

Mountainside Elementary Progress Update 2020-2021

April 2, 2021

Dear Mountainside Elementary families:

The 2020-2021 school year has certainly been unique. As you know, our students and staff have risen to the unique challenges presented to us this year with creativity and grit. We would like to take this opportunity to update you on a number of measures that we use to chart our progress throughout the year. These metrics help us to understand some of our areas of strength as well as opportunities for growth.

- [Early Literacy Achievement and Growth](#): How are our students progressing in their acquisition of reading skills?
- [English Language Arts \(ELA\) and Math Achievement and Growth](#): What type of progress are our students making in mastering year-long concepts in ELA and Math?
- [Student Survey Data](#): What are our students saying about our school and district?
- [Parent Survey Data](#): What are our parents saying about our school and district?
- [Health Data](#): How have our schools and district responded to COVID? How many positive cases have we seen in both students and staff?
- [What have we identified as our areas of strength this year and where do we think we still have room to grow?](#)

This report focuses on general school-wide trends. Please feel free to reach out to your classroom teacher, Mr. Owen, Principal, or Mrs. Christiansen, Assistant Principal, for more detailed results and feedback.

The data is extremely promising as it shows that not only are our students learning and mastering standards this year, but in many cases, they are actually doing better this year than last year. We can only attribute this to the tremendous efforts of our students and staff, and to each of you for the efforts you have done to support us this year from home.

Early Literacy Achievement and Growth: How are our students progressing in their acquisition of reading skills?

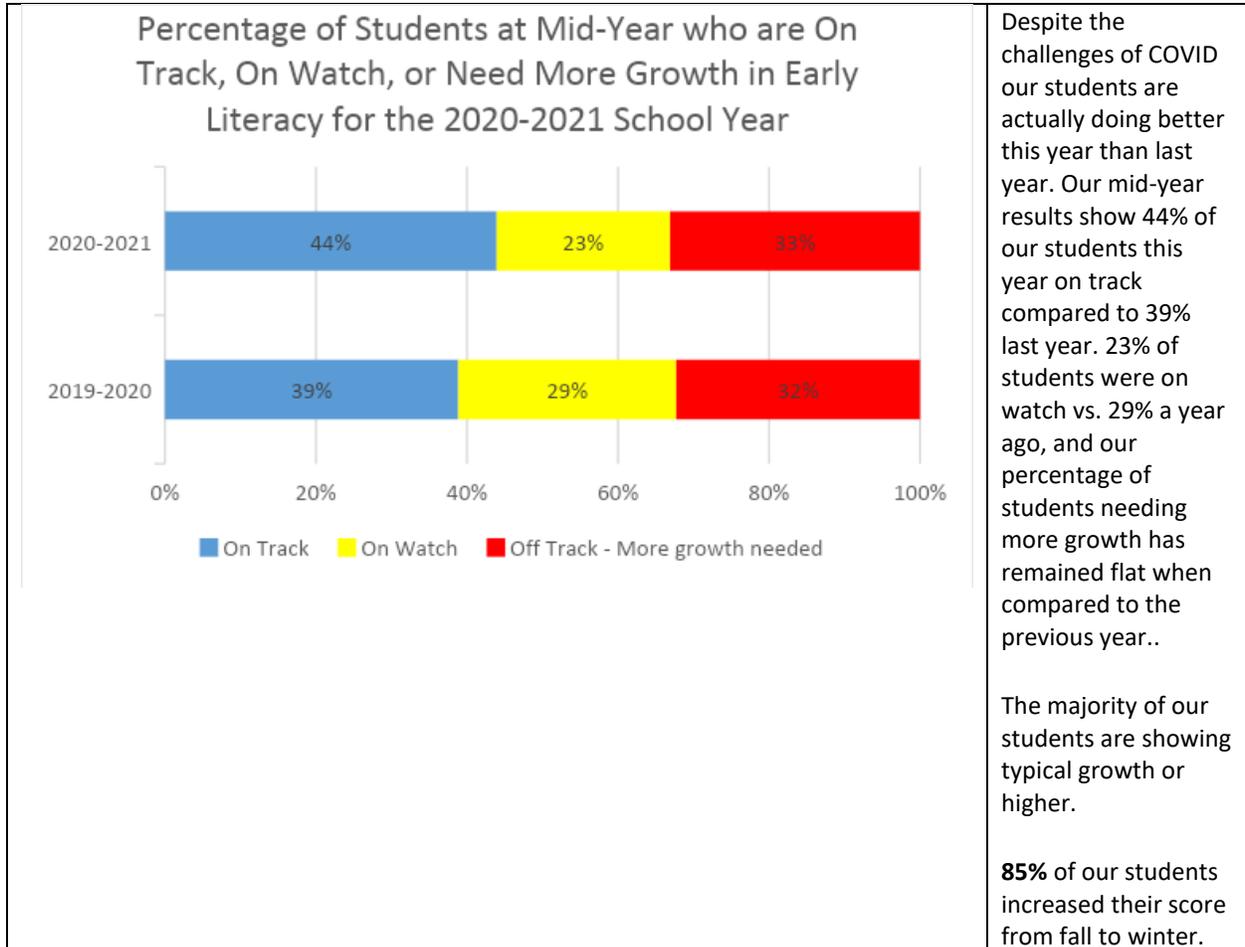
The DIBELS assessment is given to all K-3rd grade students to assess their progress in acquiring early literacy skills. 4th and 5th grade students are given the assessment on an as needed basis.

Students are considered:

- “On Track” if they are scoring at benchmark with average or above average growth, or below benchmark with above average growth or higher.



- “On Watch” if they are scoring at benchmark with below or well below average growth, or below benchmark with average growth or lower.
- “Off Track” if they are scoring at below or well below benchmark with below or well below average growth.



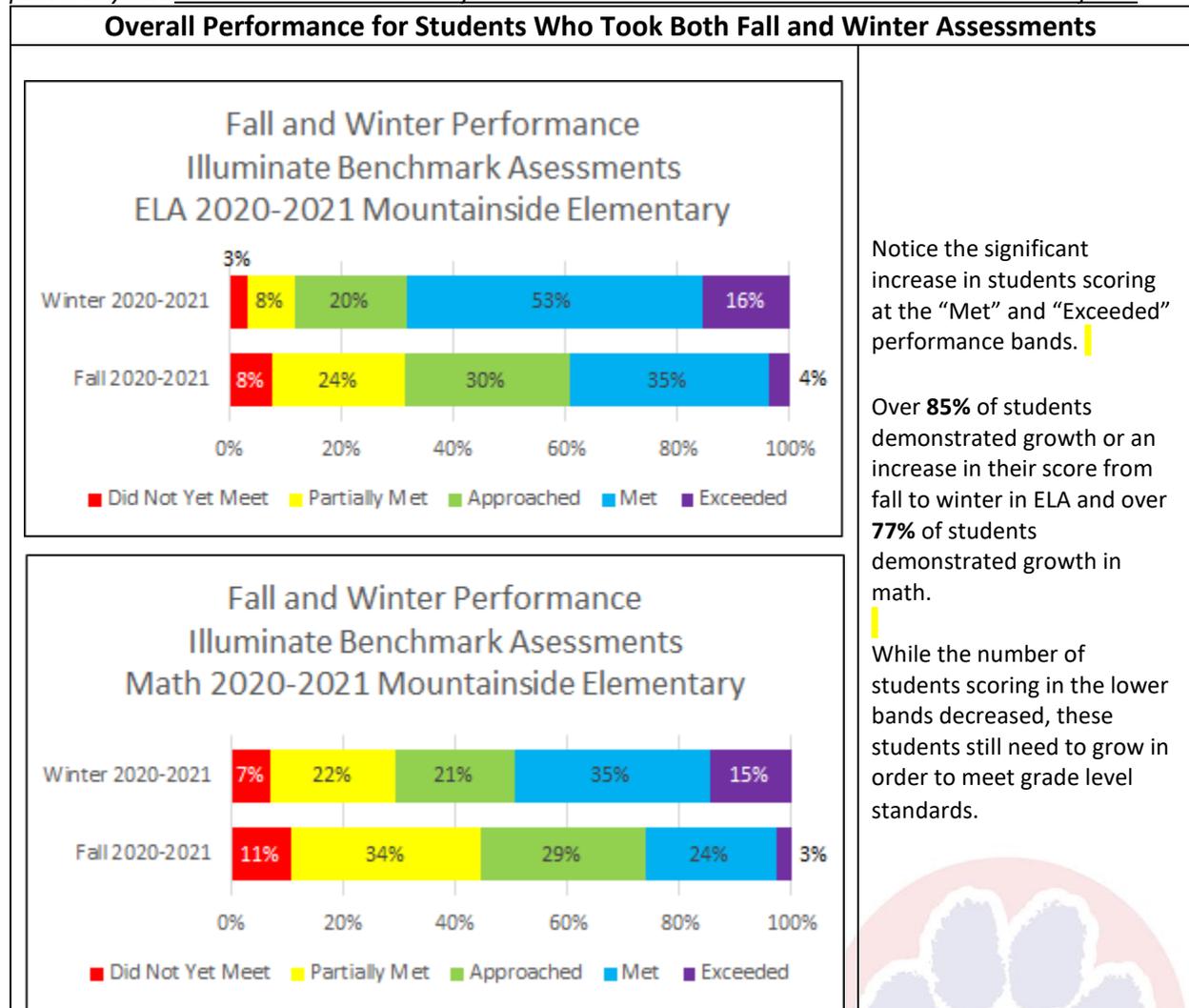
The table below describes the percentage of students in each growth category based on their achievement level after the mid-year DIBELS assessment in 2021.

Achievement vs. Growth					
Achievement Level	Well Above Average Growth	Above Average Growth	Typical Growth	Below Average Growth	Well Below Average Growth
Above Benchmark	10%	9%	3%	2%	1%
Benchmark	1%	4%	9%	6%	4%
Below Benchmark	1%	2%	5%	7%	5%
Well Below Benchmark	1%	4%	5%	8%	13%
Grand Total	14%	18%	22%	24%	23%



ELA and Math Achievement and Growth: What type of progress are our students making in mastering year-long concepts in ELA and Math?

We administered a comprehensive assessment in the fall and winter. This “Illuminate” assessment covers topics that are taught over the course of the year. The assessment enables our teachers and students to get real-time feedback on specific concepts that have been mastered or still need to be addressed. It is directly aligned to the state assessment, Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS). *If a student scored “Met” on the Illuminate assessment at the beginning of the year, then it means that they would have most likely scored “Met” on the CMAS assessment had they taken it the previous year. It does not mean that they will score “Met” on the state assessment at the end of the*



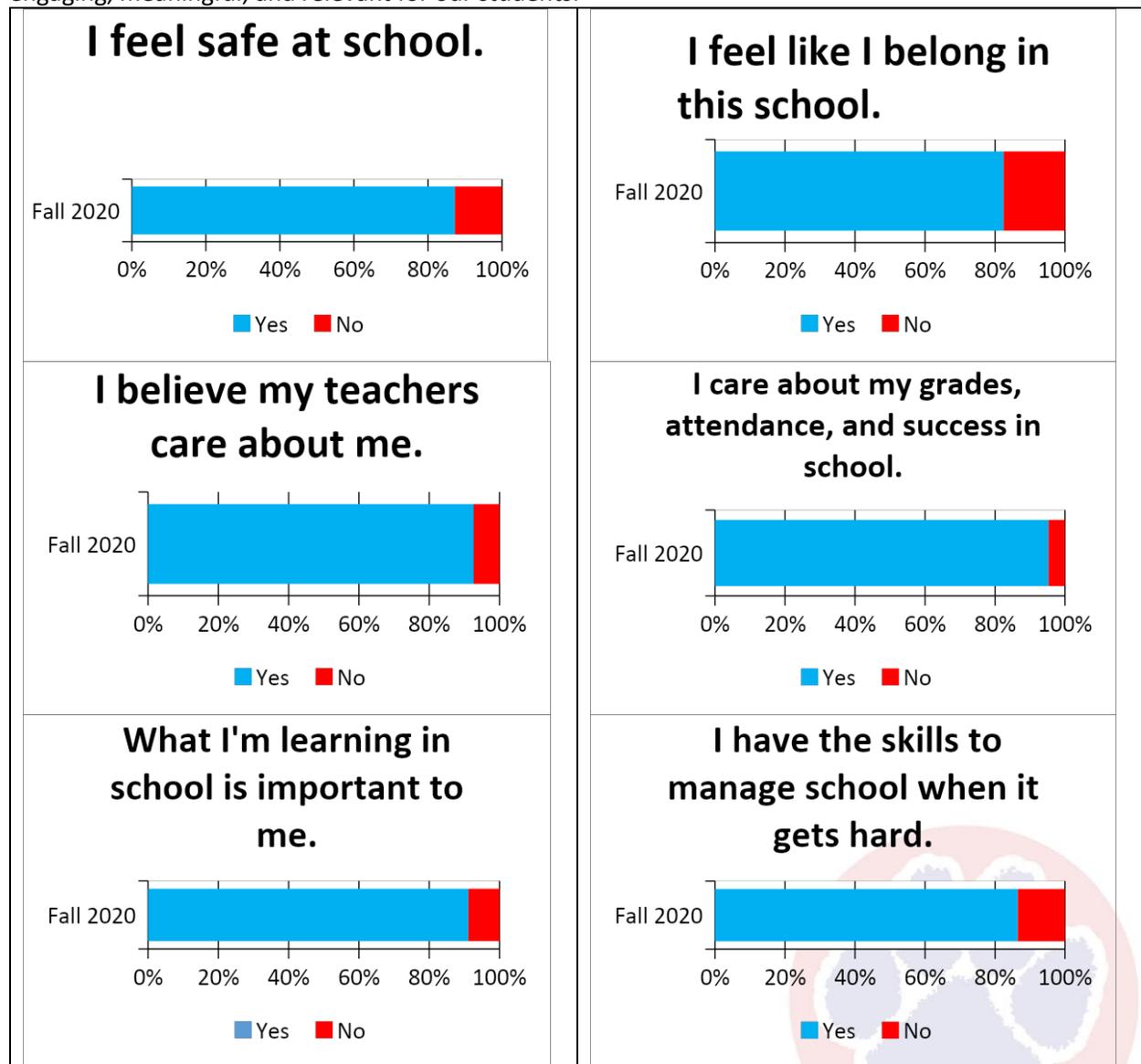
year, but we will be able to provide that analysis after spring assessments are administered.

Student Survey Data: What are our students saying about our school and district?

Mountainside Elementary School cares deeply about students’ experiences. It is important that not only do our students have a voice, but that we also listen. Below are some of the questions that we asked



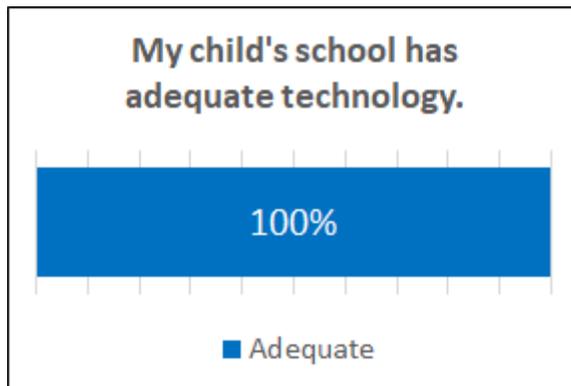
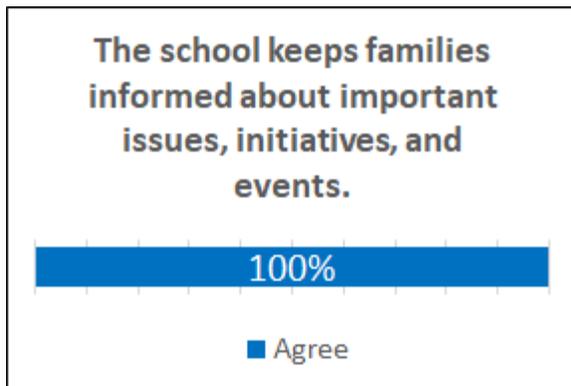
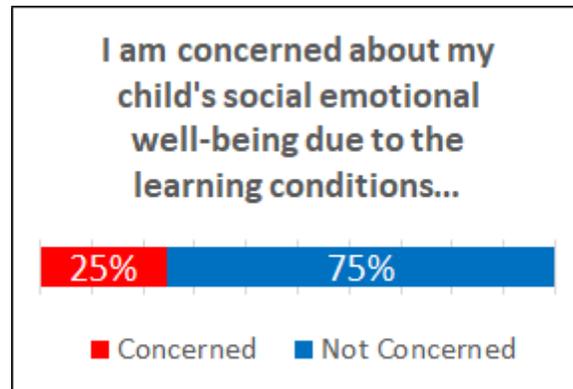
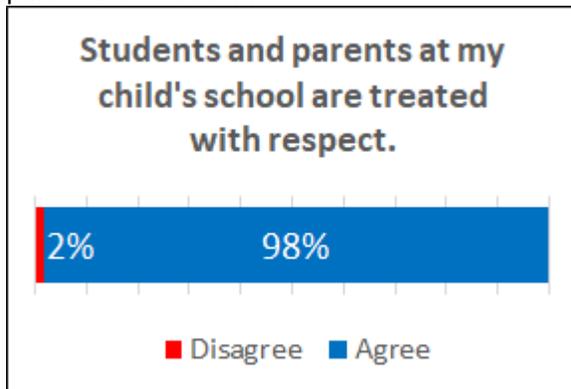
our students in the fall including their responses. While the vast majority of our students report that they feel safe, that they belong, and that they have the skills necessary to succeed, there are still some students who don't feel this way. As a community, we will continue to reach out, listen, and put the needs of our students first above all else. In reflecting on our student survey data from this fall, it was evident that the COVID protocols that allowed us to provide a consistent, in-person learning experience also made the building, classrooms, and adults appear less approachable than in years past. Our goal over this past year has been to work to build a classroom and school culture that looks different, but feels the same. We are excited to see the results of our Spring student survey to see if we were able to increase the percentage of students who "Feel safe at school", and "Feel like they belong in school". As we address the students' feeling of safety and belonging, we will also continue to make learning engaging, meaningful, and relevant for our students.



Parent Survey Data: What are our parents saying about our school and district?

We are so appreciative of the partnership that our building has been able to foster with our parent community this year. It looks significantly different than past school years, and we miss your presence in our building. As recently as yesterday (April 1) I spoke with a parent asking about what next year may hold in store with regard to visitors and volunteers in the building because this parent missed “being involved” in our school. I shared that the staff at Mountainside feel that way as well, and cannot wait until we can host our afterschool activities for students and parents, and can involve parents for volunteer opportunities throughout the school day. We are hopeful that will be able to happen next year! However, as I reflected on this parent’s comment, I don’t want to discount how our parent community has “been involved” this year. Whether it’s been helping their children access technology at home, contacting the school in the event that a child or someone in the household has become ill, participating in our virtual parent-teacher conferences, or supporting their child during remote learning in the event of a health quarantine or the week we returned from Winter Break, our parents have been tremendously involved and we thank you for that.

In looking at the data from our annual Parent Survey we appreciate your concern regarding the emotional well-being of your child. In an attempt to address that concern this year we included our school counselor in with our enrichment and specials class rotation. She has been visible in every classroom and works with every child this year. She has worked to build that sense of community and personal connection.

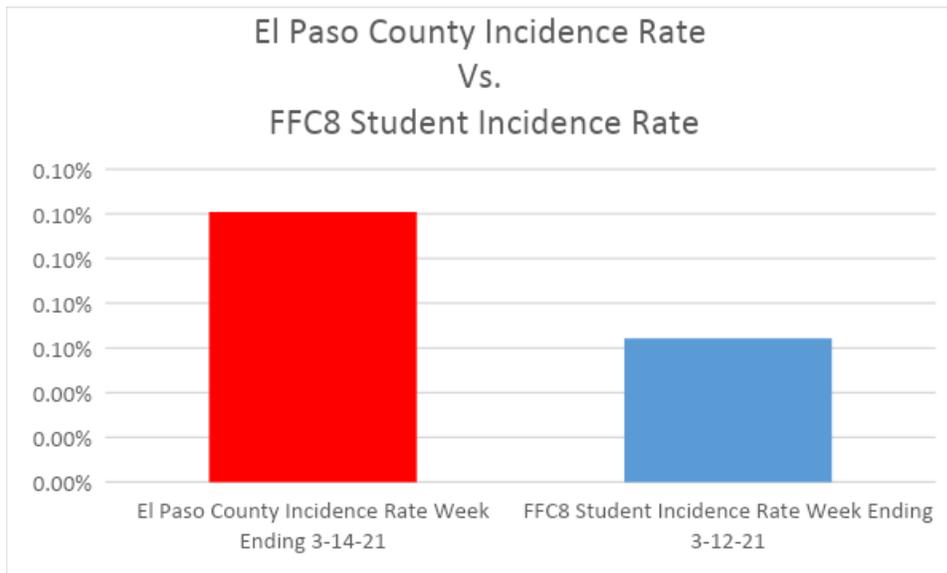


Health Data: How have our schools and districts responded to COVID? How many positive cases have we seen in both students and staff?

The health and safety of our students and staff is our number one priority. We have taken extraordinary measures this year to keep our buildings and classrooms as healthy as possible during the pandemic. Please [visit this site](#) for current information about how we are addressing COVID-19 at our district.

As of Friday, March 12, 2021, FFC8 has approximately 7768 students and 404 staff members. Of these community members a small percentage have had a confirmed COVID infection. Staff have been prioritized for vaccination and many have already received their 2nd dose.

Timeline	Students	Staff
Week of March 5 th to March 12 th	0.06%	0%
Total since the beginning of 2 nd Semester	0.55%	9.90%



Please note that our data shows that there is very little, if any, student to student COVID transmission and the incident rate amongst students is significantly lower than the [El Paso community](#) at large.

Based on this information we still believe that **the safest place for most students to be is at school.**

What have we identified as our areas of strength this year and where do we think we still have room to grow?

Academics:

Our students rose to meet every challenge this year with their innovation, perseverance, and grit. They found new ways to interact with their teachers and peers while also finding innovative ways to demonstrate their learning. What we may not have realized at first is that students are extremely resilient and adaptable. We have been fortunate not to see the massive “learning losses” that we predicted and in many cases students have demonstrated more growth this year compared to the last. The district made a very concerted effort to create a “one to one” laptop initiative for all of our students kindergarten - 12th grade and that enabled our students and staff to innovate in ways that we had never imagined. The lessons learned this year have the power to transform education for many years to come.



We still have plenty of room to grow, especially in those areas where students need to learn new skills rather than practice and refine the ones that they have already learned. This is especially impactful at an elementary school where students are learning and applying early literacy skills as they develop as readers and writers. The best way to learn to read is with lots of in-person instruction and practice. We are going to work to make sure that our earliest learners grow and any delays in learning to read and write are remediated. We expect to see this same pattern in other subject areas with very specific skills that are “new” to students. We are also going to continue to explore and refine our feedback practices. What is the most actionable feedback? What should be graded? How do we continue to get students to take ownership of their own learning?

While our district historically doesn’t see the same types of socio-economic achievement gaps seen in other districts across the state and nation, the one persistent achievement gap that does appear across the district is in the performance between females and males. Male students continue to underperform in comparison with their female peers from graduation to grades to test scores. While this pattern is seen across the nation, it is our responsibility to close the gap within our own district and strive to meet every student where they are at. At Mountainside through our analysis of student assessment data we see that pattern in some grade levels and content areas, but it is not universal. We see gender-based achievement discrepancies with females outperforming males in ELA in three of our four grade-levels administering comprehensive ELA assessments, and males outperforming females mathematics in three of our four grade-levels administering comprehensive math assessments. Mountainside staff will continue to look at our instruction to make sure we are able to implement strategies that are effective for students regardless of gender. Our focus as a staff for the upcoming year is to look at all of our grading practices and feedback mechanisms to provide students, parents, and colleagues with the most accurate and equitable measures of a student’s academic performance and growth.

Socio-emotional learning:

As has been stated earlier, our students and staff have shown tremendous perseverance and grit this year. We made a very concerted effort to focus our resources and energy on the physical and mental wellbeing of all of our community members. This has led to an increase in student and staff awareness about their socio-emotional needs and we have seen a significant increase in self-advocacy among all of our community members. It is our intention to ensure that this awareness and ability for students to ask for what they need continues to grow well into the future. We have also seen an increase in students’ awareness and access to mental health services which shows a growing awareness of resources among both students and staff. Student access to timely and effective mental health services is a point of pride in our district. We are one of the only districts in the state where there is a licensed school psychologist in every school building. This enables our mental health providers to provide proactive and personalized services. Additionally, at Mountainside we are very proud of the partnership we have built with Evans Hospital by having a licensed psychologist on site to work with students and families through our School Behavioral Health partnership. Finally, our MFLC has unique knowledge of the challenges facing a military child and provides counseling services tailored to address those specific needs. Through the coordinated effort between our school counselor, school psychologist, School Behavioral Health psychologist, and MFLC we are working hard to address the social-emotional needs facing our students.



In many ways the areas that we need to grow in are also areas of strength. How can we continue to find innovative ways to build off all of the progress that we have made so far? As the pandemic wanes and things return to “normal” we can’t lose sight of the progress that we have made so far and we must continue to actively listen and respond to the mental and behavioral health needs of our students as we plan for the fall. We need to continue to build and expand the implementation of our “Responsive Classroom” program to work to help students develop skills to address times when situations with peers or with adults become challenging. We will continue to work to improve and promote connections between peers and caring adults. We will continue to help our young learners recognize when behavior is detrimental to their learning, or unsafe, and help them to develop strategies to regulate their behaviors and deal with their emotions. Ultimately, we want to proactively respond to issues with behavior and help students find healthy ways to communicate their needs and resolve conflict. We believe in the power of our students to transform the world around them. It is our duty to help them build a foundation of mental and social skills that will equip them to be successful both in and out of school, and ultimately enable them to reach their full potential as citizens and leaders.

We believe in the power of the Fountain-Fort Carson community to change the world. Thank you for entrusting us with your students. We recognize the honor and responsibility that comes with the faith that you have put in our Mountainside community. We are proud of what we have accomplished and also recognize that we have yet to reach our full potential. Together, we will prepare today’s youth for tomorrow’s responsibility.

Sincerely,



Eric R. Owen
Principal, Mountainside Elementary School

