

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 13440 Melville Lane  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Chantilly State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 20151-2463

County Fairfax County

Telephone (703) 633-7400 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://poplartrees.fcps.edu/ E-mail seandujar@fcps.edu

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Scott Brabrand E-mail ssbrabrand@fcps.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fairfax County Public Schools Tel. (571) 423-3000

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Ms. Karen Corbett Sanders  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 140 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 23 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 25 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 188 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	20	11	31
<b>K</b>	32	37	69
<b>1</b>	37	30	67
<b>2</b>	45	40	85
<b>3</b>	54	46	100
<b>4</b>	66	38	104
<b>5</b>	59	59	118
<b>6</b>	82	75	157
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	395	336	731

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 46 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 41 % White
  - 3 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 school year: 6%

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

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	30
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	723
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, Mandarin, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Nepali, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 15 %  
109 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 51

8. Students receiving special education services: 15 %

109 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>21</u> Autism                  | <u>14</u> Multiple Disabilities                |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>11</u> Orthopedic Impairment                |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>26</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay      | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>21</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>7</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	25
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	17

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	95%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Poplar Tree Elementary School will work as a collaborative team to meet the needs of each student, to foster high student achievement, and to inspire a love of learning in a safe and caring environment. Poplar Tree dedicates itself to the belief that all our students will be prepared for a rapidly changing technological world and will be able to think critically and creatively, make responsible decisions, and learn to cooperate and work productively within the school and community, while becoming life-long learners.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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“Amazing Things Happen Here!” is our theme at Poplar Tree Elementary School (PTES), and we believe that amazing things happen throughout our building daily. PTES is a neighborhood school nestled in a diverse community and is one of the 140 elementary schools in Fairfax County Public Schools. PTES has a community of 741 students ranging from Preschool to 6th grade. Of the 741 students, we welcome students from neighboring elementary schools that attend our Intellectual Disabilities (ID), Enhanced Autism, Special Education Preschool, and Advanced Academics Programs. PTES opened its doors in September 1990, and thus began our educational journey. Currently, PTES has a staff of roughly 80 people which includes classroom teachers, Special Education teachers, content/curriculum specialists, support staff, and Instructional Assistants.

Instructionally, PTES uses a balanced literacy framework for Language Arts instruction, a workshop model for Mathematics instruction, and a hands-on approach when focused on Science and Social Studies curriculum. Woven throughout all content, staff is infusing activities and techniques that will develop students creative and critical thinking skills as well as their problem-solving skills through Project Based Learning. Our grade level teams meet weekly as Collaborative Learning Teams (CLT) to plan instruction, review assessment data, and reflect on instructional practices. These meetings are supported by our Reading Teacher, Advanced Academics Resource Teacher, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher, School Counselor, and School Based Technology Specialist.

PTES staff believes that every child can succeed and that they need to be prepared for the ever-changing world. Beginning in the Fall of the 2016-17 school year, PTES embarked on a transformational technology journey called FCPSON. PTES, as part of the Chantilly High School pyramid, assigned all students a personal device. At the same time students were assigned devices, staff began participating in professional development on ways to use technology in the classroom. At PTES the staff is committed to using technology in innovative and purposeful ways that enhance instruction and student access to the curriculum. It transformed the way parts of all content areas are being delivered to students. This technology focus combined with Project Based Learning (PBL) has resulted in a shift from a teacher-centered learning environment to a student-centered learning environment. This initiative has also resulted in student leadership opportunities. Our PAW Tech Squad is composed of students in grades 4-6. The mission of the PAW Tech Squad is to support teacher and student learning. Some of our tech squad members lead professional development for staff. The PAW Tech Squad encourages students to be model digital citizens while working to meet the needs of their peers.

PTES has a very supportive and engaged parent community. The PTES staff partners with parents to organize various spirit nights, family movie nights, and other community events like the talent show and multicultural night. PTES has an open-door policy and we welcome parents regularly into our building throughout the school day. We believe we have created a welcoming environment where everyone feels a part of the community.

The staff at PTES often use the quote “All Means All”. The meaning behind this quote is that we make sure every student, regardless of their challenges, has access to what they need. PTES is truly a special place in which we never settle until every student feels like they belong, can succeed, and thrive. Amazing Things Truly Happen Here!

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Our overall approach to instruction is to balance teacher directed with student directed time and engage students in meaningful learning activities. We use Fairfax County Public School’s Portrait of a Graduate (POG) to guide us in our educational planning. The FCPS Portrait of a Graduate Program describe the skills that we, as a district, believe students must master to achieve success upon graduation from FCPS. At Poplar Tree, we make every effort to integrate these attributes (Communicator, Collaborator, Ethical and Global Citizen, Creative and Critical Thinker, and Goal-Directed and Resilient Learner) into our learning activities and then provide students with the opportunities to demonstrate their learning in authentic ways. These enhanced, authentic learning activities include Project Based Learning, small group instruction, whole group instruction, and technology integration. Our goal is that our work will prepare every student for our rapidly changing world and empower students to be productive citizens of a global community and successful in the workforce of the future.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

Poplar Tree Elementary uses a balanced literacy approach for language arts instruction which includes a reading workshop and writing workshop. Our workshop time is designed to provide a balance of direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. Students learn that everything in their reading and writing workshop time serves a purpose in creating passionate, independent learners. The guided instruction includes teaching skills that are necessary and appropriate for specific reading stages. We use a variety of assessment tools, such as the Virginia Standards of Learning, Developmental Reading Assessment, iReady, Words Their Way, and District formative tests to guide both small and whole group instruction and identify student strengths and needs. Students are actively engaged in meaningful learning activities where they take pride, take risks, and take reading and writing seriously. In every classroom, you will find students independently reading and self-monitoring their reading. This daily practice is an integral part of our reading workshop as it allows students the opportunity to practice their skills. You are likely to see two students sitting together communicating about a book they read together all the while practicing their fluency. Students read digital print, using myOn, online databases and traditional books. Most importantly, you will see an interaction between the teacher and readers as they are guided in their reading and writing learning. This guidance allows students to see and make connections that helps to promote life-long readers and writers as well as learn new skills and refine others.

Likewise, our writing workshops aim to create a purposeful, authentic, and joyful time for students who think of themselves as writers. We want them to write for a range of purposes in a variety of genres with ease. Our goal is to make an environment where students love sharing their ideas through writing. We focus our instruction on specific writing traits such as organization, word choice, and sentence fluency. Our students have learned to compose with traditional paper and pencil as well as digitally. We foster many ways to publish writing including Book Creator, Google Sites, research projects, handmade books, and more.

We recognize that teaching reading and writing are complex endeavors and we are committed to making our practices purposeful and connected so that students can be successful in their reading and writing development. At Poplar Tree, we strive to create the conditions that help students flourish.

**1c.** Mathematics

Mathematics is taught using the elementary mathematics Program of Studies. The Program of Studies reflects national goals and incorporates the Virginia Standards of Learning. Teachers focus math instruction around five process goals. The first goal is problem solving, which builds new mathematical knowledge and develops a repertoire of skills and strategies for solving a variety of problems. Second is communication,

where students are taught to communicate mathematical ideas coherently and clearly, and to analyze and evaluate the mathematical thinking of others. The third goal is reasoning, where students use logical reasoning in solving mathematical problems, and explain and justify mathematical ideas. The fourth goal is connections, where we are teaching our students to understand how mathematical ideas interconnect and build on one another. The final goal is representations, where students use a variety of representations in learning, doing, and communicating mathematics. We strive to develop proficiency in math process goals and content standards.

In order to meet these five process goals, teachers use a variety of strategies and instructional techniques to develop mathematical thinkers. In order to build a math community, teachers focus on creating a positive and productive learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks and engage in mathematical discourse. Through the math workshop model, we engage students in learning opportunities that cultivate conceptual and procedural understanding, allowing them to become flexible problem solvers. This structure allows teachers to differentiate instruction in learning centers, rich mathematical tasks, and small group instruction.

Components of our math workshop time include engaging students in number talks and sense making routines. In a number talk, students are asked to calculate a problem mentally and then share their answers and strategies. The teacher records student thinking and facilitates discussions about the strategies. Sense making routines provide ongoing skill building, practice, and review that maintain and expand upon ideas students have explored in previous units. Routines are often predictable and allow students to experiment with mathematical ideas in a safe environment. Engaging in number talks and sense making routines allows all students at PTES the opportunity to participate in rich academic conversations while developing critical language skills. These math workshop components foster productive classroom conversation allowing students to express their ideas while making meaning of the mathematics.

The math workshop model helps teachers differentiate math instruction. Students are provided enrichment opportunities across all grade levels which allows for students to develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of math. In grades 3-6, PTES offers an advanced mathematical curriculum, which includes extensions and acceleration of grade level curriculum.

Teachers strategically use both formative and summative assessments to measure both math process goals and content standards. We observe and monitor student learning through the Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments (3-6), Universal Screener (1-6), district catalog formal assessments (3-6), and the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program.

#### **1d. Science**

Our science instruction develops students' ability to analyze problems, synthesize data and generate solutions. Students experience science through observation, experimental design, and scientific inquiry. Our content encompasses a wide range of topics including weather, oceans, seasons, simple machines, energy, ecosystems, and astronomy. Teachers at all grade levels use hands-on activities and Project Based Learning (PBL) to bring the science curriculum to life. During one PBL, our second grade students took on the role of meteorologists and created weather forecasts to share with our school community. Our fifth graders learned about the different levels of the oceans and created a mural for display in the school hallway that showed their learning of how living and nonliving parts of an ecosystem are interdependent. The forecasts and murals allowed all students to connect with different levels of science content. Students also have opportunities to explore digital resources in the same way a scientist would. Teachers at Poplar Tree provide students opportunities to access both historical and current data to help make meaning of what they are learning and apply it to real world situations. For example, when learning about ocean currents in 5th grade, students accessed information from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration site in order to further their understanding. Students applied the learning to the specific grade level content and ways to decrease marine pollution. Teachers also use interactive Google Slides to create digital roadmaps for students to follow throughout the scientific inquiry. This process allows students to learn at their own pace and choose different paths to gain new knowledge. These slides also give teachers opportunities to

continually assess students along their learning journey. Using the variety of active learning strategies, Poplar Tree continues to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills with all students.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

The social studies curriculum introduces students to the broad areas of geography, civics, history, and economics. Lessons and assessments are aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning and FCPS Program of Studies. Students at Poplar Tree are continually encouraged to look at history and civics through multiple perspectives with a critical lens. Sixth grade students created a Living History Museum to showcase a variety of people from different time periods and cultures and explain their influence on society today. A sixth-grade student applied his knowledge on United States Expansion and Reform to become Meriweather Lewis and discuss the impacts of the Louisiana Purchase with students at other grade levels. Within the curriculum, the students learn to understand that there are different cultures and perspectives. Second grade students took on the lens of a Native American in order to gain perspective of Native American life and demonstrated their understanding by collaborating to create interactive murals. Teachers and students use technology tools to communicate and collaborate about social studies topics. In third grade, students become travel bloggers to encourage others to visit a specific continent as part of their geography curriculum. During this Project Based Learning unit, the students researched using digital and non-digital tools and collaborated to create videos using Google Slides and Adobe Spark. After learning about famous historians, 1st grade students used Flipgrid, an online video communication tool, to apply and share their new knowledge to how the famous historian has impacted their lives today. Across all grade levels, teachers and students interpret digital and nondigital charts, graphs, pictures and primary sources to determine characteristics of people, places and events throughout US and/or World History.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Poplar Tree is home to an Early Childhood Class Based Preschool program for students ages 2-5 with varying special needs. The students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and most are identified with Developmental Delays. The students attend school for a half day Monday through Friday. The curriculum is language rich and emphasizes communication, early literacy, social development, and development of other skills as designated in the student's IEP.

#### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

PTES has outstanding additional curricular areas which include Art, Physical Education, Music, and Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program.

Art is a time for all students to develop and demonstrate their creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills. Students have a weekly art lesson which allows instruction in a safe area for practicing craftsmanship and skills with multiple media and tools. Students have opportunities to apply research and critical evaluation skills to reflect on many types of art. Lessons include drawing, painting, clay, weaving, wire sculptures and technology integration. Students reflect on art and its value and impact on them, the community, and the world as a whole. All students in the Chantilly Pyramid have the chance to showcase their art at the Annual Chantilly Pyramid Art Gallery. Students and community members are able to visit the "gallery" to appreciate art created by students in kindergarten- 12th grade. The art teachers also integrate grade specific curricular topics into their art projects, which allows for deeper understanding of subject knowledge through an artistic lens. Art plays an important role in our school because students are encouraged to express themselves by taking creative risks and communicating their ideas in artistic ways.

All students in kindergarten- sixth grade participate in general music classes during the school day. Students in fourth-sixth grade have the option to trade one general music class for an instrumental class in band or strings. The music program at Poplar Tree gives students opportunities to explore music in a variety of ways through playing various instruments, movement, singing, note reading, composing, and analyzing musical selections. The music teachers integrate technology into all classes with Interactive Whiteboard lessons and

helping students write code for robots to perform their musical compositions. Each student in our fifth and sixth grade participates in chorus. The 5th grade students perform a traditional choral concert in December for the school and parent community. Each spring, the 6th grade students perform a musical show with acting, singing, dancing and sometimes even creative variety acts. It is an annual musical event that the entire community looks forward to each year.

The purpose of the Physical Education program at Poplar Tree is to teach students the skills, knowledge, and attitudes essential to live a healthy lifestyle while learning about ways to exhibit healthy and safe behaviors. In PE, students learn about the importance of fitness and conditioning, have practice with rhythmic activities and dances, stunts, tumbling, and gymnastics, and participate in a variety of sport activities. Our PE teachers encourage teamwork, fair play, leadership skills, and game strategy. Students are learning skills for games and are also discovering activities that they can engage in outside of school. One of these units is the “Bike Unit” that students enjoy in the spring. The PE department teaches students safety expectations and skills, and also discusses ways that adults use bikes in the community for things like biking to work, leisure activities, or using stationary bikes for exercise. Physical Education at Poplar Tree is not just learning skills and rules to play games in class. It is a chance to develop skills that they will carry forward become active and healthy adults.

The library at Poplar Tree is a place where students, staff, and parents have access to a variety of resources that allows their imaginations to take flight through literature. All students feel welcome and encouraged to grow and learn in this space of our school. It provides more than just books, computers, and databases. It is a safe haven for all students to think, collaborate, and create as they flourish as learners. Our librarian works closely with all classroom teachers to enhance their curriculum using library resources. Authors are invited to speak with students about the work that goes into crafting a good story that others will want to read. Students have practice becoming good users of information as they develop research skills using both print and digital resources.

Our Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program teachers instruct students in grades k-6 in Spanish with an emphasis on the area of Science. The FLES teachers develop lessons that immerse students in the Spanish language while continuing to develop their collaboration and communication skills. Project Based Learning and STEAM activities are integrated throughout the curriculum. Additionally, students develop their foreign language skills while building their background knowledge of the culture. Embedded throughout the lessons are multiple facets of the FCPS Portrait of a Graduate skills. Students are continually refining their communications skills and are striving to be ethical and global citizens while acquiring knowledge of another language and culture.

All of these non-core subjects offer adapted specialized classes for our students in the Intellectual Disabilities and Autism programs. These adapted classes focus on ways for students with cognitive or physical challenges to access the curriculum in meaningful and purposeful ways. The non-core subject teachers collaborate with Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Behavior Support Teachers, and Assistive Technology staff to ensure that every student is fully accessing the curriculum. One example of this can be seen in our music classes. Poplar Tree Elementary teachers will attach switches to instruments so that students with difficulty using instruments due to dexterity deficiencies are able to hit a button to play different sounds. In art, the teacher will vary the materials and use high and low contrast projects to adapt to the visual needs of our students. “All means all” at Poplar Tree and that includes all curricular areas for our students.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

Poplar Tree has a multi-tiered system of support that uses student data to make decisions in order to provide high quality instruction and intervention. Our responsive teaching is correlated to our observations and analysis of student learning behaviors to draw conclusions and inform our planning and teaching. Grade level collaborative learning teams meet weekly to discuss student data, plan for instruction, and monitor student progress. We have created a student list that is updated regularly to monitor students' performance.

Students who are working below grade level receive a variety of supports that meet their learning needs. This could look like small group targeted intervention in addition to high quality core instruction within the classroom (Tier 2) and intensive intervention in area(s) of need in addition to high quality core instruction outside the classroom with curriculum specialists (Tier 3). Our interventions are evidence-based, systematic, and provide explicit instruction that targets a specific area of need. These interventions are provided in addition to core instruction and are intentionally designed to increase performance in relation to a specific, measurable goal. Our interventions must be based on valid and current performance data, delivered with fidelity, and require ongoing progress monitoring. Specialized programs such as Leveled Literacy Intervention and Just Words are used with specific students during this Tier 3 support. The effectiveness of these interventions are monitored by assessing the targeted skill over time. Additionally, the principal allocates funds for hiring additional part time staff to assist teachers in meeting student needs. This staff works directly with teachers and students and provides additional support where needed.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

At Poplar Tree, we believe in providing differentiated curriculum in areas of student strengths and feel this is equally as important as providing supports for students below grade level. We provide differentiation through our reading and math workshop models. In addition, we also provide opportunities for all students to use a variety of advanced academic curriculum such as read above, Caesars English, M3. The Advanced Academic Resource Teacher (AART) provides quarterly professional development during grade level Collaborative Learning Team meetings. The staff at PTES believe that all students should be creative and critical thinkers and have access to learning opportunities that provide enrichment. We also screen all students through an Advanced Academics local school screening committee. This committee is composed of classroom teachers, the AART, counselor, Reading Specialist, Assistant Principal, and Principal. Students are either identified as a Level I, II, or III. Students identified for advanced academic services (Level III) are provided weekly lessons from the AART in one or more areas of academic strength that extend and enrich the Program of Studies in the four core content areas.

### **3c. Special education**

PTES has a total of 86 students identified as needing special education services. Of those 86 students, 46 of them receive 15 hours or more per week of support from a special education teacher in either our ID, Intellectually Disabled Severe (IDS), Enhanced Autism, or general education classrooms. No matter the learning or social challenges that these students face, we work as a team to create ways for all students to be successful. A therapy dog visits our school which helps illicit communication and motor skills. Several general education students participate in our Peer Buddies Program. This program partners general education peers with our special education students where they engage in social and academic activities. Our special education teaching staff work collaboratively with occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists, and our assistive technology specialist (ATS) to address the complex needs of the learners in their classrooms. ATS aligns their work with the School Based Technology Specialist (SBTS) and Technology Specialist (TSPEC) to select the appropriate technology to help provide students a voice which includes eye gaze systems, touch screen monitors, and adapted materials. At Poplar Tree Elementary School, we embrace the motto “All means all.” We believe in the success of all students regardless of their life challenges.

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

The mission of the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program at Poplar Tree is to develop students’ academic English language proficiency through integrated content-based language instruction. ESOL services help foster academic achievement, critical thinking and problem solving, and advocacy for English learners. Poplar Tree follows the FCPS Language Instruction Educational Program and the EL Program Model and Standards to inform implementation of high-quality instruction for English learners (ELs). The program models’ differentiated research-based design contains three core elements: Content, Language & Literacy; English Language Development (ELD); and Systems of Support. These elements provide ELs with the instruction and support they need to simultaneously develop English language proficiency, content understandings, and Portrait of a Graduate attributes. The ESOL teacher prioritizes time

to provide targeted small group ELD instruction, co-teach, and support CLTs. English language development is supported throughout the instructional day and across content areas. Students receive small group pull out ELD instruction, in addition to supports and scaffolds within their classrooms to foster rigorous instruction. The ESOL teacher works with all ELs, including those eligible for special education and advanced academic programs. Dually identified students have access to both ESOL and special education services. They are supported through participation in the IEP process and the sharing of data to contextualize the students' academic performance and linguistic needs. In addition, dually identified students in self-contained special education classrooms receive ESOL services through weekly lessons to further support their needs. There is a collective responsibility for the teaching and learning needs of English learners in kindergarten through sixth grade at Poplar Tree.

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

Poplar Tree is also home to an Advanced Academic Program (AAP) Center. This includes students in grades 3 through 6 from several elementary schools and offers identified students a highly challenging instructional program. Differentiation in the depth, breadth, and pace of instruction is designed to meet the needs of advanced learners with a strong emphasis on higher level thinking skills. Adaptations are made to the curriculum in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for gifted learners with a strong emphasis on critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and decision making. AAP students participate with the entire student body in school-based activities such as student government, physical education, band and strings, chorus, Art, and FLES.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

At PTES, our focus is on educating the whole child while preparing them for a rapidly changing future. To do this, we strive to integrate the Fairfax County Portrait of a Graduate skills into our lessons and projects, in order to provide students multiple opportunities to fully develop these attributes. The five Portrait of a Graduate categories identify the skills and characteristics students will need to be successful in their future and include being a collaborator, communicator, critical and creative thinker, global and ethical citizen and a goal directed and resilient individual. Our students are encouraged to look beyond the high stakes testing environment and develop these critical skills in order to be lifelong learners and leaders.

Our school counselors provide a comprehensive counseling program that supports our positive learning environment and enhances the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students. Their efforts focus on removing the barriers to academic success and focus on students' strengths and abilities. The counselors work with students individually and in groups using evidence-based programs such as the Kimochis, Unstuck and on Target, and Zones of Regulation to teach students critical skills like self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, and prosocial skills that enable them to be successful as learners. They strive to develop strong collaborative relationships with parents and teachers in order to fully support our students and ensure that students are emotionally safe and able to learn.

Poplar Tree also offers a variety of opportunities for student leadership with programs such as the Peer Buddies, the PAW Tech Squad, Safety Patrols and Student Government. The Peer Buddies program aims to foster friendships between students with special needs and their general education peers. Peer Buddies meet with their peers weekly to play at recess or complete a classroom activity like an art project or game. These meetings provide our students with special needs the opportunity to connect with their peers, practice social skills, and develop friendships. For our peer buddies it is a valuable opportunity to give back to the school community and demonstrate leadership and responsibility.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Parents are an integral part of our school community at Poplar Tree. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is active in creating events to support the community. The Annual Talent Show, Multicultural Night, Family Movie Nights and additional family nights allow our students and parents to participate in fun and community building events at school. The monthly PTA meetings alternate between morning and evening times to encourage parents with various work and childcare needs to be able to participate and support student learning.

The Assistant Principal and Principal host monthly parent coffees which are scheduled in conjunction with our PTA meetings and focus on topics of interest to our parent community. Our administration leverages the expertise of our staff and asks a specialist from our staff to share relevant information with parents and answer their questions. After the coffee, the information is posted on the Poplar Tree webpage for any parent to access. For example, the Reading Specialist shared strategies with parents for how to support their child's literacy at all grade levels. Our School Based Technology Specialist led another parent coffee focused on technology use, screen time, and how parents can help their children be positive digital citizens. Per parent request, our school counselors shared resources and strategies to help parents strengthen their children's resilience and enhance their coping skills. Parents are appreciative of our staff members and their willingness to share helpful information with our community.

One of our most important community events is the Fire vs. Ice Basketball Game. The 6th grade boys and girls and PTES staff compete in a basketball game after school at Chantilly High School. The bleachers are filled with kindergarten through 6 grade students and their families to cheer on the players. Many PTES graduates return to watch the game. This event truly shows the connectedness of our students, staff, and families in this friendly school spirit rivalry.

Knowing how important parent involvement is for student achievement, we have multiple volunteer opportunities for our parents. One of our parent engagement programs is Watch D.O.G.S. This program encourages fathers, uncles, grandfathers, or other male figures to spend a day in the school as a positive male role model. The Watch D.O.G.S. can be seen working throughout the building, helping in classrooms, and enjoying time in the cafeteria and playground. Other parent volunteers can be seen daily in the library, classrooms, or publishing center supporting teachers and working with students. PTES is fortunate to have such a helpful and involved parent community.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

PTES has developed a professional culture that is rooted in a belief that the best learning happens when we can learn from each other and have some fun at the same time. We offer various PD opportunities before school that are structured in an informal way. For example, our “Hole Lotta Learning” donut themed professional development staff members prepared informal presentations about how they used different technology tools or teaching strategies. Their colleagues were able to sit with them and discuss how to use it in their own practice. We have found this approach to be very successful in providing staff ideas and resources that result in improved student engagement. Giving teachers the opportunity to lead their colleagues in professional development shows their expertise is valued and allows them to build their leadership capacity. We learn best from others at Poplar Tree, we embrace learning from each other! Another strategy we use is to provide morning PD around a topic that is led by students on our Paw Tech Squad. Students are able to share their knowledge about technology tools and resources and how these tools can be used in a teacher’s classroom. Both of these morning PD opportunities are not mandatory, yet many staff members regularly choose to attend. Our other major way we promote a professional culture and deliver PD is through our grade level Collaborative Learning Team meetings. Our grade level teams meet weekly to discuss instruction and assessment, and we also infuse embedded professional development into these meetings as well. As a result, no one works in isolation and our protected time for collaboration coupled with student and teacher led PD improves our practice and leads to improved student outcomes.

Staff morale is important to us at PTES. We believe that strengthening the social connections between staff members and nurturing a supportive and caring environment creates a positive community in our building. Observers have shared with us that when they walk into our school, they feel welcomed and it is very obvious that our staff operates like a close-knit family. One way we work to build these connections is through our “Panther Perks” program coordinated by our very active Social Committee. These monthly activities are strategic in connecting people throughout the building that might not have an opportunity to work together on a regular basis.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The Principal and Assistant Principal at PTES believe that leadership is a collaborative process and teamwork is an essential component of enhancing student outcomes. Students are the priority; collaboration is the strategy. As such, we have two leadership teams that work with the administration to discuss instructional practices, environmental concerns, and school-wide programs. Representatives from each grade level and the specialists form the Team Leaders and meet monthly with the administration to discuss and problem solve around environmental issues like behavior in the cafeteria, hallways, and recess. This team also addresses instructional practices like providing input on the School Improvement and Innovation Plan and assist in the initiation of school wide programs like RULER (Recognize, Understand, Label, Express and Regulate emotions). During these meetings they collaboratively developed school behavioral expectations, reviewed academic data to help develop school wide academic goals, and identified areas of growth in ways to continue to engage parents. The administrative team value the voices of those in the trenches and strive to develop a community where all staff members feel comfortable sharing ideas, suggestions, and are willing to take risks that benefit students.

As part of our effort to implement a multi-tiered system of support for our students, we created an “SOS” (Systems of Support) team that provides professional development and assistance to teachers to meet identified student needs. The SOS team consists of our Reading Specialist, Advanced Academics Resource Teacher, School Counselor, ESOL Teacher, School Based Technology Specialist, Technology Specialist,

Principal and Assistant Principal. They meet weekly to analyze student data; design supports for interventions and enrichment and plan professional development for teachers. These team members also mentor teachers, co-teach lessons and model strategies to help all students achieve at their highest levels. Over the summer, this leadership team met to develop a professional development plan based on the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Cycle for our collaborative learning teams using student data and input from staff on recognized areas of growth. This plan includes differentiated professional development that meets teacher and grade level needs. During the year, the team reflects on the grade level CLT meetings and professional learning and adjusts the plan as needed. Guiding the grade level teachers through the PLC cycle and embedding professional development into our meetings provides teachers with the opportunity to determine who needs interventions or enrichment and then receive “just in time” professional learning to provide the necessary remediation or extension activities to students.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The strategy that has been most influential to our success at Poplar Tree is our focus on blended learning. In a blended learning environment, online learning and face to face learning are blended together in order to provide students with control over the time, pace, path, and place for their learning. Because we are a school where each student has their own device, and we want to be sure that these devices are used purposefully, this strategy is infused in every collaborative team discussion and professional development opportunity.

Our teachers have embraced the blended learning model as they have seen increased engagement in our students, which in turn has led to increased student success. When you walk into our classrooms, you will see students having a choice in where they are sitting with a variety of flexible seating options available. Some students may be working with a partner to complete a task, while others are working individually, or in a small group with their teacher. Students are moving through their learning at a pace that works best for them. In math workshop, students participate in a flipped classroom model where they preview a video of the lesson the day before, and then engage in a face-to-face lesson with their teacher to practice and apply the skills they learned. In the reading and writing workshop, students participate in online word hunts, practice their writing skills in their journals, read both digital and non-digital books, and have small group guided instruction with their teacher. Many of our students have the opportunity to engage in Project Based Learning where they are challenged to answer a driving question that is authentic and relates to the real world. During these units, students collaborate with a team, research their ideas using both online and offline resources, and have choice in the digital or non-digital tools used to showcase their learning. As students participate in PBL, they have many opportunities to use Portrait of a Graduate skills such as communicating with others, thinking creative and critically, while being goal-directed and resilient.

As a result of our students engaging in these types of meaningful experiences, students have ownership of and feel empowered by their learning. Other schools from around Fairfax County and beyond visit Poplar Tree Elementary often to see blended learning in action. At one of our recent visits, a teacher said, "I used to think blended learning was scary. Now, I think, it is...but it's worth taking steps in this direction because the outcome is incredible!"