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

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal <u>Mrs. Amanda Clark</u>
                (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.)  (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name <u>Florence Elementary School</u>
                     (As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address <u>285 Hwy 469 North</u>
                     (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City <u>Florence</u>          State <u>MS</u>       Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) <u>39073-0189</u>

County <u>Rankin County</u>

Telephone <u>(601) 845-8164</u>         Fax <u>(601) 893-0114</u>

Web site/URL <u>https://fes.rcsd.ms</u>        E-mail <u>amanda.clark@rcsd.ms</u>

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* <u>Mr.  Scott Rimes</u>         E-mail <u>srimes@rcsd.ms</u>
                     (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name <u>Rankin County School District</u>      Tel. <u>(601) 825-5590</u>

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 <u>Mr.  Grumpy Farmer</u>
                     (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

                                            Date_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

# PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.

6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.

7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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

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

# PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1.  Number of schools in the district      16 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
    (per district designation):            3 Middle/Junior high schools
                                           8 High schools
                                           1 K-12 schools

                                           28 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district**.)

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

    [ ] Urban (city or town)
    [ ] Suburban
    [X ] Rural

3.  Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| PreK | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| K | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 81 | 84 | 165 |
| 4 | 100 | 87 | 187 |
| 5 | 95 | 79 | 174 |
| 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 or higher | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Students | 276 | 250 | 526 |

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

4.  Racial/ethnic composition of      0.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school (if unknown, estimate):  0 % Asian
                                         10 % Black or African American
                                         1.3 % Hispanic or Latino
                                         0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                         87.1 % White
                                         1 % Two or more races
                                        **100 % Total**

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

5.  Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 10%

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

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

| Steps For Determining Mobility Rate | Answer |
|---|---|
| (1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year | 28 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year | 30 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 58 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020 | 553 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.10 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 10 |

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

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

7.  Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals:      38 %

           Total number students who qualify:      199

8.  Students receiving special education services     17 %
    with an IEP or 504:     91 Total number of students served

    Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

    | | |
    |---|---|
    | 9 Autism | 3 Multiple Disabilities |
    | 0 Deafness | 0 Orthopedic Impairment |
    | 0 Deaf-Blindness | 21 Other Health Impaired |
    | 0 Developmental Delay | 15 Specific Learning Disability |
    | 5 Emotional Disturbance | 58 Speech or Language Impairment |
    | 1 Hearing Impairment | 0 Traumatic Brain Injury |
    | 5 Intellectual Disability | 2 Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9.  Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4

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

    | | Number of Staff |
    |---|---|
    | Administrators | 2 |
    | Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 26 |
    | Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 13 |
    | 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. | 4 |

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

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

| Required Information | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily student attendance | 96% | 97% | 95% | 95% | 95% |
| High school graduation rate | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
    Yes ___            No _X_

    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.

Every student, every day, whatever it takes! This is the standing philosophy for FES. Our philosophy ensures that teachers and students know that high expectations yield high learning for all students!

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

https://fes.rcsd.ms/resources/policies

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

# PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Florence, Mississippi, is a small city south of Jackson with a population of just under 5,000 people. Florence Elementary is one of four schools that serve students in this community. We are a part of the third-largest school district in the state of Mississippi. Our district is "A" rated, and Florence Elementary is one of our district's "A" rated schools. Florence Elementary is home to approximately 575 students and serves grades 3rd through 5th. Florence is known for its hometown feel, values, and generational history. The community and families are diverse socioeconomically and culturally, but the community is unified in support of the schools and the success of all students. Eagle Pride is the unified logo for all four schools within the zone.

Overall, the character of our school is based on achievement, success, pride, and community. Florence Elementary is an inclusive and welcoming facility that welcomes families, community members, and students from any background. We believe they are in the best place to reach their maximum potential. Each teacher and staff member promotes the philosophy of high expectations, which directly correlate to high achievement and success. We celebrate all students and often not only for success in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Hard work, dedication, and effort are celebrated more than actual achievement. It is the key to the overall success of Florence Elementary!

It is vital for every student to feel like a champion and find success in themselves. Teachers nominate two students who go above and beyond for Eagle Elite every nine weeks. This award goes beyond grades; it looks for students who are role model students, being good citizens, and striving to make an impact on others. In addition, celebrate students daily with random acts of kindness and student shoutouts. If students are seen helping others, lending a hand without being asked, having a positive attitude, building others up around them, or working hard in the classroom, teachers or staff can fill out a shoutout card on the student. Inside the classroom, students are given the opportunity to earn tickets when excelling academically, meeting student or classroom goals, or going above and beyond outside the classroom. These tickets can be used to purchase items off our Eagle Cart. This cart is stocked with goodies provided by our Parent Teacher Organization. Our discipline remains low every nine weeks due to these positive reinforcements we have implemented throughout the school.

Academically, we celebrate successes every nine weeks with honor roll parties and benchmark celebrations for students meeting benchmark goals. This allows every student to understand what standards they are working on and set a goal to master these standards by the next assessment. Students taking ownership of their learning allows them to understand fully and become invested. We do celebrate not only proficiency but also growth. Not setting a certain level requirement allows every student the opportunity to be celebrated when they meet their personal goal. These celebrations are in the form of glow parties, pizza parties, and ice cream parties. This gets students excited and pumped up to continue to work hard throughout the year. Our goal is not to define students by their test scores but to celebrate their achievements and success through their hard work!

One creative technique we have been developing over the past three years at Florence Elementary is the Technology Team. This team consists of 3-5th grade students with technology goals, responsibilities, and training throughout the school year. This team has worked hard to host morning announcements each morning for all students to view on Zoom within each classroom. They have completed in-house Google training, learned how to navigate different resourceful websites offered by the state and district technology team, and created an online website to help students learn how to use and maintain their Chromebooks and other classroom technology resources. This group is led by two fifth-grade Presidents who take on leadership roles of managing morning announcements, creating new innovative tools for online learning, and helping manage school-wide computer maintenance.

Another program we offer that helps inspire students is our big brother, big sister programs for our current third graders. Third graders are paired with high school ROTC students twice a month. During this time, the high school students read to students, play games, and create activities to help build student confidence.

We try to help the transition to a new school for our 3rd-grade students be as smooth as possible. Each year

we host a third grade parent night, and families are able to come into our school and experience a typical day for our third graders. They go to their child's classroom and are given information about the strategies and instructional goals used each day in the classroom. This is the first year that these students are making letter grades and have to take a state test. Giving these parents the opportunity to see what their child goes through each day helps the teachers and parents become a unified team.

# PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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

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

Every student, every day, whatever it takes! This is the standing philosophy for FES. Our philosophy ensures that teachers and students know that high expectations yield high learning for all students! This means setting the bar high for all students, no matter their background, economic status, or learning plan. We know that when the expectations are high, the students will meet that expectations.

Teachers plan collaboratively to target standards across all subject areas weekly, quarterly, and yearly. We are constantly analyzing our instructional approaches, strategies, and assessments to ensure they encompass multi-disciplinary areas of academics and that the academic needs of all students are being met. We analyze through grade-level data meetings, subject department meetings, and peer observations.

We know the importance of being intentional, so at the start of each year, our administration and our leadership team devise a strategic plan. This plan encompasses all grades, subject areas, and enrichment, including stem, special education, gifted, etc. The plan includes our vision, motto, and goals for the year. As a team and school, we use this plan as our baseline throughout the year. We refer back to it each nine weeks to make sure progress is being made.

Every unit of our team is a part of the strategic plan, which means they create a goal for the year. The team units reflect on goals every nine weeks and revise the goal as needed. The reason for implementing this plan is to make sure we have a common purpose and to make sure everyone has a set task to work on during the year. Working as one unit on a common goal is what makes Florence Elementary the best it can be.

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

Our school bases its instruction on the Mississippi College and Career Readiness standards. The standards cover reading informational text, reading literature text, language skills, writing, and speaking and listening skills. The standards are scaffolded to help students move from learning to read to reading to learn. Students explore the craft and structure of texts of different genres to create a balanced approach. Our school understands the importance of teaching students the why behind learning, so teachers annotate the standards with students to communicate learning goals and break down the language of the standard in kid-friendly terminology. We believe that when students know the language of the standard and why we are learning it, they are able to take ownership of their learning.

Our newest curriculum program, Fountas and Pinnell (F&P), has opened a large window for cross-curriculum lessons and gives a wide variety of books that allow students to explore different cultures while actively engaging in the lessons. Teachers have used this curriculum as a base to develop lessons that are rigorous yet engaging to ALL students.

By utilizing highly engaging interactive read-aloud books, teachers are able to model comprehension strategies, fluency, and accuracy and lead collaboratively through rigorous conversations. Teachers scaffold and help students create a deeper understanding of details in more complex texts. Reluctant readers are given the opportunity to practice skills and contribute to discussions through small group instruction, which targets specific skill deficits which are intentional with each student.

Using F&P books as a baseline for the curriculum, teachers have developed extensions for each lesson that directly connect with the Mississippi College and Career Readiness standards and help build students' background of knowledge. Questions that are designed within these lessons are carefully developed around the district's pacing guide, which matches each nine-week benchmark assessment and MAAP State Testing.

During classroom discussions, teachers monitor students' understanding and are able to immediately address misconceptions. Using student-led discussions and informal observations made by the teacher, the teachers identify students who need remediation. Teachers then use small groups to remediate. Teachers use an informal checklist to track student mastery of standards during whole group lessons. After giving common summative assessments created by the teachers, teachers meet to discuss trends across classes. For example, if a particular class shows less mastery of a standard than others, the teachers will collaborate on best practices for reteaching.

Students use the knowledge gained from dissecting authentic texts to use those concepts as writers. Students explore informational essays, opinion essays, and a variety of narrative texts, such as memoirs, historical fiction, and short stories. Students study mentor texts and then the teacher models through mini-lessons. Teachers and students meet together for individual feedback sessions. Peer-to-peer collaborations and editing are put to use. Final writings are published in various formats, including web pages, hardback books, writing contests, and other activities.

Throughout the school year, students are given opportunities to present their understanding with various tasks, including using choice boards, room transformations, and classroom activities to allow differentiation and promote student engagement.

Teachers use various online resources such as Nearpod, Google Slides, Google Sites, Blookit, and Kahoot. Examples of the resourcefulness of innovating these tools include lessons that have video clips, fun academic games, a diverse variety of question types, and open discussion platforms for sharing thoughts and ideas. These technology tools also were extremely helpful during COVID-19 to guide virtual lessons by actively engaging students from home in the lessons that were being taught at school.

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

Like English Language Arts, our school bases our math instruction on the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards. The standards include mathematical domains of operations and algebraic thinking, numbers and operations in base ten, numbers and operations- fractions, and measurement and data. The standards expose students to real-life experiences, which reflect the value of mathematics, enhance students' confidence in their ability to do mathematics, and help students communicate and reason mathematically.

We know the diversity of all students. Every student learns differently; therefore, supplying students with different strategies to solve problems helps them understand math as a process. Our district has adopted the Engage New York, Eureka curriculum, which supplies multiple strategies to teach each standard. Students are given the tools to understand mathematics is not just about getting the right answer but, more importantly, understanding how they arrived at the answer. Our teachers use the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Mathematics standards as a base for developing their lessons; they use the Eureka curriculum as a supplemental resource. Even with the Eureka curriculum, the key focus is the learning standards. Teachers make sure that all students dig deep and annotate standards to grasp truly what the standard is asking them to master.

Teachers know the importance of helping students make sense of mathematical concepts. To do so, they use a wide range of resources, including pictorial representations, manipulatives- hands-on and virtual, and technological tools. For instance, teachers may use base ten blocks to model the concept of regrouping when subtracting. Giving students the visual of regrouping helps them understand the why behind the procedure. Teachers have transformed their rooms into a pizzeria, and students had to solve real-world problems by completing the correct fractional toppings displayed on the order card.

Teachers create common assessments to track student mastery. Assessments are created in the form of formative and summative assessments, including; a teacher observation checklist, exit tickets, and performance tasks. Teachers use the Mississippi Department of Education Scaffolding Guide to develop higher-level questions for their students. Our teachers realize the importance of creating good questions that encourage students to think and persevere. Teachers then use this data to drive further instruction to ensure they are meeting the needs of their students.

During COVID and school closure, teachers continued providing students with lessons through zoom. Teachers also video-recorded lessons for parents. This helped bridge the gap between home to school and supplied the parents with support to help their students. Teachers meticulously planned for the gaps that would be inevitable in math with the interruption in instruction due to Covid. Using data, small group and one-on-one instruction became a part of daily instruction to help accelerate students by filling in gaps created. The Administration and Leadership team realized that they needed to revise their pacing guide to ensure that standards were spiraling through math as they do ELA. Google Docs/Slides, Flipgrip, and Kahoot all helped our teachers keep students engaged during this time. Using these outlets has given our entire instructional outlook a revamp by using technology in math to help students become more engaged!

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

Our school fosters children's innate curiosity to help them become inventive, reflective, and critical thinkers, open to new ideas, and willing to experiment and take risks. Our students are naturally excited about the world around them, so we use this excitement in developing our science lessons.

Teachers use the curriculum FOSS: Full Option Science System to reach the four science domains; earth and space science, life science, physical science, and engineering and technology. This curriculum ensures students are using hands-on, inquiry-based lessons. Our philosophy for science is to take abstract ideas and help students explore those ideas using experiments. We create lessons that encourage students to observe, generate questions, predict, explore, experiment, discuss ideas, interpret data, and draw conclusions around fundamental scientific concepts. For example, a third-grade student observed that water droplets were creating dome shapes on the picnic table after a rainstorm but not on the wooden benches. The teacher used this curiosity to create a lesson on surface tension. We know that when using the world around them and relating scientific concepts to natural phenomena, we foster curiosity and create lifelong learners.

Teachers use informal observations during student explorations to assess student understanding.  They use these informal observations to gauge student progression in each of the four science domains. Teachers remediate students who are not showing mastery. Teachers then take their observations, content, and science standards to create summative assessments.  They start with explorations to make the abstract scientific ideas more concrete to provide students with real world application.

Our school knows the importance of collaborative discussions between students. Educators make sure that students are using the appropriate vocabulary when discussing scientific or mathematical concepts. Teachers use science as an avenue to help students learn to collaborate and communicate effectively. We know that science is also a great way to practice mathematical and language skills. Teachers carefully incorporate these subjects into their science lessons to show students the importance of each subject across the curriculum. Students love science, and we are very proud of the overall success we have seen from our students using the FOSS curriculum.

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

Our school recognizes the many disciplines that comprise social studies, such as civics, economics, geography, and history. Our teachers demonstrate their ability and skill to teach social studies by designing lessons that incorporate and interweave the disciplines. These lessons challenge students to build their knowledge and engage in higher-level thinking. Grades three through five use different forms of literature, such as grade-level fiction and non-fiction books, to grab students' attention while also helping develop a student's background knowledge about historical events.

Teachers incorporate ELA standards into their social studies lessons by promoting research, writing, and speaking and listening. We value that these units are an avenue to help students think critically about the world around them. Students seem to find the topics covered throughout these lessons intriguing and memorable. Students relate to historical events and learn the importance of learning from the past to create a better future.

This interweaving of subjects creates a stimulating environment. We have seen an increase in their ability to understand district benchmark assessments because they have background knowledge from teachers being deliberate and intentional about their social studies lessons. For example, students had a passage about a Native American boy and the challenges he and his family faced. Because their teachers had taught them about the Westward Expansion, they had a deeper understanding of the story and could empathize with the main character.

Each year our school participates in Mississippi's Secretary of State Education Voting program, Promote the Vote. During this week, all grade levels inform students about the different officials running for office. Whether it be a presidential election, state, or local, each year has a different focus. Students are able to understand the process and importance of voting. We also teach students to form an educated opinion. On election day, students go through a mock voting precinct where they get to cast their vote. This is so beneficial in helping students become active citizens in their communities.

Social studies assessments are embedded throughout our reading curriculum. Teachers also look at the Mississippi social studies standards to create Project Based Learning lessons. Teachers are able to assess each student's understanding of the social studies concept through the student's completion of the projects. For example, students are exposed to economics and the concepts of interest rates, loans, and budgeting. Students then plan an end of the school year party by using a budget. This allows students to practice relative life skills, while allowing the teacher the opportunity to assess student mastery and understanding of the skills.

**1f.  For secondary schools:**


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


**2.  Other Curriculum Areas**:

Students grades third through fifth participate in "specials" once a week for 40 minutes, with 3rd-grade seeing music twice a week, 4th-grade seeing the library twice a week, and 5th-grade seeing Physical Education twice a week. Music class is a hands-on, performance-based class. Students in grades 3rd and 4th build confidence and learn performance techniques in their yearly musicals. 5th-grade students are able to audition for the Honor Choir. Throughout the year, they visit retirement homes, veterans' homes and perform at community events. Music class teaches students the basics of notes, rhythm, singing, and musical style. Students learn a variety of instruments, including recorder, hand percussion, and xylophones/glockenspiels. Students energetically participate and learn team-building in these activities.

In PE, students work on physical fitness through team sports and individual workouts. We have been provided specific outdoor equipment so that students may be challenged with rigorous physical activity. Students also participate in the DARE program during this time. We are partnered with the local Florence Police Department, and an officer leads lessons on drug abuse resistance education.

The school counselor teaches a classroom-based universal prevention program that helps teach students skills that can help them in school and life. It focuses on listening, focusing attention, making friends, and problem-solving. It also helps students develop important self-regulation and social-emotional skills. This helps to decrease problem behaviors and increase success in life.

The library at Florence Elementary strives to provide multiple experiences for its students. We delve into library standards that back up ELA standards in the classroom. Students are exposed to computer science, STEM, and a love of books during the library period. Monthly experiences are based on thematic plans that come from our calendar (i.e., President's Day, Black History Month, Poetry Month, Read Across America, etc.). Students use technology to write book reviews, do WebQuests to navigate technology, and break-out

rooms on thematic topics. Cyber Safety is taken seriously and is taught to all grades in the library towards the beginning of the school year. Students are able to check out books of their choice. They learn responsibility and the Dewey Decimal System by replacing books in the right areas of the library. The library has a yearly Book Fair that is open to parents and students with certain shopping days to expose the families to new literature. Reading Fair is another activity that students can participate in during the 2nd semester. Students choose a book to develop a storyboard and create a Flipgrid to present their work. The winner moves on to a District Level competition.

Our students participate in Computer Class. Students form good typing habits during these lessons by practicing skills found in the Edu-Typing program. They also work on basic coding skills that will help them in future classes. Through these "extra" classes, students at Florence Elementary are exposed to a variety of standards outside of the classroom that reinforce learning in the classroom. Teachers and "Specials" teachers work together to benefit the "whole" child.

3.  **Academic Supports**

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

Instruction, interventions, and assessments are collaborative and intentional to meet the needs of all student populations. Our team identifies and monitors students who are performing below grade level. Instruction in the classroom is rigorous and planned strategically to teach each specific standard to a level of proficiency for all students.

Interventions begin with tier 1 upgraded instruction in the classroom for all students. We strive to utilize instructional time to work with students by reteaching in small groups or one-on-one and providing support and modifications when necessary to ensure each student is progressing towards mastery of grade-level content. Assessments are analyzed to determine progress and the level of intervention needed by the support team. Students who are moved into tier 2 and 3 are provided specific and research-based instruction that is teacher-directed and based on data that supports the area(s) of deficit for the specific student. For example, Leveled Literacy Interventions are in place for students reading below grade level for Tier 3 students. Both the teacher and interventionist communicate about growth areas and compare intervention data as a team to meet optimal levels of growth at an accelerated pace.

Progress monitoring, classroom assessments, and data are compared to ensure consistent progress for each student. Assessments are designed and created by grade-level teams. We use common assessments, so the data is comparable for all students. Questions are aligned with the blueprint and rigorous to measure mastery appropriately. Data meetings provide teachers with a clear picture of areas of strength and weakness. Team discussions are held to develop alternate methods of instruction to target weaknesses. This might include altering specific classroom instructional strategies or practices to enhance performance and proficiency for the students performing below grade level in any subject area.

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

Classroom and gifted teachers work together to analyze student data from various assessments, including state tests, benchmark assessments, and summative assessments, to customize instruction for students as needed. Skills learned in core curriculum classes are applied and enhanced in the gifted classroom through the skills contained in the gifted curriculum.

We incorporate the Mississippi gifted standards and curriculum into our time with students. In addition, we integrate our instruction with the Mississippi College and Career Readiness standards, particularly for research, writing, reading, science, and social studies.

For example, fifth-grade students are required in standard RI5.6 to "Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.". In contrast, fifth-grade gifted students are required in standard IL 5.2 to "Utilize primary and secondary sources to provide new knowledge or understanding in a particular area."

Gifted teachers participate actively in Teacher Support Team meetings with the classroom teachers of their students. We realize that a student who is identified as gifted does not always mean they do not struggle academically. We value the varied learning needs of these students and use our program to enhance their education while also measuring their progress in the classroom.

Students participate in shaping their own assignments in gifted classes by choosing how they will synthesize the information learned and present a product of choice. Students can use their strengths and work on their weaknesses while completing their chosen assignments. Classroom and gifted teachers share information about the assignments and often communicate to make sure every student is challenged and successful.

Students performing above grade level but may not be considered gifted have goals just like students who are below grade level. Teachers help students to create their academic goals every nine weeks. Students help students reach those goals by tailoring their small group instruction to push those above grade level students as well. Our goal is for all students to continue to grow and be challenged.

### 3c.  Special education:

At Florence Elementary, inclusion for every Sped student is our goal. Every student needs to receive the same quality, rigorous, and high expectations for learning that all students receive. Our overall goal is to make sure each student, when they leave our building is on his or her pathway to a regular high school diploma. As a cohesive team, our special education teachers work with the general education teachers to make learning seamless and inclusive for all. Yes, modifications and accommodations are made through differentiated instruction, but the goal is for both teachers to work together as one for the student. When walking into an inclusion classroom at Florence Elementary, you should not be able to tell the difference between the general education teacher and the special education teacher because they both are working with ALL students and meeting the individual needs of each student by being intentional in planning and implementing instruction.

We meet these needs through PLCs and data meetings with the general education teachers and grade levels. The teachers work together to tailor instruction based on our students' current needs. We make sure to monitor progress and evaluate standards to make sure ALL students are making growth and meeting goals set on the IEP and in the classroom as well. During data meetings, special education teachers meet with general education teachers and administration to discuss summative and benchmark tests to analyze standards and discuss strategies to support our students better. Strategies are discussed as well as trends in weak standards. We then meet again after each summative test to monitor the progress of the standard and make sure growth was being made on the skill. We found that our Sped population needs our focus standards and skills to be spiraled daily as the data shows they struggle to transition from one standard to another.

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

Our school focuses on improving any English language student's listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English while also being sensitive to their fluent language. We use a Content-Based program that incorporates English at an understandable level within context. Students are only pulled out of the regular classroom who perform on the lowest English proficiency level. Teachers use visual aids and label classroom materials and items. We use leveled readers to increase the student's ability to read and comprehend English text. Our overall goal is to prepare students to speak English quickly and proficiently!

Communication with the families of these students is crucial to their academic success. We meet regularly with the families and are transparent with them about their child's progress to becoming proficient in English. Teachers also collaborate with an English Learner specialist from our district office. This resource allows us to make sure we are doing what is best to meet the needs of all of our EL students.

Allowing students to participate in the regular classroom enhances their social development in addition to accelerating their academic abilities in English. Students who are learning English learn more from their

age-appropriate peers at such a fast rate. We value that these students need to be completely immersed in the English language to learn it effectively. By providing interventions, encouragement, and using data to guide instruction based on their individual needs, students can be successful and progress towards being fluent English speakers.

These students tend to learn to speak the language a lot quicker than they learn to read and write the language. Teachers make sure to support these students through small group interventions being careful to develop their vocabulary and specifically their academic vocabulary.

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

We know the importance of meeting students where they are. This includes adapting our curriculum and instruction to the needs of migrant and homeless students when they arrive at our school. In prior years, we had housed students as a result of natural disasters when their community had been destroyed. Our teachers assessed the students to find their current level of proficiency and adjusted their daily instructions accordingly. If students are below grade level, we work in small groups to feel these students' gaps. We want every student to succeed even if they arrive at our school later in the year.

By partnering with our local churches and other community organizations, we attempt to make sure all the needs of our students are met. For example, we have donations of backpacks, school supplies, and clothing available to any student in need. We also partner with local organizations to offer family counseling services. Our school aligns curricula to the district pacing guide. This helps students who are experiencing mobility within the district have an easier transition. Specifically, with new students, our counselor sets up buddy lunches to have a relaxed setting and ensure that students are transitioning well. Our counselor has a variety of resources available to aid families going through hardships. For example, if a student needs glasses, we have resources in place to help fulfill that student's need.

We know that homeless students and families are fighting bigger battles to make their transition easier. It is our goal to meet students where they are and provide the interventions needed to help create a successful transition.

# PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

## 1. Engaging Students:

The goal of Florence Elementary is to engage every single student by developing personal relationships. We believe that students are most successful when we, as a teaching team, get to know our students personally. This develops a trusting relationship in the classroom.

Our teachers are always looking for ways to engage students in the learning process. Teachers transform their classrooms and hallways into things like Jurassic Park, outer space, spy labs, under the sea, and so much more to get students excited about the week's lessons. Once the students are engaged, the teachers have the opportunity to teach rigorous standards that are challenging for students. Disguising the rigor with "fun" helps motivate the students and achieve mastery. Students are more motivated to escape Jurassic Park than just doing another worksheet.

Students are openly engaging with one another through in-depth conversations about topics and ideas through these lessons. The teachers at Florence Elementary encourage student-led activities that allow students to freely discuss topics and explore new ideas by having conversations with their peers. Room transformations take the leadership role out of the hands of the teacher and engagingly put it into the hands of students by giving them the responsibility to truly, actively participate.

Building student individuality and strong personalities are something that Florence Elementary leaders and teachers strive for in all grades and subjects throughout our school community. Students are excelling in building their own thoughts and exploring different avenues to freely express their thoughts and responses to modern-day topics and concerns of our community, nation, and world.

Character building is one of the most important lessons we collectively encourage at FES! We strive to inclusively teach every single student, including their social and emotional health, and teach students that being successful means more than just achieving academically! Start with Hello is a project we do for a week yearly to encourage students to build the important skills of engaging in a positive way with one another. During this week, we encourage students to speak and interact with every child they encounter, during lunch, on the playground…really focus on kindness and finding what makes each one of us special.

During school closure, we worked to continue to keep our students engaged. We did teacher spotlights each day on social media, and the teachers gave students a fun challenge to do at home with their families. Teachers shared ideas like nature walks, baking cookies, creating a game show, etc. We not only kept students learning, but we aimed to make sure students' emotional health was supported as well.

## 2. Engaging Families and Community:

The community should be a great representation in schools. When we think about the word community, it means a group or neighborhood of people that share common values, beliefs, and ideas. As a community, Florence Elementary School is involved in many activities throughout the year that are mentioned below. We have school partners/adapters that come into the school and offer incentives for the students and include them as part of their family in the business world. By doing this, partners recognize their shared interests and responsibilities for the children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for our students.

We presently have several communities, businesses, and industry partners at Florence Elementary School. Eagle Elite is a monthly program that recognizes our students who exhibit excellent character and citizenship skills. A local agent with Farm Bureau rewards each Eagle Elite student with a "goodie" bag. Student of the Month is a monthly reward program that recognizes those students who balance success in and out of the classroom. This program is made possible by our parent-teacher organization and local community businesses. Teacher and Staff Member of the Month is a program that spotlights our most talented and dedicated teachers and staff members for each month. Our parent-teacher organization and local

community businesses make this program possible.

The Christmas Angel Tree helps provide Christmas gifts consisting of toys and clothing for our families in need. DARE is a program taught by a Florence Police Officer or our School Resource Officer designed to teach our students about drug prevention, anti-violence, and promoting kindness with their peers. Love Bags are food bags given by local churches and organizations that provide nonperishable items to our students who are of low socioeconomic status and do not receive daily/weekly snacks after school hours. Junior Tech Team is an innovative group of students from each grade level chosen to handle minor technical issues and troubleshoot concerns as they arrive. Junior Auxiliary dedicates their time to our school by helping our less fortunate students with school supplies and other necessary resources needed to succeed in school. The PTO is our supporter of the school, with many parents, businesses, and teachers involved to provide resources and tools and assist with various activities while supporting the vision and mission of the school. Teacher mentor programs provide a new teacher to be paired with a veteran teacher with successful teaching experience to mentor and embrace them throughout the year. These are only a few examples of the many engaging and outpouring of encouragement through our local community to help our school be the best it can be.

### 3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Florence Elementary, we aim to create a culture where teachers feel supported, appreciated, and a key part of our team. To be a successful team, every member strives for the same goal and mission. When creating a vision for our school, it is important for each grade level and teacher to have a voice. For a vision to be implemented successfully, everyone must buy-in. Each year our leadership team sits down to look at our school vision, motto, strategic plan, and goals to monitor progress from the previous year and make revisions. Creating a team for all decision-making is key. This team is much more than just our administration team. This team is made up of not only teachers from each grade but also each subject area. This allows all subject area teachers to have a voice. We also involve our curriculum specialist from the district to sit in on our meetings, sharing ideas and strategies to help successfully implement our plan and goals for the upcoming school year.

During the past two years, we have endured many challenges due to Covid, including online learning, hybrid schedules, and students having to quarantine multiple times over the course of the year. Through this, our team has come together and grown stronger than ever. We created hybrid schedules for all students, creating A days and B days, taking into account blended families, and making sure we kept parents who were working in mind so that all of those students could come on the same day. We revised our daily schedule to ensure we were getting the most out of our instruction each day. It was and still is so important to see continued growth in ALL our students, those virtual and those in the building.

On days students had to distance learn or quarantine for any reason, they continued to Zoom in with the teacher for all subject areas. We provided times for students to come in, if possible, to take their assessments or review standards needing additional attention. Teachers set up Zoom hours for tutoring and small group interventions for Reading and Math. We met on common summative assessments during PLC meetings with grade levels, dug into the data, found the standards we need to reteach, and met with small groups to intervene. We also found through our data that even with the struggles, hard work, and positive attitude from every teacher, staff member, administration, parent, and community member, students continued to have a successful year. Our students continued to make growth and succeed over the last two years because of our dedication to student success.

### 4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at Florence Elementary is to model your expectations. Everything starts from the top down. We can't expect best if we do not model best. The role of a principal is to show rather than tell. We can't expect teachers to be their best with lessons, data, and classroom management if we don't model how it should look. As the principal, it is important to let teachers know we are a team in all aspects. Many teachers and faculty members serve as support for the principal. Decisions are not unilateral; they are based on the diverse viewpoints of the leadership team and our teachers. Nothing is asked of teachers that the principal cannot model and give support to achieve. For example, the principal models and teaches in all-

new teachers' classrooms as well as veteran teachers if needed and helps set up peer mentors for weekly meetings. These meetings are on each subject area and address topics such as classroom management, data, assessments, etc. Leadership is not just found through the administrators; at Florence Elementary, every teacher is looked at as a leader; this is shown in many ways; one through developing lessons, data, and assessments as a team. We plan through PLCs and data as a grade. Every teacher takes an active role in the process. We create summative and formative assessments for each grade as a team. Teachers look at strengths and weaknesses from previous standards and assessments to create upcoming lessons and assessments. We are a school that works and grows together for the success of each and every student!

Data meetings are another way we ensure student achievement. As leaders, we use data to drive all instruction. Teachers and principals work together to look at summative assessments, benchmark data, and grade standards to compile a group of standards needing more work; these are standards for the grade, each class, and even individual students. This is another example of how collaboration among our teachers and administrators directly correlates to any success we achieve! After each assessment, teachers and principals meet to monitor each standard assessed to see if progress is being made, and we can work together to address areas still needing growth. The principal creates a strategic plan for the school. It maps out the goals for the year and addresses all grades and subjects. It even includes enrichment teachers as well as community stakeholders. This plan is monitored for progress and mastery throughout the year by our leadership team. Our school is not only successful because of the people who fill it but also because of our wonderful community. We strive to work with our parent-teacher organization, businesses, and community stakeholders.

## 5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The city of Florence is known for its rich historical background that guides many of the activities of Florence Elementary School. We focus on understanding the values and cultures of others in the community.

At the "upper elementary" school, it is important to hold an open house for students transitioning from "the lower elementary" to us. Students get to walk through the building and meet their teacher to lessen anxiety. During this open house, information concerning academics, behavior, attendance, and various grade-level events is greatly emphasized and presented in a way to include all. The expectation of student performance and parental participation is always expressed as one of the most important factors. We encourage parents to set up meetings and use all forms of technology and paper communications that we offer to stay abreast of their child's school day learning and activities. This includes, but is not limited to, Google Classroom, Remind, newsletters, and planners.

We address current events that directly impact students and families via progress reports, weekly reminders, teacher/district newsletters (in Spanish as well), social media, school/district website, marquee board, parent/teacher conferences, grade level musicals, Eagle Elite, MAAP recognition, Honor Roll/Attendance parties, Black History month lessons, Women's History month lessons, and Parent Teacher Organization. Students have lessons on Severe Weather, Cyber Bullying, and DARE to share safety in the school setting and to carry into their homes and community.

Students take the responsibility of informing their schoolmates of current events by giving Morning Announcements through Zoom. The school has a team of students with a staff sponsor to write and present daily announcements to the entire school. The media team presents monthly Social and Emotional Learning topics to our students in grades third through fifth. These lessons are for students of all ages to assist them in understanding and comprehending their emotions. They also focus on bullying and acceptance of differences. It helps them thrive academically and personally and maintain positive relationships with all students.

The staff is also trained each year through our district to be cognizant of differences and equality in the workplace. Many aspects of today's culture and movements are discussed and recognized.

We strive to include all students and make learning a successful and rewarding experience for ALL.

# PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most instrumental success of our school is because of our collaborative approach. Our team motto, Together everyone achieves mastery", is because everyone takes a leading role in our success. Our team not only includes administration, it includes teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members. One of our biggest strengths is planning as a school. This took many years to implement effectively. We created an atmosphere of building safety nets and understanding that if we do not discuss failures in the classroom and what will make it better, we will never grow stronger as a grade or a school. That work led to stronger grade-level meetings, each time we met, to share lessons or strategies that worked well in the classroom and as well lessons that needed reworking.

Assessment analysis to create common assessments in each grade helped in understanding how it takes every person to create rigorous and engaging lessons to meet the needs of all students. Each team member digs into the standards to learn what standards students used the year before and what standards they will need as they continue to the next grade. After working in PLCs in each grade and planning where it needed to meet the needs of all students, our goal as a school stretched further to be a cohesive team throughout our entire building. For example, one of our academic goals this year was to increase writing skills among all our students in third through fifth grade. At the end of the last year, 3rd-5th grade ELA teachers met to develop a writing plan to implement new strategies across the grade to help students use the same strategies in each grade level, thus making it easier for students to pick up where they left off the year before. Teachers created a pacing guide, discussed genres across the grades, developed transitions, and vocabulary from one grade to the next, and created a common rubric across all grades.

This year, these teachers and administration meet quarterly to discuss progress, make improvements where needed, and build ideas for upcoming writing lessons among the grades. Teachers collaborate and utilize the resources and advice from the instructional coach and district curriculum specialists, participate in peer observation of writing lessons, and then have feedback discussions for reflection and growth. They began sharing their students' writing for scoring to become "experts" at scoring writing based on the writing rubric. This year, we have seen significant improvement in writing through common assessments and district benchmark assessments.

Collaboration is intentional and effective when everyone works together for student success!