

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Dr. Elaine K. Meils

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

Official School Name Tarpon Springs Fundamental Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 400 E. Harrison Street

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

Tarpon Springs FL 34689-4599  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Pinellas

Telephone (727) 943-5508

Fax (727) 942-5443

Web site/URL http://www.tarponfund-  
es.pinellas.k12.fl.us

E-mail oakesh@pcsb.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. Michael Grego

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail gregom@pcsb.org

District Name Pinellas District Tel. (727) 588-6000

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Rene Flowers

(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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 77 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 21 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 18 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 116 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
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	25	29	54
<b>1</b>	20	16	36
<b>2</b>	18	18	36
<b>3</b>	17	19	36
<b>4</b>	35	31	66
<b>5</b>	19	25	44
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	134	138	272

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 85 % White
  - 2 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: <01%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	270
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<01

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

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

Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Greek

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %  
Total number students who qualify: 74

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
28 Total number of students served

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

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>22</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	97%	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 2017.

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

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

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2006

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

In collaboration with families, we will provide a safe, nurturing environment which inspires lifelong learning and fosters responsible citizenship.

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

Per district policy, students apply to attend a Fundamental program during an application period. Students are invited to attend based on a lottery system. There are some exceptions to the lottery, such as proximity radius to the school, sibling priority, children of full-time staff member and military family status. There are no qualifications to attend other than residency within the county.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

---

Tarpon Springs Fundamental Elementary (Tarpon Fundamental), home of the Tarpon Tigers was established in 1980 in the town of Tarpon Springs, Florida. Tarpon Springs is known for its Greek culture and influence. Experienced sponge divers from Greece settled in Tarpon Springs and developed an industry that continues to flourish today. Each January, Tarpon Springs hosts the largest Epiphany celebration in the Western Hemisphere. While Tarpon Springs only has a population of approximately 23,000, the town's population doubles during the Epiphany celebration. Tarpon Springs is located on the picturesque Spring Bayou just a paddle away from the Gulf of Mexico. The charm of this small town permeates into the fabric of our school.

Tarpon Fundamental is the smallest, public elementary school in Pinellas County with a student population of 272 kindergarten through fifth grade students. We are also one of five Fundamental elementary schools in Pinellas County. Our school has flourished as an academic success for the past thirty-eight years. Tarpon Fundamental's student body and staff represent a blend of both our small town community, as well as a picture of many towns within the district. As a Fundamental school, students from all over Pinellas County may apply through a district managed choice lottery system. Year after year, the number of applications far exceeds the number of available seats. Currently, our student population ranges from children with special needs to gifted and high performing. Our school community includes many nationalities with students who speak and write multiple languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Greek to name a few.

In Pinellas County, Fundamental schools maintain a focus on a "back-to-basics" structure with an emphasis on student responsibility, a strict dress code and mandatory parent involvement. At Tarpon Fundamental, the primary emphasis is on the development of each student through the incorporation of a growth-mindset attitude centered on a love of learning while promoting success in academics and student responsibility. Our school's vision of "100% Student Success" guides our mission statement and core values. Our mission statement is prominently displayed on our campus and serves as a daily reminder that "in collaboration with families, we will provide a safe, nurturing environment which inspires lifelong learning and fosters responsible citizenship". Several years ago, teachers and staff came together to express in words what we practice each day. The result of this collaboration was the creation and formulation of the following core values: (1) we value and believe that learning is a collaboration between school and family, (2) we believe in educating the whole child, (3) we believe in promoting a positive, growth mindset and the opportunity to learn from mistakes, (4) we value responsible citizens who hold themselves accountable for their academic performance and behavior, (5) we value professionalism and a willingness to collaborate and support one another, and (6) we believe in finding meaning and joy in our work and promoting fun in the workplace.

In 2006, Tarpon Springs Fundamental was awarded the National Blue Ribbon School Award. This recognition has served as a point of pride, as well as an awakening of how high our standards had been set. As we reflect on the prior recognition of the Blue Ribbon Award, the climate, vision and philosophy had not changed, and the expectation for continued growth of each of our students has continued. The honor of being a recipient of a National Blue Ribbon Award has become part of our school identity. The 2008 school year began under the guidance of a new principal who has built upon prior successes with a vision for future and continued success.

While maintaining high academic standards, we continually implement routines that foster positive relationships with our students and families. Our staff reflects on the evolving needs of our student body with an approach that welcomes new ideas. As an example, our morning routine has developed and grown into a culture of unity. In brief, students gather on the Physical Education (P.E.) court and participate in a walk-about where they have the opportunity to walk and talk with students from all grade levels. When the arrival bell rings the principal greets each student at the doorway as they enter the building. Students progress to their classroom where their teachers greet them with a high five, hug or handshake. This daily practice signals to each child that they are a valued member of our school family where learning and developing involves more than books and paper.

In our school community, we take full advantage of opportunities to create deep and long lasting

relationships with one another, the students and their families. Genuine, caring relationships are created, fostered and grow to be reciprocal in nature. In our opinion, this is the key to our positive, safe learning environment where students learn from mistakes, challenge themselves, collaborate with peers and experience success. At Tarpon Fundamental each student is embraced and celebrated as both a learner and a child.

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

---

### **1. Core Curriculum:**

English Language Arts (ELA) - Our core curriculum is driven by research-based practices and curriculum materials proven to be effective in moving students toward meeting grade level expectations as defined by the Language Arts Florida Standards. These standards correspond with and complement the anchor standards that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate. The anchor standards for reading include: Key Ideas and Detail; Craft and Structure; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas; and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity. The anchor standards for writing include: Text Types and Purposes; Production and Distribution of Writing; Research to Build and Present Knowledge.

Our school district has developed a Modules Curriculum for ELA which is designed for students to have a balance of reading, writing, speaking and listening opportunities with text complexity, informational and literary text, text dependent questions, literacy across content, academic vocabulary, and evidence-based writing embedded into daily practices. Foundational skills are integrated into the Modules, encompassing the whole range of standards. These skills are built beginning in the primary grades (K-2) and continue to grow throughout the intermediate grades (3-5) through enhanced and explicit instruction that follows a developmental reading continuum. Jan Richardson's "Guided Reading Routine" is a program we implement to develop skills from alphabet knowledge to phonetics to vocabulary, and reading and comprehending a variety of text as part of the teaching. In addition, "Istation" is a prescriptive software program implemented to provide text and activities to students for the purpose of practicing reading skills at their reading level.

Mathematics - The Florida Standards for mathematics are two-fold: content standards and practice standards both supporting and enhancing the development of the other. The mathematical practice standards focus on the processes and proficiency used when problem solving. The standards of mathematical content are a balanced combination of procedure and understanding and are organized by domains, clusters, and standards. Mathematical knowledge begins with foundational learning in kindergarten and is built upon each subsequent grade in the following domains: Operations and Algebraic Thinking; Number and Operations in Base Ten; Number and Operations - Fractions; Measurement and Data; and Geometry. Our district provides a bank of recommended resources to support mastery of the standards. "Go Math!" by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is the district adopted resource. It is a standards-based core program with a plethora of instructional materials and assessments for Tiers 1, 2 and 3. One example is a "Mathematical Formative Assessment System managed by "Collaborate, Plan, Align, Learn, Motivate, Share". Teachers use a variety of formative assessments which are software adaptable programs used with students to provide content based on their current ability level. A unique feature of our math instruction from kindergarten through fifth grade is how teachers allow students to work through rigorous mathematical problems. Students are encouraged to experience a struggle within a supportive learning environment. Teachers act as facilitator reminding students to use their growth mindset and to persevere through complex and multi-step problems.

Science - Our science curriculum is based on the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards focusing on specific concepts under the strands of Earth, Life and Physical Science. Students are exposed to science concepts throughout their elementary years making it possible for in-depth, conceptual knowledge to be developed. The Nature of Science is integrated into science instruction as students learn about the tools of science, observation, performing experiments, etc.

In the area of Earth Science, gravity, patterns of day and night, space, weather and climate, rocks, minerals, and soil, renewable and non-renewable resources are some of the concepts. Life Science topics include the life cycles of plants and animals, as well as an understanding of the human body. Physical Science teaches about movement and direction, pushes and pulls, balanced and unbalanced forces; the various states of matter; energy, magnetic forces, physical and chemical changes in materials to name a few. We also have an interactive Science Lab utilized by students in grades 2 through 5. The lab gives additional hands-on experiences in each of the strands of science. It is equipped with tools and materials that supplement foundational concepts taught in the classroom. Teachers attend district-level training pertaining to activities

and lessons within the lab setting.

Students in grades two through five have the opportunity participate in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) club after school one day per week. The STEM enrichment club is facilitated by classroom teachers, offering one club per grade level.

Social Studies - Social Studies includes historical inquiry and analysis that helps students develop an understanding of our historical past and its effect on our future. The depth of knowledge expands to comparing people, events, cultural celebrations and holidays from the past through modern times. Students experience this knowledge through instruction, text, videos, project-based learning, debates, presentations and integrated technology formats. Class field trips include a third-grade visit to Florida Cracker Country located in Tampa, a fourth-grade trip to St. Augustine and a fifth-grade trip to Tallahassee. Florida Cracker Country is a living, history museum that invites students to participate in activities such as churning butter, candle making and washboard cleaning from Florida's early rural heritage. As the oldest city in the country, the St. Augustine field trip builds upon the students' in class study of Florida history, including a visit to the Castillo de San Marcos, Spanish Military Hospital, Ponce De Leon Fountain of Youth, and a walking tour of the historic St. George Street. Our fifth-grade trip to the state's capitol, Tallahassee, reveals current government processes in action that enhance their study of local and state government. These hands-on field trips immerse students in real experiences that allow them to form connections between their lives and the lives of people from Florida's past and present.

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

Arts - Visual - Students in K-5 receive weekly instruction on the Florida Next Generation State Standards in drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media, digital media, sculpture and ceramics. Students are exposed to all of the basic Elements and Principles of art and design, laying down a foundation that students' will use in both middle and high school, and for the rest of their lives. Our school is equipped with the latest technology, including access to the internet, as well as an interactive Smart Board so students may fully engage and participate in the learning process. Students also have access to an iPad Art Lab with numerous art making applications, enabling each student the ability to produce digital artwork, photography and movies.

Student advocacy is a top priority in our visual arts department and our art instructor takes every opportunity to display student artwork throughout our campus and numerous exhibits throughout the community, in turn boosting students' self-esteem.

Art - Performing - Students in K-5 receive weekly instruction in music. Literacy development in both language and music acquisition is stimulated through the child's interaction in music class as they build upon prior knowledge through the sensory experiences of music and song. Musical instruments are woven into the curriculum and include percussion, Orff instruments and recorders. Throughout the school year, students in every grade level are provided the opportunity to perform vocally and instrumentally at designated PTA meetings. Students are also provided after school opportunities to participate in the school chorus and violin program. Students in fifth-grade participate in the All-County Choral and Violin program.

The school drama club is a popular after-school enrichment club for fourth and fifth-grade students. The club is facilitated by parent volunteers and meets on a weekly basis. This year's production is "Annie".

Physical Education - Physical Education/Health - Students in grades K-5 attend Physical Education (P.E.) class three times per week with the P.E. teacher and receive a health class (often referred to as a recess) with their classroom teacher two times per week. Florida's physical education standards are organized around four strands: Movement Competency, Cognitive Abilities, Lifetime Fitness, Responsible Behaviors and Values. These strands are relevant across all grade levels, K-5, and provide unifying threads of understanding. Essential skills acquired through the physical education curriculum have a strong connection to the essential skills attained in the core curriculum. P.E. classes cover a range of activities including teaching basic skills of various sports, health, fitness, teamwork, sportsmanship and cooperation. P.E. classes are often referred to by students as a favorite part of their school day! The Coach/P.E. teacher begins

the class with student warm-ups emphasizing physical fitness and incorporates many life lessons throughout his interactions with students. In the spring of every school year, a popular field day is conducted.

Technology/Library/Media - Library, media and technology curriculum focus on engaging students individually in the process of learning. Lessons are taught that benefit students utilizing library skills, technology usage and information literacy aligned to classroom curriculum instruction. Students are taught how to seek information through digital sources, as well as traditional library collections. Technology lessons emphasize responsible digital citizenship, collaboration with peers on developing inquiry based projects, and effective use of software tools to create products. "Maker Spaces" have been incorporated into the library curriculum to support student curiosity and exploration on a variety of subjects. Examples would include circuitry, coding and 3D printing. These opportunities encourage students to make connections to prior knowledge and the real world. Students are encouraged to participate in national, state and district literacy initiatives such as "Read Across America", Literacy Week, "Jim Harbin Education Media Awards" and the "Sunshine State Young Readers Award" competition. In addition, a school-based reading incentive program designed to motivate and reward students for reading a variety of books focusing on different genres helps to support the school reading goal.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

At Tarpon Fundamental we celebrate diverse learning needs and styles. In order to meet the needs of each student, we implement a variety of instructional methods, interventions and assessments. Grade level teams meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to discuss strategies to meet the needs of all their students. During these PLC meetings, teachers create lesson plans to differentiate teaching materials and design high order thinking questions that meet the various needs of all students with a critical eye on the top 25% and lowest 25% of learners, as well as English Language Learners (ELL). Ideas for lesson plans and original teaching materials are a result of analysis and reflection of student data from sources such as Istation, Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments, running records, formative assessments, anecdotal records, observations and ST Math.

The School Based Leadership Team (SBLT) consists of the principal, grade level teachers, curriculum specialist, counselor/intervention coordinator and may also include the teacher of gifted, media specialist, and/or school psychologist, as needed. During these monthly SBLT meetings, the team analyzes the most recent data for all students and then collaborates on targeted interventions and monitoring systems within the state's "Response to Intervention" (RtI) process. Progress monitoring is conducted with fidelity on all students that classify at Tier 2 or Tier 3.

These SBLT meetings also include discussions and analysis of lesson plans, student behavior, curriculum updates and any other support needed. Additionally, district level specialists and coaches often attend the SBLT meetings to offer and explain district initiatives relevant to the needs of our students and classroom teachers.

The following is an example of these processes in action over a three-year period. Several years ago during a third-grade SBLT meeting, a grade level teacher shares her concerns about a student's reading deficiency based upon running records, Istation, district assessments, formative assessments and teacher observations. The teacher also expressed concerns regarding this student's self-esteem and intrinsic motivation. During the SBLT meeting, the team reflected on data and teacher observations and placed the student in Tier 2. Further action steps included before and after school tutoring, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) reading interventions, small group instruction with a focus on his targeted areas of need within reading. Furthermore, multiple parent-teacher conferences were held to inform the parents of concerns, interventions and progress made. During this process, the media specialist researched and provided the parents with appropriate educational reading applications for use at home. Progress monitoring graphs were shared and explained to the parents at each conference. The SBLT also consistently monitored the student's data and as a reflected and adjusted his intervention plan as needed. At the encouragement of his teacher, he joined the Drama Club. His experiences with drama offered him opportunities and outlets to express himself through music and dance. It is our belief that through these interventions, opportunities and in collaboration with his supportive family, this student's self-esteem increased and in turn, awakened his intrinsic motivation for

academic success. This student's progress continues to be monitored. At a recent fifth-grade SBLT meeting, the curriculum specialist shared his MAP data from the fall of 2017 to the winter of 2018 showing increased Rasch Unit Scale (RIT) scores in ELA, math and science. He is currently exceeding grade level reading expectations!

As a high performing school, we provide rigorous tasks to meet the needs of high performing students. Teachers are planning for the highest 25% in lesson planning, implementing Marzano Taxonomy (Question Stems, Products, Terms and Phrases), creating higher order thinking questions wherein students are afforded opportunities to apply and use knowledge within specific situations. Specific examples include implementation of "Engage New York" math curriculum in lieu of district purchased curriculum for all fifth-grade students, Learning Boards to support student mastery of standards, and an after-school kindergarten book club that includes project-based learning opportunities. Our school prides itself on the implementation of Document-based Question (DBQ) learning wherein students analyze primary and secondary sources. Document based questioning allows students to interact with text (written, graphic, illustrated, etc.) linked to an essential question, followed by collaboration and discussion of meaning, making inferences and creating a persuasive argument to answer the original essential question.

Other opportunities that support the maintenance and growth of our high performing students include participation in academic and creative competitions such as Odyssey of the Mind, Mighty Mu Math Competition, Super Scientist, Educational Media Awards and the PTA Reflections program.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Tarpon Fundamental values and believes in educating the whole child. Teachers support the idea of a positive growth mindset. We also value responsible citizens who hold themselves accountable for their academic performance and behavior. Our school uphold's the following five "Guidelines for Success" which include the safety and respect for others. 1) Think Responsibly, 2) Show Respect, 3) Focus on Learning, 4) Expect the Best, 5) Safety First. Students are expected to follow these guidelines at all times within the school environment. Each classroom has the "Guidelines for Success" displayed. These expectations are tied to each teacher's individual classroom behavior system. Expectations at Tarpon Fundamental are consistently upheld. School-wide, we review the expectations on a first day assembly with the principal, through monthly newsletters, each morning on the announcements and through a common language throughout the school. School-wide gatherings reteach this common language. Students are recognized with "paws" for following these guidelines and a lunch date with the principal. Additional ways students are recognized is through their writings being displayed within hallways, morning news recognition and special "Tigerrific Awards".

The school counselor develops and administers classroom lessons each month to students, which focus on the Guidelines for Success, study habits and social skills development. Students identified by the teacher, or within a SBLT meeting, as needing additional emotional support are invited to attend a small group opportunity with the counselor to focus on specific social/emotional needs. Students identified as requiring additional academic supports are moved to Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions. Students are identified as needing further social/emotional supports meet regularly with the counselor either in a small group or individually on a weekly basis. These meetings are tailored with lessons that meet the student's needs.

Teachers feel valued and supported in a variety of areas. Most importantly, through monthly SBLT meetings, teacher needs are discussed and addressed regularly. Ideas and requests are met with an open mind and a focus on what is right for students. Through the support of administration the purchase of research-based educational programs proposed by teachers come to fruition such as "Hands on Problem Solving" and "Leveled Literacy Intervention".

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Tarpon Fundamental prides itself on a vibrant and active parent involvement base. In fact, our families log over 5,000 volunteer hours each year. On any given day, you will see parents throughout our hallways helping in various ways both inside and outside our classrooms. Our school's Family and Community Liaison coordinates, encourages and acquires volunteers for our smaller day to day needs, as well as larger commitments such as student mentoring, the Great American Teach-In and chaperoning field trips. Our parents are an incredible energy force within our school. Parents are involved not only in the day-to-day lives of their own children, but eager to step up for leadership roles within our school, such as the School Advisory Council (SAC) and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The SAC meets monthly to address any school concerns or areas of improvement. New ideas are shared and implemented for school improvement and safety. SAC meetings are attended by those who are voted in as members. Our PTA board is also extremely involved, creating engaging monthly meetings for all parents and staff. The PTA board plans and organizes a Spring Fling event for all children, families and staff of our school. This event brings together our school community in a fun evening of food, games and music. There are multiple opportunities for families to come together as a community to celebrate our incredible educational environment. Examples include a winter and spring concert, a volunteer appreciation breakfast, a Thanksgiving luncheon, a parent book club and quarterly assemblies (PAWssemblies) where students receive recognition for their academic, athletic, artistic and civic accomplishments. Our school regularly informs parents of school events through a variety of school to home communication. Weekly emails and phone calls from our principal share news of importance as well as upcoming events for the week ahead. A monthly newsletter sent to all families shares news from school. The PTA also sends a newsletter each month to share news and encourage parent involvement. At Tarpon Fundamental, parents are required to

attend three parent/teacher conferences per year. These conferences provide teachers time to share student growth with each individual parent, as well as any further necessary supports. Should a student require additional acceleration or further interventions of support, a meeting is held with the school support team and parent(s) to find ways to best implement these needs. Closely monitored data are shared with parents regularly. These parent conferences are crucial to the success of every student. The home/school connection allows for a team of support for our students. Nearby, we have two community organizations; Cops 'n Kids and the Citizens Alliance for Progress. Students are invited to attend after school programs at both locations for free tutoring and school support. Several of our parents are tied to local businesses which sponsor our school by making donations of food and student incentives.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Professional development is critical for our teachers' growth in order to maintain their superior pedagogical standards. Though it is an expectation of the district and principal, our staff goes above and beyond to continually improve themselves as educators. Teachers believe it is their responsibility to keep up-to-date with the latest research in best practices in order to provide students with an enriched education. One important area of focus is "Culturally Responsive Instruction" (CRI). This practice allows the teachers to connect students to academic content through lessons that reflect awareness and understanding of cultural referents and resources that are meaningful to students, thus bridging the academic achievement gap.

Aligned with CRI is "Universal Design for Learning" (UDL), which is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal access and opportunities to learn. Our teachers use student data to drive their instruction and have participated in multiple levels of training not only on how to interpret data, but how to use that data to develop lessons to fit the specific needs of their students. Teachers are mindful of the various achievement levels and learning styles within their own classroom and make sure they are current in their practice by attending workshops focusing on English Language Learners, gifted learners, students with learning disabilities, students with Autism and those with physical and mental challenges. It is our goal to reduce barriers to the curriculum and optimize levels of challenge and support to meet the needs of all learners. Our staff receives monthly curriculum updates from the district with an emphasis on increasing the rigor in core instruction and moving from a teacher-centered environment to a student-centered environment, thus increasing the cognitive demand of student tasks. Another area of professional development our teachers engage in is in the area of technology. From using technology in kindergarten, computer coding at all grade levels, to administering assessments and retrieving data, etc. technology is an integral part of education and teachers continually hone their skills and knowledge.

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

The leadership philosophy of our school is one of supporting all stakeholders and respecting students' different styles of learning to engage their growth in a variety of ways. The principal oversees all aspects of the school and there are no additional administrators assigned to the school. The week begins with a Monday morning Operational Team meeting led by the principal and those involved with the daily operations of the school including the front office staff, counselor, media specialist, cafeteria manager and head plant operator. The plans for the week are discussed and responsibilities assigned as needed. In addition, the principal has a leadership team comprised of the counselor, media specialist, curriculum specialist and three teacher representatives, one from primary grades, intermediate grades and the teacher of gifted. Within this team, which meets on a monthly basis, the team provides input to the principal on agenda items and collects input from grade level teams and specialists to provide further input to the principal for her consideration in decision-making. The principal also relies on individual members of this team to support the daily operations of the school, i.e. curriculum, technology, social and emotional issues.

The principal's expectation is that all teachers will grow in their practice throughout the year according to their "Deliberate Practice Plan" (DPP). Professional development is provided on campus to all teachers for general curriculum updates, as well as at the district level for individual teacher goals. The school-based training provided this year included restorative practice training which was provided by a team of teachers who attended summer training along with the principal. The goal of this training was in alignment with our mission of implementing a culture of caring with the classroom environment which is an expectation of the

principal. Teachers are also provided opportunities to attend state and national conferences to grow within their practice. Examples include the International Reading Conference and the National Association for Gifted Education Conference.

The principal reviews lesson plans and student data on a weekly basis. She knows the learners within the school environment and is passionate about servicing their needs. In preparation with grade level or individual teacher meetings, she analyzes data and observes students through classroom walk through's so that she is knowledgeable to discuss learner needs. She also conducts four observations per year for each instructional teacher to understand how learner needs are being addressed.

The principal recommends that teachers provide and are compensated for before/after school remediation/enrichment opportunities to address the talents of learners. As a result, over twenty enrichment clubs have been developed and sustained within the past ten years.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

Building genuine, caring relationships is the one practice that has proven to be most instrumental to our school's success. This practice begins with school tours offered to any interested family prior to the application period. Upon acceptance to our Fundamental program, families are encouraged to register in person where they are welcomed by our family-community liaison, data-management technician and principal. Prior to attending in the fall, new families attend a spring orientation and are invited to meet and socialize with current families and staff members at our annual school-wide Spring Fling. These three occasions act as a springboard for the foundation of deep and long-lasting relationships.

Family connections are evident every day. In compliance with Fundamental policy, parents are required to provide transportation to and from school, as well as sign agendas and homework assignments each day. These practices allow for daily two-way communication opportunities to share news of student progress, celebrate successes and gain insight into student needs. Parents and grandparents are a constant presence on campus serving in various volunteer capacities. We also welcome former students back on campus for after-school volunteer opportunities. Former students have assisted with activities such as our drama productions, classroom libraries, TV production club and STEM club.

Not only do strong relationships allow us to know each family on a deeper level, these relationships establish a trust between staff, students and parents that foster open and honest conversations regarding student growth. Teachers receive continuous feedback from the principal through the Marzano evaluation model. Monthly SBLT meetings allow teachers a voice to request support and weekly grade level PLC meetings encourage teamwork. Students also thrive with continual and current feedback related to their personal academic gains. Parent conferences are unique in that parents and teachers engage in meaningful conversations regarding the progress of the whole child. During these conferences, parents and teachers share information in a quiet, meaningful and individualized setting. Information shared creates a more complete picture that enables the teacher and parent to understand fully the academic, social and emotional needs of the child.

The building of deep relationships does not only occur bell-to-bell. Our school proudly offers over twenty before/after school activities, clubs and teams sponsored by staff, families and community members. These enrichment opportunities unfold and cultivate the talents and interests of the whole child.

It is our sincere hope that strong bonds built and nurtured at Tarpon Fundamental will lay the foundation for a lifetime of outstanding academic and social experiences for our children.