

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Foothills Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 520 Sandy Springs Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Maryville State TN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 37803-6340

County Maryville City Schools

Telephone (865) 681-0364 Fax (865) 681-0366

Web site/URL http://www.fhe.maryville-schools.org E-mail karen.schito@maryville-schools.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. Mike Winstead E-mail mike.winstead@maryville-schools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Maryville City Schools Tel. (865) 982-7121

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 Mr. Nick Black  
(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**

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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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

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

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	69	71	140
1	85	64	149
2	80	66	146
3	74	76	150
4	0	0	0
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
<b>Total Students</b>	308	277	585

\*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):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 84 % White
  - 4 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 16%

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

Our mobility rate is 16%. This is correlated to the transiency between the other two elementary schools, a large Japanese Corporation that employs individuals who return to their native country upon completion of their work assignment, the cost of living, and limited housing availability within the district.

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	58
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	31
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	89
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	553
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.16
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	16

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Burmese, Dinka, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, Thai, Gujarati, Tamil, Italian, Portuguese, Philippine

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %

Total number students who qualify: 160

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

70 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>11</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>39</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: 3

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	28
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	14
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	47
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2019.

<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. 2014

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

Foothills Elementary is committed to embracing excellence through powerful and engaging learning experiences, meaningful collaboration, and respect for diversity in a caring, secure, and positive environment.

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**

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Maryville Tennessee is a small, growing town nestled in the Foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. New families are drawn to our area for the great people, closeness to mountains and lakes, family centered activities, and the strong educational values of our community. Built in 1995, complete with a building site reflecting the best of curriculum and focusing on the needs of children, Foothills welcomes its families with a breathtaking view of the Smoky Mountains and access to rolling neighborhoods with a direct connection to the Greenbelt, our city trail system connecting parks and schools.

Responsive Education is a shared philosophy among the teachers and staff of Foothills Elementary School. From the moment new kindergarten students are welcomed into our school and until these same 3rd graders are celebrated through a “Clap Out” by their younger peers four years later, there is intentional devotion to meet the needs of each learner. Among the 585 students served, there is laser-like focus on each one. Through data analysis, student engagement, surveys, vertical alignment, and conversations with students and families, a comprehensive action plan is followed for each student. This intentional plan includes enrichment, academic intervention, language programming, counseling, medical care, social support, parent and family engagement, and Adverse Childhood Experiences interventions. There is systematic collaboration to ensure that each child’s needs are met allowing success for all.

“Personal Best and Nothing Less” is the school motto we chant in unison and embody daily. Our teachers set high expectations for all students. While we have a reputation for academic excellence, achieving growth is equally important to our stakeholders. Our challenges and opportunities focus around meeting the large range of learners with students above and below several grade levels within the same class. With an expanding ELL and Economically Disadvantaged population, we continually work to address specific needs often associated with adverse childhood experiences and instructional delays. Teachers gather around tables and systematically analyze data to ensure growth is occurring for each student. We embrace the arts and the whole child by providing daily STEM, library, gym, music, art, and life skills. Counselors and therapists wrap their arms around the social and emotional needs in our building.

Community involvement is an integral part of our school culture. Parent volunteers provide many services through our Family-Teacher Organization to build and keep traditions and celebrations. These include our annual Open Houses; Grand Event Special Guest Day, Raccoon Romp, our annual fundraiser; the Winter Blast Carnival, and the spring fitness and fun days. Students engage in community projects by volunteering to collect cans for food drives and participating in litter pick-up campaigns.

Several years ago, Foothills initiated the first, month-long One Book Blitz that grew from our single school celebrating literacy by providing the same book and engaging in a shared read with our 500 students, to a community event serving over 5,500 students. Just last February, the Foothills staff wrapped up the “Cricket in Times Square” Blitz that included a physical school transformation to look like the streets of New York City, daily trivia questions, dress-up days, and celebrations to promote the joy of reading.

Since earning the National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2014, our school has continued to develop many unique, innovated programs. Our Code of Conduct is represented by our school mascot, a raccoon named ROCKY. This program reinforces rules and attributes of leadership while rewarding students for doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. Raccoon Tracks are posted weekly in the hallway, honoring individual students for their leadership skills. These selected students join school administrators for a celebratory lunch. Class rewards are earned by spelling out “ROCKY”.

iReach, our 1:1 iPad initiative, enables students to learn at their own pace in reading and math with individualized assessments and adaptive programs. Our blended approach offers the world to our students with the stroke of a finger. Through an innovated software tool, SeeSaw, students snap pictures of their completed work assignments and email their parents, as teachers post comments about work productivity, classroom environment, and field trips.

Responsive education has been improved with the provision of resources for our Safe and Healthy Student

Initiative. Professional development in trauma-informed strategies, sensory stimulation, and behavior regulation strategies have improved growing discipline problems and created more inclusive environments. The entire school has updated all fixed furniture with flexible seating. Students can choose to stand or take advantage of collaborating with friends through a variety of seating options. School guidance services have been expanded with a contract with a local counseling agency for therapy and additional support.

Our collaborative, literacy initiative with our sister schools has produced a digital teachers' toolbox, where teachers share instructional strategies to fulfill our literacy framework components and beliefs. This has improved our overall literacy scores in the past three years, as well as provided increased vertical alignment, shared vocabulary, and specific resources to reach the student not meeting expectations.

Foothills focuses on meeting the needs of the whole child with an emphasis on academic, emotional, and physical needs of each student that walks through our doors.

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

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

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

If you were to walk through the hallways of Foothills Elementary School, you would quickly see why students and staff enjoy being part of this incredible atmosphere. Our vision at FHE is to empower students to become lifelong learners and productive, self-confident citizens in a changing world. Our goal is to improve students' academic performances, but also contribute to their overall development and well-being. Our students understand that we expect "Personal Best, Nothing Less," as we recite this school motto each morning and use it throughout each day. Our boys and girls take this commitment seriously and apply it in all aspects of their day, inside and outside the classroom. They take ownership of their learning by tracking their own progress and achieving goals. This provides an enjoyable learning experience for the students, but also a fulfilling one for our teachers. Our teachers live this motto as they invest their time, collaborating and planning meaningful and engaging lessons that follow the state's challenging academic content standards. Through vertical alignment, our teachers create a scaffold approach to instruction that utilizes meaningful assessment. The data obtained through these assessments, both formative and summative, allows the staff to identify and close skill gaps. While we are committed to high academic achievement, we are equally committed to individual student growth. Each classroom at FHE looks a little different. The teachers have the autonomy to create a classroom structure around the identified needs of their students. Teachers use differentiation, flexible grouping, higher-order questioning, and problem-solving within their daily lessons. Teachers also have the community outreach and support that allows the staff and students at FHE to be one of the most distinguished learning environments in the area. With everything in place, the staff at FHE is able to deliver the rigorous curriculum in a positive and engaging manner, allowing the students to thrive in their daily learning.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

Foothills takes a balanced approach to literacy that is guided by Tennessee Academic Standards and focuses around voluminous reading. The ELA curriculum is supported with a variety of instructional methods, which are continually reviewed for validity, relevance, and rigor. Using well-stocked school, leveled, and classroom libraries, teachers strive to create a genuine love of literature, balancing fiction and nonfiction. Instructional emphasis is placed on the five pillars of reading: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as writing genres and skills.

Daily instruction includes opportunities for read aloud, read along, and read alone. High quality questions, rigorous texts, and evidence-based answers are essential elements. Our district Literacy Council developed a reference for foundational, balanced literacy, which provides strategies and best practices for each component within a balanced ELA block. Teachers use the district pacing guide and standards-based report cards to ensure that all state standards are incorporated in a logical sequence. Daily lessons include interactive read-aloud; guided reading; shared reading; independent reading; explicit phonics instruction; and skill lessons. Flexible leveled reading groups, based on formative and summative assessments, utilization of the assigned assistants allows for differentiation. Focused instruction targets deficit areas and areas for acceleration. Reader's Workshop and Accelerated Reader are used strategically to individualize and enhance independent reading and give teachers opportunities to conference with students. Technology-based programs, such as Moby Max, iXL, and SeeSaw provide immediate feedback for practice, remediation, and enrichment.

Teachers enhance students' enjoyment of reading through exposure to rich literature in the form of read-alouds, novel studies, and literature circles. Students share their love of reading with community readers, parent volunteers, reading buddies, and Human Animal Bond in Tennessee dogs. Reading is celebrated through school-wide literacy events.

Reading, writing, and speaking are integrated through project-based book report presentations, science and

social studies content reading activities, and varied daily opportunities to respond to text and share ideas. The Six Traits writing curriculum is used at all grade levels to provide common vocabulary and an understanding of the traits of quality writing. Students are provided writing opportunities in narrative, informational, and opinion genres, as well as opportunities to become familiar with the expectations of state writing rubrics. Journal and prompt writing are cross-curricular.

Student goal setting is implemented in K-3. Data tracking of fluency and comprehension, through STAR, AR, and Case 21, enables students to take ownership of their progress. These assessments provide benchmark testing, which is used to set goals, determine instructional groups, and inform students independent reading levels. Data reports from these assessments provide valuable information to parents during conferences and at Academic Parent-Teacher Team events. During PLC 's, teachers collaborate through shared professional reading experiences to plan programming to meet the needs of both their struggling and high achieving students.

The end goal of the rich and varied literacy experiences provided at each grade level is a lifelong love of reading sustained by the ability to read independently, with purpose and understanding. All stakeholders work together to facilitate an ELA curriculum that will allow every Foothills reader to reach this goal.

### **1c. Mathematics**

At Foothills Elementary School, our math instruction is driven by the Tennessee State Standards according to the Maryville City Schools' pacing guide. Our pacing guide reflects the rigor, concepts, the format of state tests, and research of the National Council of Teachers of Math. These standards are taught using a combination of the Ready Math curriculum program and problem-based interactive learning. Through these avenues, we teach four major concepts, including Numbers and Operations, Measurement and Data, Algebra, and Geometry. These concepts are vertically aligned between grade levels, which allows our teachers to provide comprehensive instruction that reflects a well-designed path from Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Teachers use a specific math discourse which requires students to express their reasoning, ideas, and thinking.

For students to demonstrate a complete understanding of the math concepts, teachers implement research-based instructional strategies that include hands-on experiences with manipulatives, differentiated practices, various models of technology, small group learning, large group instruction, and discovery tasks. Teachers are well skilled in doing these instructional strategies and applying a healthy balance of support and productive struggle within groupings of students.

After analyzing student assessments, teachers collaborate to identify best teaching practices that yield high student performance. The benchmark methods used to guide instruction are the online iReady adaptive math program and the standards-based Case 21 assessment. Case 21 specifically reflects the rigor and question types of state designed test questions. Both iReady Diagnostic and Case 21 are administered three times a year and measure student growth, as well as achievement. Teachers also use the end of lesson tests to assess student understanding of specific standards through formal and informal assessments. To build fact fluency and automaticity, students practice and are quizzed weekly to build speed and accuracy on addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts.

Once the teacher has received the data from the student assessments, teachers and students use these assessment results for goal setting and identifying strengths and skill areas to improve. Teachers establish student ownership of his or her scores by holding individual conferences to set learning goals. In addition, the data is used to identify students that are above grade level, on grade level, and below grade level. The online iReady lessons, a technology piece of the Ready Math curriculum, are assigned to each student based on his or her lowest skill deficit. Therefore, a high achieving student may have lessons beyond grade level while a low achieving student will be assigned remediation lessons to close academic gaps with all students working on meaningful, self-paced, adaptive curricular content. Essentially each student is placed on their own learning path. Students who score below the 25th percentile receive Response to Intervention (RTI) services. Our RTI team uses a combination of small group, teacher led instruction and other intervention programs. RTI students are progress monitored bi-weekly, and instructional decisions are made according to NBRS 2020

the results. Students demonstrate mastery of problem-solving, reasoning and proof, connections, and representation through comprehension, blended learning using high quality materials and resources.

#### **1d. Science**

Foothills Elementary uses the Tennessee State Science Standards to guide instruction and serve as the primary knowledge-based non-fiction curriculum in language arts. These standards are based on the 5E model: Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate. The standards also employ cross-cutting concepts for establishing cross-curricular connections. Teachers make use of multiple resources to create meaningful experiences for students. Some of the classroom teachers use Inspire Science for informative text, direct instruction, and assessment tools, while teacher autonomy is supported through individual teacher content building.

All students are given equal opportunities to grow their scientific discovery through STEM class. This is one of our special areas that students attend on a seven-day rotation. In this class, the teacher uses Generation Genius videos to engage students on a topic. Then, the remainder of class is used for related experiments or activities to deepen their understanding.

Teachers also integrate science into their language arts instruction through informational text in both guided and independent reading times. Teachers utilize interest inventories to survey students' varied reading interests. This information helps teachers choose high-interest, non-fiction selections. Across all grade levels, the top interests include books about animals. This information informs teachers that choosing life science books will increase student engagement. Reading books with increasing science complexity also allows teachers to enrich students' reading comprehension through modelling strategies and expose students to tiered vocabulary instruction.

Teachers organize grade level visits from The Muse, a local science and discovery museum, which coincide with the science standards they are learning. These visits are guided discovery sessions led by trained educational specialists.

Assessments range from informal assessment of students' ability to interact with the 5E model to formal standards-based mastery checks. The goal is for students to progress from remembering information to being able to apply, analyze, and create artifacts from their work.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

Foothills Elementary builds its Social Studies curriculum around the Tennessee Academic Standards and this serves as the knowledge content in ELA instruction, as well. These standards span from Early Concepts of the Community in Kindergarten to World Geography and the Earliest Days of North American History in third grade. Keeping this curriculum in mind, and utilizing a balanced literacy approach, Foothills teachers are strategic in planning integrated thematic units. Within these units, one-way social studies content is delivered through high interest read-alouds, engaging shared text, and a variety of videos, role play, and collaborative projects.

Fiction and nonfiction, picture and chapter books offer students the opportunity to experience history and geography from the point-of-view of someone who lived it or the expert who has spent years studying it. During their Tennessee unit, history comes alive for our first graders who get a firsthand 3-D look at historic sites with Nearpod's Virtual Reality lessons. While studying economics in second grade, our students explore business concepts and develop a good or service for Market Day, where they design marketing strategies to sell their products. In third grade, students research Americans from history, write epic first-person accounts, and perform them in character for their classmates.

Foothills teachers also utilize visual multimedia resources like BrainPop, Flocabulary, and Nearpod to engage learners. Furthermore, Foothills teachers engage students with project-based learning. In addition to learning social studies content in exciting ways, teachers assess student mastery with extended writing tasks and allow students to assess their own learning with thoughtfully integrated rubrics. Finally, Foothills prides

itself in its mission to “Make a Difference”. While learning about communities, students have opportunities to reach out into our own. The Great Kindness Challenge is one way students can “give back”. During this week, students dress up as the superheroes they are and are encouraged to bring canned goods, cereal, toys, and books for those in need.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Foothills students participate in special area instruction on a seven-day rotation. Classes offered are Art, Library, Life Skills, Music and STEM for one hour and Physical Education for two hours each rotation. Related arts instruction allows students to participate and excel in areas beyond academics and creates a sense of community for students of differing ages and abilities. Offerings are adapted to meet specific needs of students with special educational challenges as well as bilingual students. Third grade students have the opportunity to enhance their learning through programs, such as an after-school Art Club, Choir, Intramurals, and Running Club.

Art classes allow students to create through exploring various materials, mediums, and techniques using their imagination and self-expression. Each year students develop skills with two-dimensional mediums: painting, drawing, and printmaking, as well as three-dimensional mediums: ceramics, sculpture, and fibers. Students learn to use critical thinking to analyze peer artwork, as well as their own. Through visual research and discussion, students explore art from around the world exposing them to diverse cultures from both present and past. The students’ artworks are displayed throughout the school and at the annual Spring art show. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to participate in an after-school art club to expand their knowledge and self-expression in art.

The library serves as a collaborative learning space for students, staff, and families. It incorporates a read-aloud approach examining multiple genres of literature and story elements. Research skills are practiced using various reference materials. Students utilize fiction and nonfiction to explore text features, research, and make connections with story content, words, and illustrations. Skills classes teach students to access and evaluate information in digital and print resources, which build student literacy and achievement. Assisting students in finding literature based on personal interests at their optimal reading level as determined by personal goals and assessment is the main focus in the Foothills Media Center. The library program provides an up-to-date collection reflecting the diversity of our world population. Library staff collaborate and provide materials that connect with classroom learning goals and objectives, selecting fiction and nonfiction materials, biographies, and leveled library multiple-copy sets for guided instruction. Literacy celebrations include Read Across America, One Book Blitz, First Reads, and a summer reading program.

Life Skills class focuses on academic, social, emotional, and career domains, helping students build competencies that lead them to be remarkable students, classmates, and friends. All grades explore and discuss topics such as leadership, positivity, confidence, mindset, teamwork, and friendship. Our school wide PBIS initiative is also reinforced in Life Skills, centering on the characteristics of ROCKY, our school mascot. These include Respect, Ownership, Cooperation, Kindness, and Doing Your Best. Students also learn the importance of creating healthy habits and setting goals in order to be successful.

Music classes teach students patterns and how to listen. Using instruments, singing, acting, and expression, students learn to communicate through song. This class prepares students for instrument opportunities in band, orchestra, and chorus in later grade levels. Music teaches language skills, self-esteem, active listening, math skills, creativity, performance practices, combating performance anxiety, and self-expression. Music is the only school activity that utilizes both hemispheres of the brain.

STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) classes teach students to think in a scientific, mathematical way. Instead of teaching these subjects separately, STEM combines the skills needed for these subjects into a single practice. STEM explores simple machines, technology skills, energy, and mathematics. STEM

encourages curiosity and fuels a child's need to explore. STEM teaches practical knowledge, deep thinking and understanding, creativity, adaptability, teamwork, communication, and critical thinking. It is inquiry-based and provides focused student interactions.

Physical education helps students to become strong, healthy children through exercise and physical activities. A positive learning environment and culture is established with the ultimate goal that students develop a love of being physically active, building the foundation they need to live a healthy lifestyle. We do this by exposing students to a wide variety of activities and sports as well as introducing them to health components such as heart rate, muscles, and bones. The benefits of physical education include improving strength and endurance, flexibility, balance, agility, and coordination along with reducing stress and anxiety, reducing the risk of obesity and boosting self-esteem.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

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

Foothills is committed to identifying and addressing the needs of individual students to understand and maximize their potential. All students are given universal reading and math screenings (STAR Reading, STAR Early Literacy, and iReady Diagnostic) three times throughout the school year. This data, along with teacher observations, anecdotal records, and classroom assessments, provides information for our multi-tiered approach which allows us to efficiently address the educational needs of all students.

In addition to our differentiated core curriculum in Tier I, students whose screenings indicates the need for increased academic assistance receive Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI2) services. The RTI2 process begins with strong Tier I instruction with the student's teacher utilizing alternate strategies, accessing a variety of materials, and collecting data. Teachers support students performing below grade level by differentiating instruction through intentional grouping and adaptive programs. Additionally, teaching assistants are significantly instrumental in closing learning gaps for all learners. After four weeks, the RTI2 team reviews the data to determine whether these changes are effective. If the team determines that the student is not progressing as expected, they may recommend Tier II or III intervention services.

Once students are identified as needing intervention, survey-level assessments (SLA) are administered to determine each student's skill deficit. Detailed results from SLA's assist in carefully placing students in small intervention groups according to need and aid in guiding instruction with specific, explicit, systematic, research-based interventions tailored to each student. Interventions include: Developing Number Concepts, Foundations for Math, TouchMath, Wilson Foundations, Power Reading, Scholastic Literacy, and Funemics.

Interventions are provided by highly trained personnel in small group, pull-out settings. Collaboration of the RTI staff occurs weekly to perfect intervention techniques. Daily performance and bi-weekly progress monitoring data derived from FastBridge Learning is used to determine needs and modify instruction. The data team meets every five weeks to ensure interventions are being implemented with fidelity and determine next steps for students' personal plans.

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

Foothills teachers recognize the need to differentiate curriculum to ensure that high-performing students are motivated and challenged regularly. We implement daily flexible skills-based ability groupings to effectively meet the needs of our students. Additionally, accommodations, adaptive programs, teaching assistant support, and accelerated learning opportunities are utilized to personalize instruction. Foothills is a one-to-one technology school where each student is issued an iPad for use throughout the school day, allowing individualization through educational applications. Applications such as iReady Math deliver adaptive learning paths individualized to the student that accelerate acquisition of advanced standards. Accelerated Reader and leveled classroom libraries, using the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system, allow the classroom teacher to choose a plethora of reading text selections several grade levels above the assigned level. The expansive leveled libraries provide engaging fiction and non-fiction articles, books, and stories. A digital accelerator allows teachers to enter reading level data and student interest to identify the "right

text” in the hands of accelerated learners.

Universal screening assessments (STAR Reading, STAR Early Literacy, iReady Math Diagnostic) are administered to all students at least three times per year. Additionally, teachers use Case 21, a benchmark assessment that highly mirrors the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, textbook adoption assessments, and standards-based common assessments for multi-metric data analysis. Teachers utilize this data for those students who are reading above grade level work to provide acceleration and enrichment.

Foothills believes that excellent teaching coupled with opportunities for peer collaboration, project-based learning, independent study, advanced pacing, as well as engagement in additional activities that focus on individual passion and talent, is the key to supporting high-performing students. Advanced students consistently receive daily challenges, expansion to the core curriculum, and exemplary teaching. For students who meet the 2-prong litmus test for gifted disability (qualify and academic impact), an Individualized Education Plan is developed to address their needs and challenges, which often include social skills and prevocational skills.

### **3c. Special education**

Foothills adheres to the belief that special education is not a place; rather, it is the most intensive intervention along the continuum of service. Our students benefit from collaborative and inclusive classrooms led by highly qualified, well-trained, passionate teachers. Teachers are consistently cross trained in standards, curriculum, instructional programs, and assessments. Additional 2018-19 training focused on phonics, literacy, trauma-informed, differentiation, inclusion, and occupational therapy supports that benefit all students. Special education teachers received specialized training on dyslexia, developing quality individualized education plans, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, restraint, isolation, and de-escalation techniques. Individual teachers completed autism certification.

A continuum of services ranging from comprehensive support to consultation is provided based on individual students’ needs defined by psychoeducational evaluations and data collected through grade level standards-based, district, program-specific, and formative assessments, classroom performance, and daily, weekly, and/or bi-weekly academic and behavioral progress monitoring. Specific assessments used include Fastbridge, AIMSweb, STAR, Case 21, iReady and Brigance. Data sharing and collaboration occur frequently in order to evaluate programming, groupings, accommodations, and modifications. Formally, data and progress toward individual goals and objectives are shared with parents a minimum of 4 times per year.

Foothills maintains high expectations for all students. Students participate in high quality, standards-based, differentiated tier one instruction in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. Each classroom has a teaching assistant to assist with individual and small group specialized instruction. Special education teachers and assistants provide additional academic and behavioral support in the general education classroom, as well as individual and small group targeted instruction to address students’ individualized goals and objectives. Research-based programs used include Wilson, S.P.I.R.E., Reading Milestones, Early Literacy/Reading Skills Builders, SRA, TouchMath, McRuffy Press Math, iReady Math, 6 Traits Writing, and Step Up to Writing. Students may also receive related services such as speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Foothills reaches beyond the IEP by providing in-house counseling and behavior support through school and community-based contracted therapy services.

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

Foothills Elementary recognizes the importance of meeting the holistic needs of linguistically diverse learners through multi-metrics data analysis, targeted instruction, and strong collaboration between stakeholders.

Foothills begins the bench marking process for potential English Learners at registration using the WIDA Screener. This assessment provides the student’s English language proficiency in the domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This data, along with information gathered at the initial family meeting, is

used to create the Individualized Learning Plan, including collaborative academic, language, and social emotional goals, ESL services tailored to student need, and accommodations for implementation in the classroom.

Foothills maintains high expectations with high support for ELs by providing differentiated instruction in the regular education classroom along with ESL instruction through pull-out and inclusion models based on WIDA English Language Development Standards, which concentrate on the social and academic language needs for ELs success. In addition to an exceptional EL teacher, two teaching assistants are utilized within our pull-out and inclusion models. The ESL teacher provides training on WIDA ELD Standards for all teachers annually combined with guidance on ESL best practices to support language and literacy development. Ongoing student specific trainings and regular collaborative goal setting ensure ELs have access to rigorous standards-based curriculum.

In addition to the initial screener, EL students participate in the WIDA ACCESS test as an annual measure of progress towards English proficiency. This data is examined by stakeholders to measure growth, set goals, and drive instruction. Once accessible, ELs also participate in the universal screening for RTI at least three times per year, Star Reading, Case 21, FastBridge, textbook adoption assessments, and district created common assessments.

The ESL teacher reviews the results of all assessments as part of multi-metrics analysis to determine how often to evaluate student progress with the educational team: daily, weekly, or monthly. Data review teams include collaboration between administration, regular education teachers, RTI coordinator, special education teacher, and our guidance counselor as needed.

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

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

Walking through the halls and into classrooms at Foothills Elementary, there is evidence of student engagement and motivation all around. The walls showcase student projects that are completed with pride. Smiles light up faces as students greet teachers and classmates. Throughout the day, students experience learning in a way that motivates them to do their personal best and challenges them to reach for understanding and application. Not only are students supported academically, but also socially and emotionally through a rich learning environment that is full of positivity and opportunities for growth.

Classroom learning at Foothills has several key components that are woven into each day. There is a healthy mix of small group and whole class instruction. With differentiated instruction, students are exposed to materials and content that meet them where they are and move them forward to mastery. This allows students to feel successful while being challenged. Projects and activities keep students engaged and are able to instantly share these with parents is a plus. Being a 1:1 device school, our teachers use Seesaw as a communication tool between school and home. Technology is the wave of the future, and our students are natives. Educational games reinforce teacher instruction, and creative apps allow students to show application of concepts. Students give their personal best. They are challenged to reach new levels. They are smiling, having fun, and learning, even when they are dancing. One cannot walk very far down a hallway without seeing a class enjoying a brain break with a GoNoodle activity. Through these activities, students have the opportunity to move their bodies while learning valuable skills, and they are highly engaged.

Foothills students are supported socially and emotionally. All students attend Life Skills classes that explore characteristics and skills to help them be great students, classmates, and friends. They make connections with book characters to practice and apply many skills including respect, ownership, cooperation, kindness, and doing your best. In fact, these characteristics are reinforced and celebrated school wide with our ROCKY initiative. Students are recognized for exhibiting these traits and can earn ROCKY tickets to spend on meaningful rewards and experiences. Weekly ROCKY Leadership awards and a monthly leadership lunch with the principals are additional incentives that celebrate students' positive choices. Our goal is for students to arrive each morning excited and ready to learn and to leave each day feeling confident, successful, and loved.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Foothills Elementary has a welcoming and positive atmosphere. Our partnerships with business and neighborhood resource agencies along with strong support from our families have a vital impact on our educational achievements.

Foothills has incredible support from a multitude of community service organizations. The local police and fire departments, our district Family Resource Center, community food banks, and counseling agencies continually provide training and resources for our students and staff. Human-Animal-Bond-in-Tennessee (HABIT) boosts confidence in our young readers. Collaborating with these agencies is essential in helping our students be at their best, so they can do their best. Each year, businesses become financial sponsors for our school as well, offering resources and time to help enhance our school environment in order for our students to succeed.

In addition to the support we receive from the community, our families are heavily involved at Foothills. The Family Teacher Organization (FTO) is comprised of representatives of all stakeholders who meet monthly to set goals for the school. Parent representatives organize annual, school-wide activities such as Raccoon Romp and Winter Blast, and they volunteer in a variety of ways throughout the year. Pertinent information is shared between home and school through weekly and quarterly newsletters, the school website, and on social media. Sharing information with new and established parents is a crucial part of the success at Foothills. Open House is unique and essential in building community. Held a couple of days before the school year begins, it sets the tone for a successful year. Families have the opportunity to meet

teachers and administrators as well as discuss curriculum, procedures, and grade-specific information. The administrative team conducts tours for our new and prospective families that helps alleviate anxiety and aids in a smooth transition. Grade-level teachers offer conferences to parents throughout the year, and each grade also hosts Academic-Parent-Teacher-Team (APTT) meetings two times each year. Students and parents are invited to APTT nights where teachers share student data, tips and strategies for skill practice at home, and other literacy and math topics.

Curriculum extensions, such as yearly author/storyteller visits, book character parades, and a summer reading program, are another important way that families unite with the school to promote learning and literacy. The One Book Blitz energizes our entire community and immerses all stakeholders in a month-long reading campaign. Foothills values family and community involvement and engages partners to build school improvement and success for all students.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Foothills provides high-quality professional development opportunities to equip our staff with education, skills, and resources to provide cutting edge programming for all students. Teachers have a voice in professional development and several days are reserved for self-directed study. Needs assessment guide the professional development plan each year. With the adoption of new curriculum, administration ensures training is an integral part of the process along with a multitude of resources. Collaborative support systems are provided where administrators and teachers are trained and, in turn, train others, reflect, and refine practices to customize programming and maximize learning.

Nationally recognized experts have been utilized through professional visits, consultation, and video training platforms. Yearly Spotlight have included motivational speakers. Book studies have focused on the needs of our strategic plan including Mike Schmoker's "Focus", John Hattie's "Visible Learning Classroom", and Heather Forbes' "Help for Billy".

For the past three years, teacher leaders and administrators participated in a system-wide Literacy Council, examining best practices, evaluating literacy needs, and identifying target areas. A Literacy Framework, an RTI information guide, video training, and academic vocabulary lists were developed. The Literacy Council targeted phonics and guided reading. As a result, teachers researched and evaluated program options and collaboratively chose Scholastic Literacy. Each teacher participated in summer training, and literacy coaches gained additional training with Scholastic personnel to learn coaching strategies and implementation practices. The coaching team assisted grade-level peers through a tiered approach. Expert Wiley Blevins was secured to provide phonics training to all K-3 teachers, and teams worked together to develop curriculum and instructional strategies. Authors, such as Melissa Sweet and Maria Dismody, are utilized for staff development and to build literacy motivation.

In order to meet student's emotional and behavioral needs, training was secured to build a responsive toolbox. These have included Love and Logic Training with Holly Roe, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and De-escalation of Trauma Training with the Harmony Agency, and ACCESS training (Differentiated Instruction) with Kate Martin. Personalized professional development is provided through the teacher evaluation process. Teams often secure training to close deficit areas.

Staff share information through vertical conversations between grade levels, weekly team PLC's, and technology sessions. Additional opportunities are provided for teacher leaders to attend state and national conferences (AASL, ILA, PIE) and return to build capacity with their colleagues. Also, instructional assistants are provided with professional development to match their assignment and responsibility.

The on-going day to day provisions of high-quality instructional feedback from administrators as they visit classrooms and observe instructional practices are the most beneficial motivation to continuous professional learning.

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

Foothills has a full time principal and assistant principal who lead and direct the functions of the school as expected in the Maryville City Schools site-based administrative philosophy. All school management, operations, personnel, data-driven decision making, and instructional leadership fall under the responsibility of the building level administrators. Our system operates from a minimalistic approach and does not employ supervisors at the district level. Leadership is built within the schools, and teacher leadership is highly encouraged and valued.

The leadership philosophy of Foothills is built upon collaboration and a shared decision-making model. We do not uphold a top-down approach to the implementation of any curriculum initiative. Decisions affect all members in the school, so corporate decisions are expected. At Foothills, we build positive relationships and mutual respect. We are a partner with the students, families, and community. The office has an open-door policy. Families and teachers are encouraged to provide regularly feedback regularly. The Foothills administrative team has an unwavering commitment to our families and staff, with a mission to embrace excellence through powerful and engaging learning experiences, meaningful collaboration, and respect for diversity in a caring, secure, and positive learning environment.

Annually, each grade level chooses a team leader. These leaders meet monthly to make mutual decisions which include staff development, after-school family events, open house, address team/grade level concerns, and master schedules. Surveys are generated often to collect information regarding school effectiveness and suggestions for areas of improvement. Issues are raised and conflicts are explored in meetings where everyone shares an equal voice.

In addition to team leaders, there are several additional leadership roles for teachers to fulfill. These include curriculum committee chairpersons, mentors for new teachers, and school improvement team members. In addition, extended contract resources are used for teachers to work extra hours to fulfill specific roles and responsibilities determined through team and school improvement planning. These teacher leaders play a critical role in ensuring that our school remains focused on our yearly defined goals.

Our strongest leadership design model is our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These grade level teams work together during common planning times to ensure the learning needs of students are met. Everything they do, everything they say, everything they plan is focused on student achievement, growth, and best practices.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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Foothills Elementary School's vision is that of a daily commitment to embrace excellence through powerful and engaging learning experiences, meaningful collaboration, and respect for diversity in a caring, secure, and positive environment. We believe that the most powerful practice we employ is that of meeting the needs of every child, as well as the whole child.

As a school system, we are blessed with many tools and resources that help us meet the needs of our students. Our Family Resource Center (FRC) works to establish collaborative partnerships with parents, community and business leaders, state and local service agencies, and public and private organizations. The FRC has an open-door policy and offers clothing, school supplies, parenting classes, transportation services, after school and summer programming, educational toys and games, emergency assistance, home visits, assistance with truancy referrals, and educational assistance for parents and students. Community and business partnerships are formed with our FRC which provide an abundance of financial sponsorships and resources to our students and families. We believe that it is critical to ensure that a child's basic needs are being met so that our teachers can provide strong daily instruction in which students can be academically successful.

Our teachers understand the importance of setting clear and high expectations while building a relationship with each of their students and families. Our families and community members value the educational practices employed by Maryville City Schools and the strong school and home connection. With an "all in" approach, we believe that it is important to identify expectations of not only our students, but our families as well, regarding their responsibilities in supporting their child's education. Teachers communicate daily with parents using the SeeSaw forum. When teachers are in regular communication with families, parents are better able to fulfill their responsibilities surrounding their child's education. Building relationships with all stakeholders allows our school to meet the daily needs of our students.

When we can meet the needs of the whole child, Foothills Elementary School strongly believes as our school motto reads, that students can give their, "Personal Best! Nothing Less." This motto is said each morning and applied to all aspects of each of our student's days. When a child's needs are met, we can promote long-term development and success for all our students. Early success at Foothills Elementary promotes children who are happy, challenged, and engaged in future learning.