

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	50	48	98
4	52	34	86
5	0	0	0
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	102	82	184

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 16 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 76 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 7%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	11
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	166
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%
0 Total number ELL

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

Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, Spanish, English

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21%
Total number students who qualify: 38

8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %
34 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>4</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 3
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, 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.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 12:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	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 2018.

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

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.

Work collaboratively to motivate students to reach their potential through meaningful programs, outstanding teaching, and 21st century experiences to lead us responsibly into the future.

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

Little Falls School No. 3 (School 3) is housed in the historic and economically diverse community of Little Falls, a township deep rooted in fellowship and tradition. School 3, erected in 1914, is the home to 167 third and fourth grade students from a variety of backgrounds. With 22.8% economically disadvantaged, and 21% with disabilities, students are exposed to and develop empathy for diversity. Our students' families own local establishments, serve as parish clergy, belong to the police and fire departments, teach within our schools, and are very active in community organizations.

Academic, social, and emotional growth are supported through collaboration with teachers, parents, counselors, and administrators to help meet the needs of each individual student. Through the various methods of technology, parents, staff, and students are able to interact and work together to help each student succeed. This is facilitated through our 1:1 chromebook initiative in addition to access to iPad use. There is constant communication between teachers and parents on student programs, progress, and behavior.

Teachers at School 3 provide students opportunities to be active participants in the learning process. Students are provided with self-monitoring key rings, called flight cards. These cards use a 1-4 rating scale and are used by students to continuously assess themselves throughout the day based on the I can standards in each content area. This engaging practice reinforces that students know and understand the goals and objectives for the day as they remain accountable for their own learning.

Additionally, students routinely set goals and remain aware of their growth as learners. These opportunities are delivered through the implementation of Growth Mindset/Student Data Tracking folders in each classroom. Students monitor their growth weekly, monthly, and each trimester. The purpose of these folders is to allow students to set goals, work toward these goals, and feel a sense of accomplishment when the goals are reached.

School 3 is a comfortable, secure place where students feel confident and eager to learn. Through the staff's display of respect, students are provided a place to be themselves as well as focus on their well-being. Throughout the school year there are multiple classroom lessons provided by the school counselor that focus on social, emotional, and academic growth. These include but are not limited to: friendships, healthy living, kindness, social media, mindfulness and growth mindset. We are committed to working with each student to be the very best version of themselves. In addition to classroom lessons, we use our weekly Friday meetings to promote mindfulness. Through our Friday meetings we read poems, shout out individual students for random acts of kindness, practice school-wide yoga, engage in deep breathing and 3,2,1 self-reflection activities. Each week we pick a goal that relates to the student/school wellness and work with the students to achieve that specific goal. We often keep the students motivated by planning events, activities, and earning prizes.

The relationships formed with community and school support organizations are important and help to foster our climate and traditions. School 3 is located near the parks adjacent to the Passaic River. This provides for the perfect location for an outdoor classroom. Through the generosity of the PTA in conjunction with the local, nonprofit organization City Green, students grow a variety of different crops over the course of three planting times a year. Students take ownership in tending to the garden and partake in the delicious harvest during lunch and snack time. A proud tradition for the fourth graders is the trip to New York City to visit a Broadway show. Each year, the Little Falls Education Foundation grants this opportunity and teachers provide the students with a learning experience that aligns with the message of the show they are going to see. Lastly, the school's association with the township library provides students with an easy way to obtain a library card, quick and convenient access to resources for students and teachers, as well as a system of academic support for families.

Flexibility among the staff helps to support the whole child approach to learning. While each teacher belongs to a department, teacher teams are fluid and work together to support students. In addition, teachers put together cross-curricular projects to enhance this type of collaboration. For example, the music department works with language arts teachers to create two concerts each year that families have come to

look forward to. The Veterans Day concert honors local veterans from the community and families. The academic year closes with the annual Fourth Grade Memory Concert which helps celebrate the fourth graders as they move onto the middle school. Both concerts leave lasting memories on the hearts of students, staff, and families.

It is very important to the staff and administration of School 3 that we are developing and nurturing students to become self-driven learners who will continue to embrace that mindset for the rest of their lives.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The English language arts curriculum at School 3 utilizes a balanced literacy approach to develop life long readers with the ability to apply literacy skills in all settings. Teachers create lessons using the Mondo Publishing Bookshop Program, various novels and mentor texts, as well as teacher created materials. The district’s curriculum is well-developed and continuously updated online. It provides a scope and sequence that ensures teachers have access to a comprehensive plan for mastering each of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs) utilizing cooperative learning and differentiated instruction.

The core of our instruction encompasses cross-curricular reading units that develop skills through narratives, poetry, novel studies, and expository/informative texts. The ELA curriculum is broken into nine topics including narrative novel study, navigating non-fiction, biography, animal tales, analyzing literary and informational text, and understanding myths and legends to name a few. All units begin with an essential question that guides them through learning, practice, and mastery. In addition, both grades have units rich in science and social studies content including How America Began, Investigating Weather, Barrier Breakers, Investigating the Changing Earth, and Regional Geography in America. These units specifically lend themselves to students fully engaging in the topics across various content areas. For example, when teaching Barrier Breakers, students are introduced to the unit by reflecting on how analyzing the challenges others face help us in our own lives. This conversation is fostered during multiple content area classes. Students then read Jackie Robinson: Man of Courage during both ELA and social studies. The teachers engage the students in a variety of reading, writing, and speaking lessons which culminate with the presentation of why they feel the naming of Jackie Robinson as Rookie of the year was such an important event.

Both individually and in teams, teachers analyze data. Then, teachers set learning goals that meet the individualized needs of their students. Students also collect, track, and analyze their own assessment data in order to set individualized learning goals. This allows students to monitor their own progress toward grade level mastery of NJSLs. This analysis identifies students who need to be placed into tiered supports. Our support plan includes small group instruction, Orton Gillingham, and BOOST.

Most importantly, teachers collaborate, reflect, and make changes to the spiraling curriculum. Through weekly Professional Learning Communities and staff meetings, teachers continuously look for ways to ensure learning is student driven and engaging, ultimately optimizing student success.

1b. Mathematics:

The mathematics curriculum at Little Falls School 3 has been designed to build understanding of key concepts such as number sense, algebra, measurement, geometry, data analysis, and probability over time using Math in Focus as the resource that guides our instruction. The program provides all teachers a scope and sequence for concepts and student outcomes, while delivering families a clear picture of expectations. The standards and subsequently the curriculum at School 3 provide students with an opportunity to be engaged in the learning process and share their knowledge through authentic formative and summative assessments.

At School 3, we offer a meaningful and challenging mathematics curriculum. Students learn content aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards NJSLs. Third graders begin with a basic understanding of place value, multiplication, division, word problems, area, perimeter, and fractions. By fourth grade, students begin solving more complex problems with mixed numbers, fractions, and multiple operations. Concepts are introduced and taught, then strategically revisited and reinforced to provide students the time and skills needed to achieve mastery. Student level of expertise is monitored through formative assessment, summative assessment, and self-monitoring. The use of a flipped classroom approach where students can

watch, learn, and practice with the aid of a math video adds to the dynamic instruction of the teachers. The flipped classroom is also a student centered approach that allows learners to monitor, reflect, and revisit lessons on their own time to support and enhance their learning.

Individual student needs are addressed in a multitude of ways. Teacher differentiation, a systematic approach in the classroom, and our Boost program have enabled us to further address these needs. Students performing below, at, or above grade level can develop or enhance skills through our remediation and enrichment programs.

1c. Science:

At School 3, we are full STEAM ahead, making science come to life. Students are provided a STEAM period in addition to their regularly scheduled science classes. During this time, students are provided opportunities to self guide their own learning through a variety of different hands on and real world activities in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. Some of these activities include project-based learning, interactive notebooks, presentations, progress monitoring assessments, formative assessments, summative assessments, and teacher observations.

Utilizing the Next Generation Science Standards and TCI (Teacher's Curriculum Institute), students are provided an opportunity to be engaged in the learning process and share their knowledge through authentic formative and summative assessments. Students each have a Chromebook, access to iPads, and utilize individual TCI logins. Based on their investigation through the online modules, students then use a hands-on approach to problem solve, which encourages them to design, build, inspect, and experiment with real science tools and materials.

Our science program at School 3 is a student centered and student led cross disciplinary curriculum. Students are provided with umbrella topics such as environment and living things, forces and motion, weather and climate, energy, life cycles and traits, plants and animal structure, and earth's changing surface. These topics also align to their science, math, language arts, technology and/or 21st century and career standards. Students work in cooperative groups to research and work on projects following the Engineering Design Process. Some examples include the marble run, the egg drop project, the straw bucket challenge, and super plant. During the process, students identify the problem or topic, generate ideas by researching and communicating with their peers, developing a plan, getting their plan approved, then testing and making adjustments based on results. Eventually, they present their work to the school community by displaying their work on the bulletin boards or to the local community through our annual Maker Faire.

Our hands-on, student-centred approach to science instruction engages each student, aiding in the retention of material.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

In Social Studies at School 3, we use a project-based learning approach to allow students the opportunity to explore content themes. Citizenship, government, geography, economics, and history are taught through heterogeneous and homogeneous groups, where students work collaboratively to master concepts. This approach was chosen in order to infuse the English language arts curriculum into the learning that takes place during social studies instruction. Students engage in leveled, non-fiction text about social studies content aligned to the language arts standards. Students use various forms of technology and websites such as webquests and scanning QR (quick response) codes with iPads to research topics and create presentations to share with the class. This type of learning also incorporates the speaking and listening standards into our social studies curriculum. The planned experiences in social studies are student-led and differentiated by how students learn best. Students are given activity choices to accommodate their learning style. In addition, teachers prepare enrichment activities for when students are ready to extend their learning. These provide students with opportunities to be challenged at their appropriate learning level.

Content themes are spiraled through the year and include being active citizens in and out of the classroom, rules and laws that help us live safely, how the economy affects our community, roles important Americans

have played in history, and the regions of New Jersey. In order to assess student growth and understanding, teachers use a variety of methods and activities. Many of the written activities are closely aligned with the skills that are simultaneously being taught in English language arts. Students can work at their individual pace and/or with a partner or a team to research and then present their project. We engage the entire community during our living wax museum. This event provides students the opportunity to bring a historical figure to life and showcase a piece of the social studies curriculum. The project is multidisciplinary where students research and write about their character as well as personify their historical figure through speech, costume, and body language.

Teachers use rubrics to evaluate student work and confer with students to discuss their individual learning. Additionally, teachers create benchmark assessments that incorporate the various concepts explored throughout the marking period. Teachers then analyze this collected data and reflect on student learning to make adjustments to the curriculum and instruction as needed. Our social studies curriculum and assessment is interactive, allowing students to be actively involved in their learning process.

1e. For secondary schools:

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

All students at School 3 are exposed to a variety of opportunities to engage in special subject areas that support their academic, physical and creative development. These special area classes include physical education, health, Spanish, art, general/choral/instrumental music, and STEAM/makerspace. In addition, our school counselor teaches many lessons in the classrooms on bullying, character education, self regulation, and growth mindset.

The fine arts curriculum includes art making, art history, and aesthetics. It focuses on visual problem solving and collaboration as per the National Visual Arts Creating Standard. Students receive instruction once a week where they discuss and research various influential artists and aspects of art history. Students are then tasked to apply their knowledge to their own work. Students are given tools to reach their assignment goals and instruction is differentiated through the tools and tasks given. Assessment is completed through project-based rubrics and the completion of students' written artist statements.

Our general music program meets weekly and focuses on instilling the fundamentals of music in each student. This includes reading musical notation, matching pitch with the voice, counting rhythms, and composing. These fundamentals are taught through the exploration of music from different world cultures and influential composers of music history. Assessments are mostly performance based and student learning is directed towards singing or playing an instrument to the best of their ability. Our instrumental music program focuses on learning the instrument, breath control, and notated music and is assessed through performance in weekly lessons as well as during once a week morning band rehearsal. We currently have over 50% participation from the fourth grade student body. The choral music program at School 3 helps students develop their aural and rhythmic awareness while learning about and performing music from a variety of countries, cultures, and time periods. Chorus class meets weekly as a grade level to prepare for their upcoming concerts.

Physical education includes units in motor skill development and fitness. Students learn about movement skills and concepts, strategy, sportsmanship, rules, safety, fitness, and physical activity. They are assessed using both summative and formative assessments such as the FitnessGram test, sportsmanship reflections, unit review tests, and skill tests of critical elements. This assessment data is used to create goals throughout the year and target areas of improvement for the following grade. To accommodate varied ability levels, students are provided different versions of equipment such as larger or smaller targets and objects of

different sizes or materials. The health curriculum includes the standards of wellness, integrated skills, drugs and medicine and human relationships. Wellness includes physical, mental, emotional and social health, nutrition and safety. Integrated skills include interpersonal communication, decision making and goal setting and character development.

Our STEAM program is a student centered and student led cross disciplinary curriculum that meets once a week. Students are provided with umbrella topics that align to their science, math, language arts, technology and 21st Century and Career standards. They work in cooperative groups to research and work on projects following the Engineering Design Process. Eventually, they present their work to the school community at our annual Maker Faire. Students are assessed using both formative and summative assessments. The formative assessments help guide groupings and instruction for particular groups. Typically students' summative assessments act as their finished project, providing evidence of what they have learned. Access to chromebooks and iPads enhances their research and design.

The foreign language program is an introduction to Spanish language and culture and meets once a week. It allows students to perform the most basic functions of the language and to become familiar with some elements of its culture. The emphasis is placed on the development of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The context focuses on the students' lives and experiences and includes an exposure to everyday customs and lifestyles. Grammar is integrated throughout the course and is selected according to the language needs. Students acquire insight into how languages and cultures work by comparing the target language and culture to their own. Students are assessed throughout the year through oral and written presentations and progress checks. The teacher analyzes the data from these assessments to improve future student performance.

All students at School 3 are afforded the opportunity to participate in these courses. We feel that it is important to give the students a balanced education that incorporates a variety of topics and intelligences.

3. Special Populations:

A strength of School 3 is our ability to adapt to individual students' instructional needs. We continuously determine how best to help our students succeed through assessment data analysis, student feedback, and observations. Our goal is to meet each learner at their instructional level so they can continue to grow at their pace and develop a love of learning.

In order to close the achievement gap and meet the diverse needs of the special education population at Little Falls School 3, we use a variety of interventions and techniques. We have implemented a departmentalized approach to inclusion. Each inclusion classroom has one content specific general education teacher and one special education teacher utilizing co-teaching strategies. Within these classrooms, students with special needs benefit from learning alongside their non-disabled peers, as well as receive additional daily small-group instruction according to the goals and objectives listed in their Individualized Education Plan.

In addition to the inclusion setting, we also have a Learning and Language Disabled (LLD) setting which allows us to meet the needs of our students who require more academic and social/emotional support. In our LLD classroom we use the students' IEPs to guide their instruction. We work closely with our behaviorist to create plans that will help students be successful. Sensory walk activities line the hallways for students who benefit from additional movement outside of the classroom. Our occupational and physical therapists work closely with the LLD teachers to support the student use of these sensory tools.

Small-group and individualized instruction is utilized in every classroom to address needs that arise based on assessment data collected. We address the various learning styles of all our students through multimodal strategies and tiered learning experiences. Beyond the general needs, students gain experience with tools on their chromebooks that will support their learning throughout their lives. In addition, we are committed to flexible seating options which allow students to be more collaborative, move about the learning space, be more comfortable, and encourages students to share ideas and supplies.

Students who are not supported by an IEP but are performing below grade level are referred to the Intervention and Referral Service Team. This team provides support to teachers and families for a variety of different needs whether they be academic, behavioral, social/emotional, or health related. Interventions may include programs such as Orton Gillingham, LLI (Leveled Literacy Intervention), or BOOST which supports the specific areas of need in both language arts and math.

Through tiered activities and student centered learning within the classrooms, students who are performing above grade level are challenged academically. In addition, students can be recommended by their teachers to be tested for the Gifted & Talented program. After having been nominated, multiple criteria are used to determine the eligibility of each student. The criteria that we use for the Gifted and Talented program are the SAGES-2, PARCC results, teacher nominations, and reading level. The Gifted and Talented students work with NAO Robot programming, LittleBits, MakeyMakey, STEAM activities, and computer coding. If the students have an interest we provide the tools and resources for them to grow and explore. The goals of the Gifted & Talented program are to promote higher order thinking skills, logical reasoning, creativity, and collaboration.

Whether we are tailoring assessments and instruction or providing flexible seating and interventions, at School 3, we make sure that every student has an individualized learning experience and environment.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At School 3, students experience a positive environment that supports academic, social, and emotional growth. Every Friday the entire school participates in Friday Meeting where the principal leads the students and staff in celebration, goal setting, and activities in growth mindset. During this meeting, staff and students are acknowledged for ways they were positively impactful to each other, recognized for acts of kindness, and celebrated for academic and/or recreational accomplishments. Each week at Friday Meeting, students are provided with a school-wide goal. Everyone is responsible for deciding on and monitoring progress of this goal. Throughout the week, students remind each other to stay on task and work together to complete their mission. Friday Meeting ends with a growth mindset or mindfulness strategy such as deep breathing, yoga, positive affirmation, or self-reflection. This provides students with positive emotional support. Friday Meeting is all inclusive, and the foundation for students feeling a critical sense of belonging at School 3.

Students are provided many opportunities to grow socially. Fourth grade students participate in the Student Council where they plan ways to positively impact our school as well as the community of Little Falls. Each year, through the Student Council, we are able to donate money, warm winter gloves and hats, and canned goods to community members in need. School 3 also nurtures student interest and responsibility through an assortment of extracurricular activities such as band, chorus, STEAM club, fitness club, Battle of the Books, and gardening activities.

Teachers and staff feel valued because their voices are heard by school and district level administrators. Ideas are validated, needs are met, and communication is clear and frequent. The principal uses a weekly newsletter called The Focus to ensure communication is concise. Important reminders are included as well as faculty birthdays and recognitions. This collaboration has positively impacted the school culture. As a result, administrators are able to instill a system of Learning Walks which provide teachers professional development opportunities to learn from one another in a nonthreatening manner. Teachers take a morning or afternoon to informally enter classrooms to gather ideas from each other, leaving behind uplifting notes of thanks to the teacher being observed.

Administrators acknowledge teachers' personal, school, and district-level accomplishments. Whether thank you notes and emails, recognition in the district newsletter, or celebratory lunches, there is no occasion too small for our administrators to celebrate. This has created an environment where teachers and staff feel appreciated and respected.

The Little Falls School District has created a culture where everyone feels valued and supported. Placing an emphasis on both self-care and academic growth has fostered an environment where staff and students alike strive to be the best versions of themselves.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The mission of the Little Falls School District is to work collaboratively with the community, parents, and caregivers to motivate each student to reach his/her individual potential through meaningful programs, outstanding teaching, and 21st Century learning experiences in order to lead us responsibly into the future. As such, parents, caregivers, and the community at large are an integral part of how we help our students reach their potential and their goals for the future.

Engagement at School 3 is comprised of ongoing communication, Family Curriculum Events, Talk A Latte with the Superintendent, and collaboration and partnerships with various community organizations.

Constant and effective communication between home and school is paramount. Communication methods, such as our website, Falls Flash digital newsletter, Twitter, Instagram, Friday Folder, and our district App have been instrumental in our ability to reach our parents and community in order to optimize results.

Family Curriculum Events provide parents, caregivers, and community members the opportunity to see the curriculum come to life, interact with the students and/or watch our students perform. Family Math Night, STEAM Night, Arts Fair, Winter and Spring Concerts, Veterans Day Ceremony, Living Wax Museum, 9/11 Memorial Program, American Education Week activities, Read Across America activities, and Take Your Parents To Lunch Day allow caregivers and community members the opportunity to engage with our students and staff both during school hours and more importantly after the traditional school time.

The Talk A Latte with the Superintendent program provides families and community members monthly meeting times to discuss district and school successes and challenges with the Superintendent. These events, while relaxed in nature, are structured enough to guide the conversation while informal enough to provide a friendly and natural atmosphere where all feel welcomed to participate.

We are fortunate to have the social, emotional, and tangible support of the PTA, Little Falls Education Foundation, Little Falls Library, Historical Society, Little Falls Alliance for a Better Community, Little Falls Municipal Alliance, Passaic Valley Rotary Club, Women's Club, and the Little Falls Police and Fire departments, along with many other organizations. These groups have been integral in passing a referendum, providing opportunities and supplies to our students and teachers, serving as readers and/or volunteers during school wide events, and serve on school and district committees.

Our engagement strategy has been based on the following quote by Henry Ford, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." Little Falls is a community deep rooted in tradition and good fellowship as the cement of the community. School 3 provides and seeks opportunities to be an integral part of that tradition and good fellowship.

3. Professional Development:

Our professional development is designed to support teachers and staff, promote student achievement, and improve school and district practices. Through multiple means of sharing knowledge and expertise on the district and school level, teachers are awarded these opportunities. Ongoing reflection and feedback from staff along with schoolwide and district goals help drive the various types of professional development opportunities. Teachers are encouraged to seek means to continue learning, making improvements to their own teaching as well as the curriculum. We are led not only by the administrative team, but also by professional leadership and learning strategists who provide additional guidance to support our growth.

New learning is always reflected on and shared with the staff by means of slideshows, document write-ups, as well as committee and staff meetings. Administrators encourage teachers to take the lead on the way in which new information is shared. A true community of learning takes place both daily and monthly through our school staff meetings. During these meetings, information is shared and disseminated by a group of staff members or School Improvement Panel (SciP) who meet regularly to analyze schoolwide goals. Through an interactive approach, all staff members engage in this monthly learning process. Professional development activities at School 3 are aligned with academic standards and support student achievement. For example, at weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, teachers analyze data collected from assessments and discuss ways to tailor instruction and remediate weaknesses. In addition, the District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) which is comprised of teachers and administrators, analyzes PARCC scores, teacher evaluation data, and LinkIt data. This information is then pushed out to school level teams to analyze and drive professional development. Most recently, this data drove the decision to train all teachers at School 3 in Orton Gillingham and inclusion.

In School 3, we have implemented a peer-to-peer professional development program where teachers are able to observe and learn strategies from one another. A few times a year, teachers have the opportunity to visit other teachers' classrooms. During these Learning Walks teachers are able to gather new strategies and best practices that they can bring back to their own classrooms. This method of professional development has proven to be successful and a great way for teachers to learn from each other.

teachers to be active participants in the formation and presentation of trainings that improve teacher professional knowledge and effectiveness, which supports student achievement and school improvement.

4. School Leadership:

At School 3, there is a mutual respect for all leaders. The district and school level administrators believe in involving all stakeholders in decision making and entrusting teacher leaders with considerable authority. Our philosophy is symbolic of a diamond where pedagogical ideas are woven through conversations at the district, school, and grade/content area level. As these ideas are discussed and reworked, they are woven through conversations back up to the district level.

Our principal, the only administrator in the building, communicates in the form of ongoing focus agendas, faculty meetings, participation in staff PLC meetings, Friday Meetings, and most importantly with an open door policy. The warm, fair, but firm philosophy of the principal earns her respect with students and staff alike. Utilizing our diamond approach, ideas reach the principal through all stakeholder groups. Teacher and student organizations work together with the principal to make decisions that are in the best interest of our students and school.

The staff is empowered to take on leadership roles both on the district and school level.

The DEAC (District Evaluation Advisory Committee) includes members of the School 3 staff who meet frequently throughout the school year. This committee is composed of the district's administrative team as well as representatives from each of the district's three schools. During these meetings, the leaders of each school share best practices, analyze data, and work to create plans to achieve continued success at each school. Based on data, the DEAC creates district goals that are reported back to their respective ScIP (School Improvement Panel). school's ScIP meets monthly in an effort to continually reflect on the school year, the district's goals and our individual school goals. During these meetings, we discuss ways to continually improve our best practices, and develop techniques, resources, or professional development information. Importantly, this committee works to share this information with the school faculty as they are charged with leading staff meetings and create initiatives in improving the school as a whole.

The I&RS team is led by a teacher leader. Teachers recommend students who are having academic or social challenges. The I&RS team consists of general education teachers, special education teachers, reading specialist, child study team members, and principal. The committee meets to offer support to classroom teachers, develop strategies and ideas for resources to improve student achievement, and to determine if further formal evaluation is needed.

The members of the School Safety & Climate team consist of administration, teachers, community members and town police officers. All members play a key role in reviewing policies and developing techniques to survey all stakeholders with the goal of maintaining safety in our buildings and promoting a positive learning environment.

Empowering this type of collaborative leadership has helped staff and students grow and has served as the catalyst for our success.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In the past four years, data-informed instruction has been the most instrumental in our success. A school once operating without the common language of data, has been transformed into a school where data has fostered optimism, trust, and hard work as well as thoughtful leadership and talented teachers, all combining to elevate School 3 to historically high levels of success.

School 3 is guided by data. It's used in every area and has led to the development of a remediation program, departmentalization, changes in the curriculum, changes and additions to staff, and new instructional materials. It also set the stage for the transition to standards-based report cards. The Little Falls School District knows the importance of bottom-up decision-making that involves all stakeholders. School improvement teams and district evaluation committees are entrusted with considerable authority.

Strategic implementation of data-informed instruction is the key to our success. The first year, School 3 focused on the basics such as benchmarks, LinkIt assessments, and PARCC data analytics, then using the data became progressively more sophisticated each year. Next, administration instituted a professional development program so that each teacher would be supported with necessary training. Part of the plan was the use of teacher leaders to turnkey, utilizing peer to peer learning. Finally, teachers needed appropriately planned availability in their schedule because incorporating data-driven suggestions into daily instruction is compelled by data rather than intuition or experience, which requires a great deal of time. At School 3, dedicated Professional Learning Community periods were built into the schedule for the principal and teachers to analyze data and collaborate. As this analysis progressed, so did new teaching methods and materials. Instruction also has become more personalized and unique. Teachers focus on strengthening their instructional practices and further differentiate to meet student needs.

Data has altered School 3 in so many ways including putting this powerful information into the students' hands. In each classroom, students have regular access to their own data folders where they themselves graph data from benchmarks, skill assessments, and other performance goals. This practice has become routine for students. As they track their data, they are able to collaboratively set new goals with their teachers.

Our culture has changed, too. The skyrocketing growth has compelled our teachers and leaders to work in even closer collaboration to attain further student achievement; success can be addicting, and very good isn't good enough when you see the potential for greatness. While data began as our strategy it has become our motivator and greatest sense of pride.