

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Dr. Sarah Herbert

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

Official School Name Falling Spring Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1006 Falling Spring Road

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

City Chambersburg State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 17202-9009

County Franklin County

Telephone (717) 261-3439 Fax (717) 261-3493

Web site/URL

<http://www.chambersburg.k12.pa.us/education/school/school.php?sectionid=14&>

E-mail sarah.herbert@casdonline.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*Dr. Joseph Padasak E-mail joseph.padasak@casdonline.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Chambersburg Area School District Tel. (717) 263-9281

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 Dr. Dana Baker

(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):
- 13 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 17 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	19	25	44
1	25	24	49
2	19	21	40
3	26	19	45
4	27	26	53
5	18	28	46
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	134	143	277

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 10 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 75 % White
 - 8 % 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: 10%

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	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	27
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	277
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.097
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
7 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Vietnamese, Polish, Greek, Creole/pidgins

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 46 %
Total number students who qualify: 122

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
12 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.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 12 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 23:1
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	96%	96%	94%	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 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.

Falling Spring is a place where everyone can be safe, focus on an outstanding education, work together to achieve, and is respectful to one another.

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 Chambersburg Area and School District (CASD) is located in south-central Pennsylvania and is comprised of the Chambersburg borough and four surrounding townships that cover a total of 250 square miles. Over the last few years, CASD has seen much growth and diversity. Adjusting to these changes is critical to continued success of the area and our students.

Falling Spring Elementary School (FSES) is one of 13 elementary schools within the CASD. This school is located just outside of the Chambersburg borough in Guilford Township, which is in a somewhat rural yet growing residential area. FSES currently educates roughly 280 students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade annually. There are two classrooms per grade level in this school which allows for a small community school feel. Over the last four years, FSES has experienced change with its student population. In 2012-2013, students who receive a free or reduced lunch were 28.5% of the school's population. In 2016-2017, this group of students rose to be 45.5% of the overall student body. As a result of this change in demographics, we have seen a difference in our student needs and the background experiences they bring with them.

Despite demographic shifts, the overall focus of our school is to offer all students a high quality learning experience. In order to provide this experience for FSES students, a variety of opportunities have been created. As a result of many of these changes, our students have demonstrated an increase in their overall performance and growth on annual state assessments.

One example of an adjustment is the redesign of our overall building schedules at FSES. Instead of the traditional departmentalization per grade level, there are two teachers who instruct grades three through five English Language Arts, two who instruct grades three through five math, one who instructs writing in grades three through five, and another who instructs science and social studies for grades three through five. With this schedule, students travel between four different teachers during the school day.

Our schedule adjustment has resulted in many advantages for FSES. One immediate result of this schedule change was a huge reduction in student disciplinary needs in grades three through five. As students move from classroom to classroom throughout the day, they receive much needed "brain breaks." Additionally, teachers are able to become experts in one content area and they become familiar with grade level expectations in multiple subject areas. This schedule also provides a dedicated time block at a specific time for reading intervention to occur at each grade level. As students are pulled on a daily basis, teachers are better able to design their whole group instruction to occur around this time. The students who remain in the classroom during this half-hour block continue to work in literacy stations or with their classroom teacher in small guided reading groups. Schedules also were created to accommodate early dismissals and delays. Finally, as a result of establishing these schedules, students are afforded the opportunity to experience all of their different content areas every day, regardless of schedule changes.

Additionally, FSES has a variety of enrichment opportunities offered through many different clubs. Students in grades four and five have the options of participating in our STEM club, our CIA (Compassion in Action) club, and our Leadership Committee. Our STEM club meets one day per week after school throughout the year. During this time, students are provided a variety of problem solving experiences. One culminating project for this group is an annual K'Nex competition at our local intermediate unit. Our STEM Club is the first school board approved club at the elementary level (clubs only existed at the secondary level previously). Students must complete an application and maintain good standing both academically and behaviorally over the school year to remain a member. Our CIA club exposes students to service oriented activities on a monthly basis. They have conducted canned food drives for local food pantries, generated cards for military members overseas, raised awareness for kindness in the school, participated in activities at the local Humane Society, and many other similar efforts. Our Leadership Committee meets monthly to discuss and address overall building climate and general needs. Parents, students, and staff work collaboratively to address any issues or concerns that may arise. Over the last few years, this committee has established a school wide vision, a positive incentive program, addressed ongoing cafeteria behaviors, and promoted an awareness of bullying.

Another opportunity available to FSES students is our school garden. This garden not only exposes students to the process involved with caring for a garden, but the healthy living associated with what is produced. Through the drive and dedication of one of our families, this garden was created. This family has written countless grants that have resulted in many additions to our garden. As part of this garden, there is a composting program associated with our school cafeteria. All of our grade levels have taken advantage of this unique addition to our school property. In months where the weather is cooperative, teachers conduct lessons in the garden areas. Students are involved in caring for the garden. At various times during the year, students have the opportunities to sample produce that originated in their school garden. Students also assist with composting materials collected in our cafeteria on a daily basis.

Our staff, students, and families are able to support and thrive in our school, thanks in part to these procedures and programs.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At FSES, PA Aligned Core Standards, combined with rigorous expectations and a variety of engagement strategies, are at the heart of each of our core subject areas.

Our PA Standards-based K-five Language Arts curriculum was written by district teachers and specialists. Our K-2 teachers follow the Classroom Literacy Initiative model as a means to teach those standards through a safe learning environment in a rigorous and student-focused way. Within this model students are engaged through turn and talk, think alouds, and meaningful interactions with texts on a regular basis. Students are challenged on their instructional level daily during small group guided reading instruction. Formal and informal assessments such as running records and DRA's are utilized to gain insight into each student's instructional level, as well as his or her individual needs to maximize student growth. Teachers regularly use Intentional Read Alouds and Message Time Plus to introduce new strategies to students, as well as a means of reinforcement for strategies already introduced. Our "print rich" classroom spaces are organized in a way that fosters students' independent learning. Our three through five reading/English Language Arts curriculum regularly utilizes the gradual release model. Utilizing an "I Do, We Do, You Do" progression, students are introduced to, practice, and master our learning standards. Teachers use mentor texts to demonstrate what good reading and writing looks like. During guided practice, students are given the opportunity to synthesize the new information through turn and talk, random reporter, think-pair-share, student driven anchor charts, fist of five and other engagement strategies. Small group guided reading instruction helps to reinforce these skills on the students' reading levels. Independent practice is then provided for the students to demonstrate their learning. KidWriting or Writer's Workshop models are used for writing in all grade levels. Students regularly reflect on their work and through peer and teacher conferencing are given the tools they need to improve their writing. The importance of writing to our school is reinforced in our school's writing goal, which sets the standard and expectation for all written work across our curriculum and across all grade levels.

If you were to walk into a mathematics classroom at our school, you would see students engaged in cooperative learning groups, utilizing manipulatives, and participating in student led discussions. We pride ourselves on our use of technology and also our student goal setting techniques. Our students are responsible for evaluating their performance and setting goals for themselves on a regular basis. Our curriculum last year consisted of Math Investigations by Pearson, and this year teachers are using Eureka and KinderCorner. The Eureka math curriculum begins with fluency practice and teacher-led instruction on the concept(s). To practice, students complete team activities in which groups solve, discuss, and explain their methods. Students then practice independently before a class discussion. Exit tickets and homework are then used as assessment and practice tools. Meanwhile, students practice fact fluency (both operational and conceptual) by completing timed activities, setting personal goals, and working for improvement. In our mathematics curriculums, an emphasis is placed on being able to explain ideas and tell why.

Our science curriculum, based on PA Core Standards, includes the study of life, earth, and physical science. Students participate in inquiry-based and hands-on activities where the scientific method is followed. Students participate in real world experiences through the incubation and hatching of chicken eggs; watching the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly and a tadpole to a frog; and the planning, planting, maintaining, harvesting, and food preparation through the school garden. Each student in the school has an opportunity to participate in the annual school Science Fair. Fifth graders planned and executed a standards based "Science Day" for the kindergartners.

In social studies, students learn about communities in both the United States and throughout the world, different cultures, the United States government, the regions of the United States, and the history of the United States from its colonization to Westward Expansion.

All students at FSES are regularly engaged in cooperative learning groups and small group instruction where they foster independence, cooperation, and civic learning skills. Student accountability is of the utmost

importance for all students and their learning. Our teachers set the tone, the expectations, and the rigor for the learning that happens, and our students consistently rise to the challenge.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at FSES have the opportunity to participate in a variety of special classes. These classes include library, art, music, and physical education. All students in grades K-5 are able to experience these programs one time per week.

Our library is a place where students become lifelong learners through their interactions with literacy and technology. Students learn how to conduct searches utilizing the online catalog to find books of interest. Research skills are emphasized so students can skillfully interpret, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information to make meaning of it. Students learn how to best present this information and communicate it vis-à-vis their audience. Various mediums of technology, such as MS Word, PowerPoint, Publisher, and Photo Story are utilized by students to communicate their message in an effective and authentic format. Students also learn how to be responsible citizens by using information ethically by giving credit to the originators of the work they are using through the use of citations and copyright laws.

Another experience available to our students is the exploration of art. Our art teacher believes that students are successful for her because there is a high level of expectation for both learning and execution of fine art skills. The development of fine motor skills and eye/hand coordination begins at the elementary level, with lessons that build upon previously learned art principles. These principles are found in the elements of design that we focus on such as line, shape, color, value, space, and texture. All students focus on the production, execution, and exhibition of classroom created art. Our art program uses the following media to give a well-rounded creative experience: paints, paper, three-dimensional objects, clay, graphics and textiles. The teacher uses a variety of visuals for lessons such as the Smartboard, art videos, prints/posters, artwork examples, and handouts. Also, the art teacher brings a high level of enthusiasm for art, which makes for a fun and creative atmosphere for learning.

Additionally, all students participate in music class where they acquire skills in music appreciation, reading music, recognition of rhythm and sounds. Much of what is discussed in music can be connected to other content areas such as math and history. Third and fourth grade students are provided with recorders and are instructed on how to play their first musical instrument. Through this experience, students are able to develop skills in reading pitch and rhythm as well as coordination of their right and left hands. Students participate yearly in a music program where they are given the opportunity to showcase their learning. Students in fourth and fifth grades have the opportunity to participate in orchestra and band. Those students participating in these opportunities perform in separate concerts to highlight their newly acquired skills.

FSES students also participate in physical education (PE) on a weekly basis. Our PE teacher regularly teaches students about health and wellness, as well as exercise and diet. Not only do students participate in a variety of physical activities designed to develop motor skills, teamwork, and cooperation, but they also discuss “My Plate” which highlights healthy eating choices. As part of the PE program, students annually raise money for the American Heart Association and participate in Jump Rope for Heart. Besides being recognized in class, the top student scores also are displayed on a bulletin board in our school’s hallway.

In addition to regularly scheduled classes, FSES offers some additional opportunities for students. Our school garden offers real-life, hands-on opportunities to learn about nutrition and environmental stewardship. Students are involved in planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, and composting in the garden. Healthy recipes are made and tasted in the classroom. Also, the guidance counselor, school nurse, dental hygienist, and outside agencies offer a range of health lessons. Hygiene, human growth and development, dental health, and problem solving are among the topics our students learn about while at FSES.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

In order to meet the diverse and individual needs of students, our teachers use a variety of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments. Our district utilizes the NWEA MAP assessment three times per

year. After each testing window, teachers review the data and use it as a “big picture” for their students’ achievement and growth. The data also is used to recognize overall trends and pinpoint possibilities for student goal setting. Additionally, the data is used to determine needs for small group or skills based group practice. In some grades, students are responsible for recording their own scores and establishing personal goals. Our district also utilizes a guided reading assessment three times a year. This data is shared with the teachers to help them group students and prepare instruction for their small groups. Additionally, MAP data, reading assessments, and input from the teacher are used to identify students who would benefit from intervention support from our reading specialist. Students who receive intervention meet with both our reading specialist and the classroom teacher for a “double dose” of quality reading instruction. Students who are working above grade level also have their needs met during small group instruction, as well as through differentiated projects and enrichment activities, including real world application.

Our teachers informally assess every day through the use of observation, quick checks for understanding, exit tickets, and running records. These assessment tools direct teachers’ instruction and opportunities for individual and small group instruction. Due to a systematic approach to guided reading that includes using running records regularly to drive instruction, our teachers can easily tell you each child’s reading level and also his/her instructional reading needs. Teachers use tests, quizzes, and projects to more formally assess throughout each marking period.

FSES teachers have continually worked to improve student engagement. Teachers use a variety of engagement strategies such as cheers, turn and talk, thumbs up/thumbs to the side if they agree, and students are challenged to defend their thinking on an ongoing basis. Random reporter, think-pair-share, and fist of five also are used to help encourage student engagement. In many classes, teachers use the Power Teaching model that encourages students to work together in teams, each with an assigned job to ensure the group works efficiently. The teams earn points while working on cooperative learning goals, including participation, explanations, active listening, task completion, and encouragement of others. The team that earns the most points is recognized in many ways (may include - recognition sign hanging above the team, special chair cushions to use at their seat for the week, class cheers, among others).

Rubrics that provide specific examples and criteria are explained to and/or analyzed by the students, which allows them to understand what is required and push themselves even further. Rubrics are used throughout the learning process, as opposed to only being used as an assessment tool at the end. At times, students are even involved in creating and using the rubrics to self-assess and critique sample work.

Goal setting is an important part of our building’s differentiation model. Data and student work are used by the student and teacher to develop individualized goals for each student in a variety of subject areas. Students then create action plans and work toward achieving their goals. Students track their progress, and goals are demonstrated through student work and/or data collection. New goals are established, and the self-directed learning process continues.

When students meet their goals, their achievement is celebrated. This recognition may include wearing a goal necklace so everyone will know to ask them about their achievement. They may also receive goal achievement stickers, small prizes, and recognition in newsletters, to name a few.

All classrooms have SMARTboards to assist with engaging students in learning. Each teacher has time allotted for their class to use our school’s computer lab on a bi-weekly basis and shared laptop carts are utilized in the classroom. In addition to classroom iPads, our library has a set of ten additional iPads that classrooms can borrow. Our teachers strive to ensure that the iPads are not just replacing an activity, but are being used to create something that they could not have students do any other way. For example, students have created projects by researching a topic on educational websites and recording their facts into a program. The project was then printed out as a QR code and displayed in the classroom to create a Research Station, where students could scan the QR code and learn about the topic. Google Classroom is used by some classes to research, create, and share discussion questions, essays, and projects.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At FSES, our students are motivated in a variety of ways. Our students are recognized daily for exceptional behavior in the cafeteria. When a student is recognized, he or she gets to put a paper star on our cafeteria wall with his or her name and grade. Then they are recognized on the morning announcements. We also give students “Falcon Bucks” as a way to recognize exceptional academic or social behavior at any point throughout the day. All staff is permitted to give any student a Falcon Buck, even if the student is not in their homeroom. Students know they can earn a Falcon Buck no matter where they are. Students in grades three through five have the opportunity to participate in FSES’ SOAR Committee. Students on this committee represents the study body and are given some stock in the decision making processes for our school. Buzzy Bee Safety awards are given out once a month for exceptional bus behavior. These students also are recognized on the morning announcements. Our Compassion in Action club places an emphasis on spreading kindness throughout our community. Fourth and fifth graders have the opportunity to participate in the after school S.T.E.M. Club, where they further develop problem-solving skills to complete such projects as designing, building, and testing parachutes and catapults. They also build and use robotic arms and programmable LEGOS to complete various tasks, develop basic programming skills, and participate in the K’Nex S.T.E.M. Challenge contest.

Our school provides a positive environment that supports academic, social, and emotional growth. Students are included in creating anchor charts, class rules and other areas of the learning environment. Emphasis is placed on exemplary work submitted and specific feedback is given to students about their work on a regular basis. Primary and intermediate classrooms work together for buddy reading, student-led lessons, and peer conferencing. Classrooms use ClassDojo, cheers/chants to celebrate successes and to positively reinforce learning and behavior. Our guidance counselor teaches lessons to classes that meet the specific needs of that classroom and/or grade level. Our literacy and math coaches are available to support teachers with curriculum and to help teachers create an instructionally sound learning environment that is both rigorous and developmentally appropriate.

Finally, our school culture creates an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. Our principal has an “Open Door Policy” where teachers are encouraged to come and talk about issues as they happen. Positive feedback is given to teachers on walk through forms which often includes a question to consider. At our grade level meeting, teachers are asked how they can be supported in the classroom and emphasis is placed on working together as a team. That team approach also can be found in our faculty meetings where staff members are encouraged to recognize other staff members with a “Take 5” for something they said or did that reflected our school theme (FISH philosophy). The teacher being recognized receives a “Take 5” candy bar and recognition from their peers. There have been times when there were so many recognitions that we have run out of candy bars! At FSES, we are encouraged to see the good that is happening in front of us and are ready to recognize each other so to build each other up when that happens.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At FSES, we engage our families and community members in a variety of ways. We welcome distinguished business members into our school for our “Principal for a Day” program where they are able to see firsthand what is happening in our school. Firefighters, Rotarians, and STEM speakers visit our school and create special presentations for our students. We welcome our high school musical groups to perform for our students in celebration of achieving certain goals. Students from our Career Magnet School come to present the specialties they are studying, engage students in hands-on activities, and answer any questions students may have. In the spring, our third through fifth graders participate in Career Day where members of the community teach students about their jobs. Our students take grade level specific field trips each year to various places in our community. CASD Cares is an initiative that takes place one weekend per year and encourages families to assist in beautifying the outside of our building. Normally this event takes place around Earth Day, and students, staff, and families are encouraged to help plant flowers, spread mulch, pick up loose trash, and tend our garden.

Our teachers regularly inform parents and families of the learning taking place in our building. Parent-Teacher conferences, digital and print newsletters, emails, phone calls, posted pictures, and updates added to ClassDojo keep communication open between school and families. Families are welcomed into the building for various activities, like Field Day, the 100th day of school, garden activities, and special classroom events. Our Watch DOGS (Dads of Great Students) program invites volunteers to recess and lunch times so to bring a positive male presence into the building. FSES also hosts a “Literacy Night” for staff, students, and families to celebrate the literacy achievements of our fourth and fifth graders. Our school website is updated regularly with our calendar of events.

At the beginning of the year, we host an Open House night for students and parents to meet their child’s teacher and see where their student will be learning. Parents have the opportunity to introduce themselves personally and to share any helpful pieces of information about their child to the teacher. Kindergarten registration is held on site so incoming students can get an overall sense of the school setting and specifically a kindergarten classroom. As new students enroll in our school throughout the year, the family is given a tour of the building prior to the student starting school which helps to alleviate any stress related to attending a new school.

In return, families support our school’s efforts. Our school garden is used by students and teachers but is maintained overall by a committee that includes staff and families. Our garden club members were visited by a news team to help spread the word about the great things that are happening in the FSES garden! Our PTO is very active and involved. They have a Facebook page where school updates and information is posted as a way to ensure that parents are receiving important information in every way possible. The PTO recognizes and supports the importance of student learning. Teachers receive recognition luncheons and gifts, as well as supplies for their classrooms, to show that they are appreciated. The financial support from the PTO enables classrooms to have the supplies and educational materials they need to support learning.

3. Professional Development:

At FSES, professional development opportunities directly relate back to student learning. For example, our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are regularly focused upon curriculum, instructional strategies, and technology which directly impact our student learning. Meetings are held bi-weekly before school as a means of offering collaborative time for teachers to discuss these topics. As part of these meetings, our instructional coaches offer insight and support into new ideas, research-based practices, and general areas of clarification. Additionally, beginning of the year and subsequent professional development days throughout the school year address both building and district goals (cooperative learning, student talk, student engagement, best practices, school environment and professional growth). Another means in which teachers are offered professional growth opportunities is through building meetings held bi-annually. These meetings focus primarily on data and how it is used to modify or impact instruction. At these meetings, curriculum, content standards, and instructional practices are integral in the conversation when determining next steps for student learning at each grade level. Teachers meet with their grade level peer, principal, reading intervention specialist, and instructional coaches. By pulling all of these resources together, teachers are able to feel supported and better able to have their professional needs addressed.

In addition to what is offered at FSES, the CASD offers various opportunities for teachers to be supported in growing their professional knowledge. One example of this idea is our summer offerings for trainings. Teachers are able to select a workshop of their choosing. Workshops are designed to support, enrich, and further educate staff on best practices currently in effect. They are facilitated by instructional coaches and teachers who have exemplified these practices in their classrooms. After school workshops are offered in a similar manner periodically throughout the school year. Also, CASD has uniquely embedded the bulk of our professional development opportunities through instructional coaching. Teachers are able to collaborate with content area coaches throughout the school year. This year (2016-2017), individual teachers were offered the opportunity to work with their coach for a dedicated period of time in order to address needs, concerns, and next steps. As a whole, instructional coaches offer the opportunity for peer visits, co-taught lessons, feedback regarding concerns, co-planning of lessons, assistance with researching curricular concerns, book studies and so much more.

Along with teacher development, the building principal has been recently recognized as a NISL Distinguished Principal. Along with this recognition comes additional training and the opportunity to coach other principals new to the profession. The building principal also regularly attends district held administrative workshops designed to further discuss instruction best practices and similar topics.

4. School Leadership:

There is a collaborative leadership approach at FSES. While there is a building principal and head teacher, staff are often involved in making decisions that directly impact student learning. For example, the building focus for each year is discussed and determined based upon the input from the different staff members. Discussion regarding data and overall trends lead to a determined area of focus that the entire school is able to target. Various committees are formed at the beginning of the year where staff collaborate and coordinate overall school activities. Some of these committees include the Green Team, the Field Day Team, Math/Science Day, SOAR, Lead Team, and PSSA.

New this school year (2016-2017), is our Lead team. This team includes two classroom teachers (one primary and one intermediate), instructional coaches, reading specialist, and the building principal. Much of the discussion this year has been about the data gathered during walk through observations. The team holds discussions related to what is going well in addition to areas that may need to be improved. The takeaways from these meetings are shared with the faculty in order to continue moving our instructional practices in a direction that impacts student learning. The expectation is that this team will evolve into a group who will represent the staff and aid in making key decisions that positively impact the overall student learning experience.

Another leadership team in the building is our Core Team. This group consists of the building principal, school counselor, school psychologist, and the reading intervention specialist. This team meets on a monthly basis to review information supplied by the classroom teacher regarding students of concern. This team then reviews the academic, behavioral, social or combination of concerns to determine what steps are most appropriate in order to assist the student in question. Often from these meetings, parent meetings are set up which involve Core Team members, the homeroom teacher, and parents. These collaborative meetings allow for a team approach to address individual student needs at a different level.

Overall, the building principal and head teacher work collaboratively to problem solve and resolve issues throughout the course of the school day. Due to this effort, there is very little interruption to student learning. An example of this idea is disruptive students. Both the building principal and head teacher work to remove students from the classroom so that the remaining students do not have continued interruptions to their learning.

As a result of this combined leadership approach, students are afforded an environment which promotes a focus on learning.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

FSES has many moving parts that contribute to student success. However, they can all be summarized to the idea that FSES strives to encourage teamwork and collaboration with high quality student learning as the primary building focus.

FSES staff work together to make our school a success in many ways. From scheduled meetings to teacher prompted collaboration, the staff in this building continuously communicates to achieve a cohesive and productive working and learning environment. Teachers work together to create common goals for themselves and their students. They participate in peer collaboration projects to continuously improve their instructional practices. Cross curricular instruction is planned, cross grade level relationships are fostered, and school initiatives are developed. While data is often an integral part of these collaborations, the well-being of students and their academic, social, and emotional growth are at the forefront of all initiatives.

High quality student learning is evident in our school. For this type of learning to occur, students must feel safe and valued, which is the heart of our school. All staff works as a team and are instrumental in ensuring this well-being. Every staff member communicates clear and high expectations to students regarding all aspects of their school experience. Students are expected to act and interact with kindness, respect, and determination as reflected in our school vision statement. They are given the tools to do so through daily interactions with staff, communication with parents, and cooperation with peers. These expectations are modeled by the adults in the building on a daily basis. Not only do our teachers work with students daily, but our school secretary, nurse, aides, custodian, cafeteria staff, and countless volunteers play an integral role in a student's day. They, too, provide a positive and safe setting for learning to occur through their caring interactions with our students. As a result of these expectations, a culture of respect and hard work fosters an atmosphere for high quality learning. For this environment of learning to exist, our staff consistently works together to ensure each student is able to meet our high expectations.

We are very proud of our school and its many accomplishments.