by sending home weekly, bi-monthly or monthly newsletters to provide information on classroom and school-wide events and curriculum. One school goal requires teachers to make three positive parent communications per week. The administration communicates with parents and the community through a detailed monthly newsletter and an updated website. Parent/teacher conferences extend the communication between home and school. Conferences occur twice a year. Mesquite has a strong **volunteer program** headed by a Volunteer Coordinator who helps teachers enlist volunteers. Their volunteer time is recorded with approximately 9,600 hours logged last year. Our volunteers are invited to a special luncheon at Vail Pride Day. Mesquite works with a variety of health and social services such as The Arizona School for Deaf and Blind, The Vail C.A.R.E.S Program, CPS, and occasionally adoption or foster parenting agencies. Mesquite participates in The Angel Tree Project, The Fire Safety Education, and the Cienega Rotary Dictionary Program. We team with our district to provide adult education regarding health issues and child/parent relationships. At Mesquite we support the district's motto, "Vail, where education is a community effort." We value this statement because of the various needs of the families in our community. For example, we have five buses transporting students daily. Bus students who participate in after school activities ride an activity bus home. Mesquite provides an after school activity bus. Mesquite also sponsors two intercession classes per year at which time students who have transportation needs are provided pick-up and drop-off services. Teacher hours are set to accommodate parent-teacher meetings before and after school.

G3. How does your school welcome and respect families from all walks of life, solicit and value their input, and find multiple ways to invite and involve them in school initiatives to build a shared commitment to student success?

Integrating families with diverse backgrounds and needs is important to Mesquite's staff. We have a non-discrimination statement that is posted on our school web page. We clearly communicate our school expectations and policies with a student agenda book, which has our student handbook printed in the front. Students use the agendas to record daily assignments and homework. Email is an effective form of communication. PowerSchool gives Internet access to grades and is updated weekly. We value parent involvement and believe it is successful because of our communication. PTSA, as stated, is a very powerful tool in gaining parent involvement and setting the stage for expectations. Families are involved from all segments of the school community because the Volunteer Coordinator actively recruits all parents. We have specific subgroups such as resource and special needs students who have communication journals, which are used daily to inform parents. As for our ELL population, communication is translated into students' native languages if necessary and feasible.

G4. How are educational resources in the school and the community used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers, and families?

Mesquite is located in an area where many community resources are available. The art teacher uses the school morning broadcast to introduce students to local artists interviews. Students take field trips to the University of Arizona Art Museum. The Tucson Symphony visits our school to provide students with an appreciation of the instruments that are played in a symphony. Other community programs that support enrichment are Stories that Soar, Tucson River of Words, Project Astro, Saguaro National Monument, and Night Sky Watch. A strong partnership has been developed with Raytheon Missile Systems in the area of the Sciences. They provide volunteers to help judge our school Science Fair. Raytheon partners with Mesquite financially by matching employee donations. Junior Achievement is another organization that provides extensive learning opportunities for our students. It is the world's largest organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy. Wright Flight is a non-profit organization in Tucson providing teachers with an aviation curriculum used as a motivational tool for fifth grade students. Mesquite shares its facilities to local organizations that support student activities. These activities include: National Youth Sports Organizations, Boy and Girl Scouts of America, KIDCO, Tucson Parks and Recreation, Karate Kids, piano recitals, and a local church. Mesquite shares its facilities with community organizations to develop strong relationships. Some of the community organizations that use our facilities include Pima County Law Enforcement: SWAT Team Division, Rita Ranch Homeowner Associations, H.E.A.T. Optimist Club, Vail Community Services, church groups, Northern Arizona University, and Tucson Medical Center Health Awareness Program. Our partnerships build community, strengthen relationships, and introduce students to an array of academic and extracurricular activities. We value every program and organization that supports education.

H. Indicators of Success

H1. Describe your school’s balanced assessment system/approach that includes high quality summative, benchmark and formative classroom assessments used to improve teaching and learning.

At Mesquite, we seek high student achievement and excellence in instruction. One way in which we ensure that we achieve this vision is through our balanced approach to assessment. The purpose of assessment is to guide classroom instruction. The school’s overall approach to assessment is comprehensive. Students’ academic achievements are evaluated on a regular basis through a variety of formal and informal assessments. These assessments directly measure students’ achievement with regard to the Arizona State Academic Standards. Grade level teams meet at least twice a week to collaboratively plan. During this time, teachers rely heavily on formal and informal assessments to guide their lesson planning and instruction. Bi-monthly Data Team meetings provide an opportunity to examine student data. Assessment data is also used during Child Study Team meetings and parent/teacher conferences. Some of the challenges that effect school climate and achievement include absenteeism and discipline issues. Mesquite currently has several programs and practices in place to address these issues. These include Math Reteach/Enrich, V.E.R.B., Intersession, and PBS.

H2. What evidence do you regularly collect and analyze to judge the effectiveness of your school?

Formatives-Formative Assessments are used to assess the mastery of grade level standards. Formative Assessments are written by a District Formative Assessment Team (DFAT). The DFAT team is comprised of district teachers who create the Formative Assessments. Formatives are given to assess standards taught in the classroom. Mesquite’s performance standard is based on 80% mastery.

Benchmarks-Reading and Math Benchmarks are quarterly assessments given to all students in second through fifth grade. All Benchmark assessments are constructed by Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI) and are aligned to the state standards. This allows us to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and the instruction implemented in classrooms. Benchmark assessments provide immediate feedback. Classes that do not demonstrate 80% mastery of an objective reteach and retest that objective until 80% mastery is achieved. Writing Benchmarks are given to all students in kindergarten through fifth grade. This assessment is scored using the Six Traits of Writing Rubric.

Curriculum Based Measures (CBM) - CBMs are timed assessments taken by students in grades kindergarten through fifth. The Math CBM is given to students (first through fifth) daily to build fluency on specific computational skills. The Reading CBM assesses reading fluency, speed, and accuracy. The Writing CBM assesses correct writing sequence. These CBMs are administered three times a year in grades first through fifth. These are quick measures that identify ability of Mastery, Instructional, or Frustrational levels. Students performing in the Frustrational Range are given a Can’t Do/Won’t Do Assessment. This assessment determines if students are unable to complete the skill or if extra motivation is needed. Students identified as “Can’t Do” receive individual interventions for ten to fifteen days. If these students continue to perform in the Frustrational Range, additional testing will be considered. The CBM Assessments and interventions have helped prevent the misidentification of special needs students. To further monitor our primary grades, we use two additional CBM assessments. The LSF

CBM assesses letter sound fluency and is administered to kindergarten students monthly, while the WIF CBM assesses word identification fluency and is administered to first grade students monthly.

AIMS/Stanford 10-AIMS is a state mandated assessment designed to measure a student's understanding of the state standards. AIMS is taken by third through fifth grade students. The Stanford 10 is a norm-referenced test taken by second grade students. The Stanford 10 is designed to measure a student's strengths and weaknesses in the general content areas of reading, language, and mathematics.

Annual Vail School District Parent Survey-Parent satisfaction with Mesquite is assessed annually through a survey. This survey measures satisfaction with Mesquite's staff, communication, facility, and programs.

Vail School District Climate and Culture Survey-In conjunction with the National Center for School Leadership, the district conducted a district-wide climate and culture survey. All district staff had the opportunity to participate in this online survey.

Protective Schools Assessment-As part of Vail School District's Vail C.A.R.E.S. grant, Mesquite's staff completed the Protective Schools Assessment survey for the past three years. This survey collects data about staff satisfaction.

Alternative Assessments

Writing Portfolios-The Writing Portfolios are collections of student writing that demonstrate mastery of the Arizona state standards. Each sample includes the entire writing process focusing on a grade level writing genre.

Model Products-Model Products are examples of student work that exemplify achievement at each of the following performance levels: Exceeds, Meets, Approaches, and Falls Far Below.

Science Fair-The Science Fair provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their individual academic abilities through the scientific method.

Standards Based Report Cards (K-2nd)-For the past three years, Mesquite has piloted standards based report cards in kindergarten through second grade for math and reading. Unlike traditional report cards, standards based report cards identify how students perform on individual standards. Performance is identified Falls Far Below the Standard, Approaches the Standard, Meets the Standard, and Exceeds the Standard. Teachers at Mesquite have developed rubrics by which to assess students' performance on each standard.

Currently at Mesquite, there are two students who do not take Benchmark, Stanford 10 and AIMS assessments. This number represents .004% of our student population. These students do participate in the AIMS A Assessment, specifically designed for students who have special needs. Over the past few years, Mesquite's writing scores have increased significantly. In the table below, writing scores have increased between the years of 2007-2008 to 2008-2009. A contributing factor of this increase is the implementation of our Mesquite Media Center Enrichment Program. The program was created to encourage writing and provide enrichment opportunities.

H3. What are the data for the past five years that serve as quantitative indicators of improved school climate and engagement?

For the past six years, Mesquite has been an Excelling school. Its AIMS results rank among the highest in the district and state. Across all subgroups, academic performance is well above state averages. On the 2008-2009 AIMS test, 82% of Mesquite's Special

Education students met or exceeded in Reading, 76% met or exceeded in Writing, and 85% met or exceeded in Math. Of the seven English Language Learners, four met or exceeded in Reading, six met or exceeded in Writing, and six met or exceeded in Math. Overall, the 2008-2009 AIMS test results were among the highest Mesquite has ever achieved, with over 90% of all students at all grade levels (third through fifth) in all subjects meeting or exceeding. (Percents represent combined Meets and Exceeds)

		2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
3rd	Reading	92%	92%	95%	87%	94%
	Writing	84%	48%	95%	85%	91%
	Math	95%	98%	98%	91%	97%
4th	Reading	91%	87%	90%	89%	92%
	Writing	78%	73%	89%	80%	95%
	Math	99%	99%	95%	92%	97%
5th	Reading	93%	96%	95%	94%	94%
	Writing	84%	88%	83%	86%	94%
	Math	98%	99%	93%	97%	94%

H4. Data Collection

Criteria	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily Student Attendance	90.24%	90.01%	90.07%	96.4%	97%
Daily Teacher Attendance	96%	94%	94%	95%	97%
Teacher Turnover Rate	87%	77%	71%	79%	97%
Promotion Rate	98%	98%	99%	97%	97%

I. Challenges

II. Reflecting on the last five years, what major challenges have been addressed? How have they been resolved? What subsequent changes have contributed most to the overall success of the school?

One major educational challenge that our school has faced was the amount of time needed for instruction. To adequately address state standards and district expectations, an extensive amount of time was required. More time was necessary to collaboratively plan for instruction, especially for the Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. periods. This challenge was addressed by building in a 40-minute grade level planning period. Time issues were also addressed by implementing a school wide, 30-minute block of time for both Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. classes. Mesquite was also part of a pilot program in the Vail District to use curriculum pacing calendars. Another challenge Mesquite has dealt with over the past five years is one of changing administration and a turnover in teaching staff. Mrs. Erickson, the previous original principal of Mesquite was asked to open a new district elementary school. At such time Mrs. Dabney was chosen to lead Mesquite. Because Mrs. Erickson was such a successful administrator, many of her staff chose to follow her to her new school, leaving many big shoes to fill. Mrs. Dabney set the tone by having high expectations and modeling those expectations for new staff members. Coaching programs created a common knowledge and understanding of expectations and teaching philosophies. The final major challenge Mesquite faced in the past years has been one of changing demographics. Mesquite traditionally has a high socioeconomic population. With the expansion of the Mesquite boundaries to include

new construction areas that were easier for families to afford, the types of families began to change. This change in population affected the culture of Mesquite. Many of the families did not have the same expectations and level of involvement that Mesquite had come to expect. The way we addressed this challenge was through the extensive use of data compiled from the many assessment tools utilized at Mesquite. We were able to place these students in intervention situations like tutoring, intercession, Math Reteach/Enrich, and V.E.R.B. Home visits allowed our staff to develop relationships with the new families and share expectations with them. Overall, the change that made the greatest contribution to Mesquite's success was the implementation of the Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. models coupled with the joint planning time. The Math Reteach/Enrich and V.E.R.B. models allowed teachers to ensure that all students mastered their grade level standards.

I2. What are the major educational challenges the school must face over the next five years, and how does the school plan to address them? Outline how you will develop an Agenda For Action based on relevant information and data.

There are many challenges facing Mesquite in the next five years. Some of these challenges relate to budget constraints that will affect Arizona public education. How districts deal with these constraints will determine the success of their schools. This will prove to be a pivotal shift in the culture that currently exists at Mesquite. The best way to meet this particular challenge is to be aware, educated, and proactive in budgeting appropriately for the years to come. It will be imperative for the Mesquite community to do all it can to promote the next bond override election. Tax credits are another way to meet the challenge of a reduced budget. Mesquite plans to host more informational gatherings to educate parents on how to donate tax credits to the school. The other major challenge is new state math standards. It will be a challenge to maintain the same level of academic performance seen in the past. Teachers must be trained and understand the new standards to ensure student success. Administration will provide professional development on the new standards. Staff will work collaboratively among grade levels to share strategies and knowledge. Mesquite will continue to utilize assessment data to monitor and adjust instruction.

Agenda For Action:

Budget

- Awareness of budget and possible funding changes
- Plan and budget for the future (stockpile)
- Educate staff, families, and community on Bond Override Election
- Inform families of the effects of budget cuts
- Get families involved in the solutions (tax credits and volunteering)

Math Standards

- Professional development opportunities and more resources for teachers
- Continue providing opportunities for collaboration among staff
- Use data as a tool to monitor and adjust instruction

At Mesquite we are dedicated to excellence in education. As we “Bridge to the Past, Branch to the Future,” we continue our pursuit of our mission. The entire Mesquite community--principal, teachers, staff, parents, and students focus on the goal of academic success for every child.