

U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Gloria Noyes

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

Official School Name Falmouth Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 58 Woodville Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Falmouth State ME Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 04105-0000

County Cumberland

Telephone (207) 781-3988 Fax (207) 347-3130

Web site/URL http://www.falmouthschools.org E-mail gnoyes@falmouthschools.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Geoff Bruno E-mail gbruno@falmouthschools.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Falmouth School District Tel. (207) 781-3200

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 Mrs. Danielle Tracy
(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

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. 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.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	71	50	121
1	66	60	126
2	78	79	157
3	80	87	167
4	102	80	182
5	85	80	165
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	482	436	918

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 5%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	22
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	46
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	928
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.050
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
16 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Arabic, Bengali, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, Dutch, Chinese, Croatian, Burmese, Russian,

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %
Total number students who qualify: 52

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
123 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.

- 15 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 5 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 16 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 27 Other Health Impaired
- 45 Specific Learning Disability
- 14 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 2 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	46
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	27
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	54
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	11

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 20:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	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 2016.

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.

To meet the needs of each child and develop healthy lifelong learners and responsible citizens.

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

The town of Falmouth, Maine is situated on the coast of Maine, just north of Portland, Maine's largest city. The town covers 32 square miles, stretching from the coastline to rural areas further inland to the west. Falmouth serves as a bedroom community to Portland, as many residents work in or around the greater Portland area. Our town boasts a local harbor, indoor and outdoor ice skating facilities, golf courses, a medical center, extensive hiking and biking trails, and a host of small shops and restaurants.

Falmouth was settled in the 1600s, originally covering an area that is now Portland, Cape Elizabeth, South Portland, and Westbrook. Total population of the town has grown from about 1,500 in 1900 to 6,000 in 1970, to nearly 12,000 at present. Approximately 25% of the town's population is over 55 years of age, and 19% of our town's population consists of school age children. Approximately 60% of the town's residents hold a college degree, with about 21% of the town's total population holding a graduate degree or professional certification. Falmouth's median household income is about \$67,000. We are a primarily a white collar, suburban town. Our school district enrollment has grown from 1,600 in 1970 to approximately 2,200 at present. And while Falmouth has historically been relatively homogenous, that is slowly beginning to change as Portland's thriving diversity expands outward.

Falmouth public schools are governed by a single municipality. Our school board is made up of seven members and three student representatives from Falmouth High School. The school district has three school buildings, all situated on one campus in the heart of the town's geographic boundary: Falmouth Elementary School, a K-5 elementary school with a student population of 918; Falmouth Middle School, a 6-8 school with a population of 510; and Falmouth High School, a 9-12 school with a student population of 700. Our district's graduation rate is consistently above 90% and our proficiency rates on state assessments are consistently among the top schools in Maine, above 85%. Our district's mascot is the Falmouth Yachtsmen in reference to our proximity to the sea, and nautically themed names are prevalent throughout the district which lends strength to our school district's sense of community.

Incorporated in 2011, Falmouth Elementary School (FES) is relatively young; however it has a rich history steeped in tradition. The union of two schools and the return of fifth grade from the Middle School created the largest elementary school in the state. The transition was guided by a team of representatives from each school who designed the plan to build collaboration and community in a new environment. The shift was an opportunity to be creative, let go of some old identities, and re-align multiple structures and systems, resulting in a new sense of purpose. Our new school building is LEED certified and designed to inspire, as well as to support community, integration of technology, and differentiation of instruction. Of note, the two-grade, upper elementary school, Plummer-Motz, won the Blue Ribbon Award in 2005, and the exemplary practices that made it a high performing school were not lost in the transition.

Guided by our Beliefs and Practices Agreement, leaders, faculty and staff at FES are committed to both academic excellence and each child's social, emotional, and physical health. Staff ensure a safe and secure learning environment. Forging strong and authentic relationships with students and families is a priority. Our comprehensive guidance curriculum empowers students to be self-advocates while simultaneously supporting one another in learning. Student play and movement (through Physical Education and recess) are strategically embedded within our daily schedule, and character building is a priority in all grade levels, culminating in the 8 Keys to Excellence program in grade five. We inspire our students to embrace the tenets of our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) while promoting a positive school climate and culture. One result of these efforts is that fewer than 5% of students have more than one office discipline referrals.

Teachers are committed to improving through professional learning team work, goal setting and professional development. Teachers use classroom practices that cultivate growth mindset, foster student voice and choice, differentiate, and hold students to clear and rigorous learning outcomes aligned with Maine's Learning Results. Teachers have studied and implemented the workshop model of instruction, leading to marked improvements in student writing. Students have rich and diverse learning opportunities: Art, music (with the addition of chorus and band in grade 5), and library skills are part of every child's learning, every

year. World Language instruction starts in grade one, and formal computer science classes start in grade three. Students benefit from interdisciplinary learning through the garden/greenhouse and through celebrations such as Arts Nights, Coder Express and Engineering Night. Our RTI (Response to Intervention) process casts a wide net to catch and support the academic and behavioral limitations of our students. We have high attendance rates and high academic performance rates in great part due to these systems and structures.

Students have access to a range of co-curricular activities. Kids Who Care, Civil Rights Team, the Grade 5 - Kindergarten Helper program and a variety of after school programs in physical education, art, math, and theater are offered by the school. The town's Community Programs Department offers many athletic opportunities, and programs like Chess Club, Movie Makers, Imagination Station, and Girls on the Run.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Falmouth Elementary School teachers plan together and pace instruction similarly to ensure continuity of instruction in each grade. All students receive core instruction in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Additional support in reading and mathematics is offered to students identified through our RTI process. Depending on level of need, support is either push in or pull out.

We have a school-wide approach to supporting writers' development across all grades. The workshop model of instruction supports systematic development toward proficiency in the Common Core Standards. Students develop awareness of the importance of details, citing evidence and making claims both verbally and in writing. The reading and thinking work that students do to scrutinize their own writing puts writers on the path to also being analytical readers of literature and informational texts. Our focus on writing has fostered a renewed understanding of the writing/ reading connection.

We invest in early literacy skills through a "jumpstart" program in Kindergarten: a systematic multi-sensory, activity-based approach to teaching the essential pre-requisite literacy skills of letter and sound identification. In grades one through three, literacy instruction is most influenced by the components of Guided Reading and Reading Workshop. Explicit phonics and decoding strategies are taught. "Just right" texts that offer challenges and opportunities for problem solving are chosen to help students expand their strategies with the ultimate goal of reading independently. The Workshop format gives students tools for exploring and comprehending different genres, authors, and texts. Students learn to ask questions, make connections with prior knowledge and previously read texts, and ask questions to clarify comprehension. Strategies for reading informational texts are integrated with science and social studies.

At grades four and five students begin the process of reading to learn. They acquire foundational skills through a focus on analysis of plot, setting, characterization, point of view, conflict, and theme via a variety of genres. They use questioning techniques to improve their response to reading skills. We put strong value on independent reading to foster strength and stamina. The 4th and 5th grade Reading Challenge encourages students to read books from different genres and set personal goals for the number of books they will read.

To support students in becoming powerful mathematical thinkers, we use concrete, real-life examples to introduce key mathematical concepts. We provide repeated exposures to mathematical concepts and skills in an effort to develop students' ability to recall knowledge from long term memory. Students engage with games and verbal activities to practice basic computation skills, to learn procedures and to gain quick access of facts. We offer multiple strategies for problem-solving and online practice programs to accommodate different learning styles. Large and small group work is an integral part of all mathematics learning, and students are expected to share their thinking with others. We offer an accelerated class to fourth and fifth grade students who consistently demonstrate advanced performance in mathematics as determined by classroom assessments, Continental Math League problems, scores on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), and Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) mathematics tests, as well as teacher recommendations.

We are committed to STEM education and to engaging students with inquiry as they work to meet the Next Generation Science Standards. We are phasing in a new, comprehensive science program called STEMscopes that helps both teachers and students understand the nuances and complexity of the standards. A variety of units from physical, life and earth science expose students to the scientific and engineering practices and crosscutting concepts of the standards. Digital resources, supplemental print, and hands-on activities foster both concrete knowledge development and higher order thinking. The scientific investigations, engineering challenges, and claim-evidence-reasoning assessments have increased student engagement and are easily adapted to meet personal learning styles. Students benefit from making observations and conducting experiments in our gardens, forested property and nearby ocean.

Our Social Studies program (aligned with the Maine Learning Results) is designed to develop understanding

of key concepts in the disciplines of geography, history, civics and economics; skills in research and investigation; engagement with authentic application of knowledge and skills. Teachers integrate Social Studies learning with informational text reading, science, and informational or argument writing. Over their time in elementary school, students learn about civic organization, government and law in Falmouth, Maine as well as the United States. Students also study local, state and national history and geography. Some learning focus areas include “Children Around the World”, community dialogues, Maine Penobscot tribe experience, National Parks, Maine Museum fieldwork, and the Freedom trail experience.

The Maine Guiding Principles identify important 21st century skills, including civic learning for effective citizenship. Schoolwide Habits of Work rubrics aligned with these principles engage students in regular reflection, goal-setting and feedback on skills ranging from demonstrating respect for the ideas, feeling and property of others, to collaborating effectively. Teachers take seriously elements of the Common Core curriculum that focus on research skills and critical source evaluation. FES service learning opportunities include civil rights awareness, supporting the local food pantry, visits with senior citizens, and more. The guidance curriculum and character education program also directly instruct citizenship skills.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The library is available to students before, during and after school. Students in grades K-3 visit the library each week for literacy-related activities and book check out. 4th and 5th grade classes are on a flexible library schedule. This allows for team teaching and collaboration between the librarian and classroom teachers. Students have access to up-to-date print and digital sources (online databases and digital audio books) at a variety of reading levels. Library classes support the research process (BIG 6 skills). Students also enjoy author and illustrator visits as well as conversations with authors through Skype in our library. The Mock Newbery Book Club is open to all students in grades 4 and 5. 80 readers took part in 2016-2017.

The Visual Arts Program exposes students to Art Appreciation, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture - 3D, and Multicultural Crafts. The intent of the program is to further students’ understanding of their world by exploring the various disciplines and works of art both historically and culturally, and enhancing student’s ability for self-expression to create another voice. In the K-5 experience, students develop skills in self-motivation, direction, envisioning, and creating while building self-confidence. All students take art once a week for a period of fifty minutes. Many lessons are integrated with classroom studies, giving the children an opportunity to demonstrate their learning using different media.

Students in grades K-2 participate in music class once each week, grades 3-4 students attend twice per week, and grade 5 students choose to participate in either band or general music. A large percentage of students in grades 4-5 also elect to take chorus during the school day. All performance ensembles (chorus/small group/band) perform for parents three times per year. General music teachers incorporate Kodaly and Orff-Schulwerk into K-5 instruction. Also included in the curriculum is African drumming, recorder instruction, composer study, folk dancing, music elements and vocabulary, and connections to children’s literature. Music enrichment activities include trips to youth concerts to hear the Portland Symphony Orchestra and bringing music ensembles to the school (eg. Inkas Wasi-a Peruvian music ensemble, etc.).

All students participate in physical education class twice each week for 30 minutes. The Every Child a Winner Program is our chosen movement education curriculum designed to provide students with developmental movement experiences. Children learn through guided discovery and problem solving, and use their bodies and imaginations in creative expression. Movement concepts are taught through educational games, dance and gymnastics. Collaboration skills are developed through team play. In addition, students have opportunities to engage in outdoor winter activities such as the first grade ice skating program and snowshoeing on our wooded trails. Health and nutrition education is integrated into our PE and counseling / classroom curriculum grades K-4, and taught as a separate class for all students in grade 5.

Our counseling curriculum, aligned with the American School Counseling Association's standards, is implemented by counselors in conjunction with classroom and health teachers. Lesson and group discussion topics focus on prevention and developmental needs of students, and include topics ranging from stress/anxiety to bullying prevention to brain development, to online safety. These topics help FES students

develop awareness of the world while learning strategies to navigate life's challenges. Our program also includes individual counseling, small group counseling, and crisis interventions for all students K-5.

Our Spanish program begins in first grade and continues through fifth grade. Classes meet twice per week. Children learn to understand and speak the language through participating in fun, high interest activities. Games, puppet shows, stories and songs are utilized to engage students and our classes are conducted almost exclusively in Spanish. Elements of total physical response, storytelling, and organic world language communication methods are weaved into lessons. Literature also plays a large role as interdisciplinary themes are braided into our lessons in cooperation with classroom teachers. Students develop confidence with speaking and are provided with a strong foundation as they progress to further language study.

All students in grades 3-5 engage in technology class weekly. Classes focus on computer science and design, and students develop sequential thinking skills that serve them in other subjects, including math, writing, and science. They code their own games and applications, create 2D and 3D digital art and receive hands-on exposure to physical technology such as 3D printers and robotics. The classroom setting fosters creativity and collaborative thinking. Work surfaces are erasable white boards and often technology lessons are taught without devices, fostering a deeper understanding of how the technology works. The Hour of Code campaign, embraced by teachers, students and administrators for the past four school years, has greatly increased the knowledge base of our staff and students.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Team collaborative planning ensures that teachers include a range of best practices in their instruction. These include and range from turn and talk strategies, mini-lessons, whole group learning, small-group learning, 1:1 conferring, student choice and multiple pathways, workstations, reflection and goal-setting, visible learning and feedback techniques, and strategies to build stamina. Extensive formative assessment helps us ensure student learning, and we continue to develop valid and reliable summative classroom assessments to monitor student progress toward meeting standards. Teachers are growing increasingly skilled at employing growth mindset strategies that teach students how effort and persistence, rather than innate ability, can produce success. When a student says, "I'm not good at math," the teacher responds: "You're not good at that math problem yet, however, with practice and effort, you will get there." Practice, seeing mistakes as part of learning, and emphasis on positive teacher language are part of shifting student self-perceptions.

Teachers also use technology extensively to support student learning. In Kindergarten through Grade 5, students have access to 1:1 computer devices for use in a blended learning model. Students benefit from applications such as Dreambox and Lexia to engage in differentiated math and reading practice. Students demonstrate their understanding using applications like Explain Everything to share their thinking. And Students interact with their teachers through Google Classroom in demonstrating learning and receiving feedback. Students capture videos, photos, drawings and learning links to support their individual learning.

We screen all grades universally three times a year with both reading and math probes using scientifically based external assessments. Math unit tests, on-demand writing prompts and Benchmark Assessment System reading levels, as well as other common content area assessments are also used to document and monitor student learning. Starting in grade three we use two different standardized assessments to evaluate students; the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) to measure student growth in math and reading, and the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) to evaluate student learning in math, reading, writing (grades 3-5) and science (grade 5). These various data points, triangulated with teacher input, help us to identify both students who may have lagging skills as well as students who are performing above grade level. Teachers also rely on perceptual and formative assessment data to identify students who are struggling with either academic or social/emotional challenges. Data is examined at regular intervals to determine growth.

Our First Tier of intervention is the classroom, where teachers employ academic differentiation practices including workshops/flexible groupings, extension or remediation tasks, and individualized learning opportunities. Teachers are also skilled at employing a range of behavioral interventions. Teams of teachers

confer regularly and formally, in collaboration with RTI and Special Education specialists, about strategies to help meet the needs of various students.

Students who continue to struggle receive Tier Two or Tier Three support from RTI Teachers and Educational Technicians, with a combination of pullout and push in support. While scheduling can be challenging, ensuring student learning is a priority for everyone. The success of our Tier Two program in particular is evidenced by the number of students who receive support for lagging skills, are released back to their classroom, and do not need support again.

The strong communication between RTI and Special Education specialists ensures appropriate referrals based on meaningful data. Our Special Educators are strongly guided by the belief that the goal for all Special Education students is to equip them with the skills and strategies to be successful and independent. We successfully dismiss students from Special Education each year, and the number of Special Education students who meet or exceed the standard on state testing far exceeds the state average.

The FES school counselors regularly consult with administrators, teachers and parents. Extensive time is spent with families and/or caregivers in an effort to help problem solve, create success plans for students, offer advice for challenges in classroom and at home, offer outside referrals to private clinicians, and many other consultation topics. Student behavior referrals are incredibly few in number, and student learning, rather than behavioral challenges, are the primary focus.

A district-wide committee of teachers and administrators works to ensure that the very best practices are utilized in order to discover those children with exceptional ability and, eventually, their subsequent need for special programming. The Seminar program provides a learning environment for grades 4 and 5, which enriches, accelerates, and extends the Falmouth School Department curriculum as well as provides specialized social /emotional support for gifted learners. A separate program accelerates those who have an exceptional academic aptitude in Mathematics.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

George Courous (2016) suggests, “when forward-thinking schools encourage today’s learners to become creators and leaders they in turn will create a better world.” When you walk the hallways and visit the classrooms of Falmouth Elementary School Courous’ vision is alive and radiating throughout the building. The classroom structures in place empower and motivate students to become active learners in their environment. Through the Writers, Readers and Math workshop model our students are offered differentiated learning opportunities. Students celebrate their strengths and set their own growth goals in all content areas using reflective practice. Furthermore, our school culture embraces Carol Dweck’s growth mindset model. Through assemblies, daily announcements, and classroom teachings our community of learners- adults and children, believe in the power of YET and recognize the importance of positive thinking to reach desired goals. We also believe in three core values... being respectful, responsible, and safe to promote a climate that supports everybody.

Our School Culture and Climate Team comprised of administrators, teachers and staff meet regularly to monitor school climate and support the implementation of initiatives that empower staff and students to work together in a positive manner. School counselors teach comprehensive lessons to all grade levels and provide emotional / social support through groups and individual work with students. Celebrations for citizenship and academics take place in classrooms throughout the school on an ongoing basis. Every Monday we recognize our K-5 “Stars of the Week” for being safe, respectful and responsible. All of the “Stars” have an opportunity to meet with “Casco the Sea Star” our school mascot, who is a role model 5th grader, have their picture taken, and receive an award that is displayed in our showcase.

There is a strong focus on community at FES. Our upper level students are “Reading Buddies” for younger students and also serve as “Kindergarten Helpers”. Many students are involved in the “Kids Who Care” community service program and the “Civil Rights Team” that promote and support a safe and caring school. These and other initiatives provide our students with a sense of belonging and citizenship.

Moreover, our staff are highly valued and supported in the important work that they do. Collaborative processes exist that allow for staff voice and ownership in curricular and school culture initiatives. Our staff meetings begin with a celebration where colleagues voice gratitude towards one another. An appreciation board in the staff room provides a weekly venue to recognize one another for their work. The ownership and authentic relationships that are built at FES invest students and staff in the positive culture and climate that exists here. As a result, when people visit our school they will often share how polite, respectful and welcoming our school is. It makes us proud that our students and staff all feel known, valued, and treasured as members of our community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Sharing our school vision, learning initiatives, successes and challenges with our families and community members is the first step in building a trusting partnership. We believe that it takes a village to educate the whole child and we rely on our partnerships with parents and community members to promote successful learning opportunities for our K-5 students. Parents are kept well informed of their child’s learning and classroom needs through parent-teacher-student conferences, informational events, teacher emails, blogs, websites, classroom newsletters and a variety of specialized reports such as: Response to Intervention, Gifted and Talented, and Special Education updates. Our parents are highly involved in our school whether it is volunteering in their child’s classroom, helping in the lunchroom, chaperoning field trips or attending a multitude of learning celebrations. Our parents also receive weekly school-wide news through the Principal Notes, updated school and district web pages, Board reports and Twitter feeds.

To gain a better perspective on the parent’s whole school experience we invite our parents to attend Parent Partnership meetings. Our agendas focus on a variety of school celebrations, wonders, budget information and collaborative problem solving time. Our parents provide much needed information to help us enhance

our supports, instructional practices, communication as well as helping their child have a successful learning journey. Obtaining this parent feedback has recently helped our proficiency based reporting committee create a new progress report that is parent-friendly, housed online for parents to monitor their child's growth over time, and it is aligned with our beliefs and learning targets.

Another special community partnership that greatly benefits our students' growth and school success happens with our middle and high school service-learning students. Not a school day passes that these older students / role models are not supporting our young learners. They volunteer to be "Big Buddies" for students in need of emotional support, "Band Buddies" for our first year band students, recess helpers and classroom volunteers. We are also fortunate to have a supportive Parent Teacher Organization that works collectively with us to promote whole school and community events such as the Color Run, Ice Cream Social, Harvest Festival, and much more. Additionally, we have an endearing relationship with our local seniors who live in an elderly housing facility called Ocean View. Our students visit their grand-buddies monthly to make crafts, play games, sing, read and enrich each other's day. These experiences promote citizenship and emotional well being for our young learners. The proof is in the pudding, we average over 95% compliance in positive and wanted behaviors for our school population! We are also fortunate to have other partnerships with our local food pantry, Falmouth Land Trust, and preschools to afford our learners with a well-rounded school experience that nurtures not only their academic minds but also their hearts.

3. Professional Development:

Falmouth Elementary School is committed to the district's Beliefs and Practices, and the foundations that underpin them: collaboration and innovation. Professional learning is designed to enhance student learning and academic performance, and to improve the social, emotional, and mental well-being of students. Professional development is also differentiated to meet individual teachers' needs as well as the needs of the school and district as a whole. Monthly staff meetings are used to provide ongoing professional learning to support school and district vision. This year's focus has been on cultivating growth mindset in students and staff, in relation to both academic instruction and behavioral intervention. This has tied in well to the broader district goal around innovative strategies to improve learning. All teachers received a copy of the book *The Innovator's Mindset*, by George Couros, to start their year; and this has been a point of discussion and reference throughout the year. Administration has received positive feedback from "walk and talks", "staff surveys", and "classroom visits" that our community of thinkers are much more inclined to keep an open mind when learning something new and to see that failures often lead to ultimate success.

Additionally, our professional growth model involves teams of teachers writing SMART goals related to student growth (using baseline data), and related to improvement of professional practice. These goals serve as the focus for professional development throughout the year. Teachers meet regularly in Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) based on grade level or content focus to pursue action plans related to their goals. These action plans involve teachers in new learning related to curriculum, instruction and assessment; examination of student work and data to guide instruction; and unit or lesson planning. Grade level teams meet once per week during the school day, and PLT teams meet twice per month after school. Although there is a designated facilitator of each team, all group members share responsibility for carrying out goals and contributing ideas and work. PLT leaders from each team meet together regularly to have vertical conversations about curriculum and instruction. Grade-level teams also meet once or more per month to analyze universal screening data, discuss students of concern, and confer with RTI specialists about the progress of striving students.

This year, grade-level teams constructed goals around the improvement of writing instruction and implementation of the Lucy Calkins Writer's Workshop (also a school goal). Each grade level team had the opportunity to work with a Writer's Workshop/literacy consultant on-site for 10 days over the course of the year. This investment of time and monetary resources significantly increased our students' writing abilities not only in writing, but also in the reading-writing connection and in student engagement. Moreover, this professional development enhanced teacher collaboration, delivery of instruction through in-class modeling and shared teaching as well as reflective practice.

4. School Leadership:

At Falmouth Elementary School we believe in leadership density in service of our common mission. Administrators see their roles as working collaboratively to support students in optimizing their learning and to support staff in doing their jobs to the best of their ability. Leadership is dispersed throughout the school, and leaders and administrators meet regularly to ensure that communication is constant, clear and two-way. Decision-making is grounded in what we believe is in the best interests of our students, and we take great care to involve the voices of all constituent groups (staff, students, parents, district) as appropriate, to provide input and develop direction. Structured meetings, surveys, focus groups and other opportunities to build shared vision support this.

The School Leadership Team (Principal, 2 Assistant Principals, Learning Strategist and District Director of Learning) meets weekly to address challenges around curriculum, instruction and assessment. The team sets a SMART goal aligned to the district goal that relates directly to the improvement of student learning, and develops an action plan for the year. This year's goal was based on improvement of student writing scores and included a collection of baseline and summative data. The action plan has involved systematic support of teacher teams to work with a consultant, do lesson study, analyze student work and prepare instruction. Together we promote common protocols that support a positive school environment to ensure our students feel safe and have a sense of belonging, which in turn improves student achievement and social responsibility. We also believe in doing what is best and right for our learners. This may involve instructional change and our leadership recognizes that change can be difficult. When change is needed, we ask for our members to think innovatively and to keep an open mind. Ultimately, our leadership team and broader faculty understands that strong student learning and a healthy school environment is the end goal, because this is our shared purpose it unites us. We always ask the question, "Is this best for our learners?" "Is this best for children?"

Teacher leaders guide our grade level teams (GLT) and professional learning teams (PLT). These leaders meet regularly with building and district administrators to set goals, reflect on progress, troubleshoot challenges and develop leadership. Leaders develop plans related not only to matters of management (budget, schedule, assessment planning, etc.) but more importantly to matters of curriculum and instruction. With support, they guide their teams in professional learning, analysis of student work, lesson study and unit planning. Our instructional strategist leader meets with teaching teams approximately once a month to discuss students in need, whether academic or emotional. Teachers use this opportunity to brainstorm solutions for struggling students and contribute to the planning of their success. The school counselors and principals, as well as the District Director of Learning, take part in regular teacher team meetings as well.

Each of our teacher leaders offers unique talents, and we believe we are better because we thoughtfully utilize and appreciate each leader's gifts. We also work to empower teachers throughout the building to take on leadership roles in their areas of passion. Additionally, we embrace leadership with integrity, trust, respect and a commitment to excellence. This approach is modeled throughout our school and students and staff bring these principles to life with their daily actions.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At the heart of Falmouth Elementary School’s Professional Growth Model is a focus on SMART Goals to shape our efforts toward improved student learning. Goals that are “SMART” (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) foster a collaborative, outcome based approach to improving teaching and learning. All members of the administrative and teaching staff develop two goals each year. Staff members are provided with time and resources needed to collaborate and implement thoughtful action plans. Peer coaching activities (e.g., lesson study, student-work scoring, etc.) typically support one or both goals and provide staff with opportunities to learn from each other.

The process begins with a school-wide lens. Based on student outcomes, administrators, specialists and Professional Learning Team (PLT) teacher leaders identify an area of need for instruction. From this analysis a building level Student Achievement Goal is developed. This goal is the driving force for allocating time and focusing professional development work for the year.

Student Achievement Goals are then created by teams of teachers, led by PLT leaders, at each grade level that directly support the building level goal. These goals identify specific standards for student growth and aim to improve academic achievement and/or students’ physical, social, emotional, and mental health. Baseline data is collected and analyzed and student growth goals are set that meet the “SMART” criteria.

Professional Growth SMART Goals are developed by either an individual or a team. Teachers may choose to focus on any aspect of their professional practice. Although the focus is on an individual's professional growth, impact on student learning is central to this work. Book groups, peer coaching, and outside professional development opportunities are examples of tools used to support new learning.

For example, one team identified the following Student Growth SMART Goal last year: “At least 95% of third grade students will progress at least 3 instructional reading levels by the end of June 2016 as measured by the Benchmark Assessment System.” This goal aligned with our school-wide focus on improving literacy practices. Our 2016 Spring Maine State Assessment and NWEA data bears out the impact of this goal, indicating significant reading achievement by our students. Many teams meet and exceed their goals, and others fall short. However, our emphasis is on maintaining a high bar for all students and promoting deep reflection, progress monitoring, and collaboration toward improved instructional practice.

One team’s Professional Learning SMART Goal was around the use of iPads. Teachers sought support from the Technology Coordinator to develop and incorporate instruction of tap typing and Google Classroom to allow students and teachers to interact throughout the writing process. Real-time access to student writing has allowed teachers to provide timely, specific, useful feedback much more expeditiously to students. The ability to revise and rework electronically has allowed students to draft more easily. Both teachers and students became more confident users of the technology, and students continue to benefit from the drafting and feedback process as other teacher teams have benefited from the learning of their colleagues.