

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

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

School Mailing Address 3001 Chichester Lane  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fairfax State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 22031-2113

County Fairfax County

Telephone (703) 208-8100 Fax (703) 208-8197

Web site/URL https://fairhilles.fcps.edu/ E-mail cjhunstad@fcps.edu

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. Scott Brabrand E-mail ssbrabrand@fcps.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fairfax County Public Schools Tel. (571) 423-1120

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Dr. Ricardy Anderson  
(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)

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
  - 143 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 25 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 53 High schools
  - 2 K-12 schools

223 TOTAL

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

- 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

- 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
<b>PreK</b>	8	12	20
<b>K</b>	43	46	89
<b>1</b>	63	39	102
<b>2</b>	54	45	99
<b>3</b>	29	38	67
<b>4</b>	37	38	75
<b>5</b>	32	37	69
<b>6</b>	23	35	58
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	289	290	579

\*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 28 % Asian
  - 7.1 % Black or African American
  - 20.9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 33.2 % White
  - 10.6 % 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: 11%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	28
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	34
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	62
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	569
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.11
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	11

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

Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Korean, Nepali, Urdu, Chinese, Turkish, German, Tagalog, French, Hausa, Bengali, Pashtu, Amharic, Russian, Punjabi, Thai, Macedonian, Farsi, Cambodian, Azerbaijani, Cantonese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Mongolian, Polish, Romanian, Somali, Telugu, Kurdish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 34 %  
199 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26 %

Total number students who qualify: 153

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %

64 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>14</u> Autism                 | <u>15</u> Multiple Disabilities                |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>24</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>8</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.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	22
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 22:1

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	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

Fairhill Elementary fosters academic excellence in a respectful environment which instills strength of character and embraces community involvement.

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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Fairhill Elementary School is an energetic, family-oriented, academically rich, and culturally diverse suburban learning community set in the heart of Fairfax, Virginia. At Fairhill Elementary, we believe that all students can achieve academic and personal excellence. We prepare children for a productive future by providing for successes in a positive, inclusive, enriching, and academically stimulating environment. We celebrate diversity, foster mutual respect, and embrace collaboration as we unite to achieve common purposes and clear goals. We value service-learning as a means to help students understand the positive impact they can make both individually and collectively on their community and the world.

Our dedicated and talented staff members collaborate in teams to focus on continuous improvement of student achievement through the implementation of best practices for teaching and learning. With exceptional teachers and a full-time enrichment specialist, students are regularly challenged to work beyond the required curriculum through projects and enrichment activities. Technology integration is enhanced by interactive whiteboard technology in each classroom, multiple wireless laptop labs, and a fully connected audio and television production studio.

Fairhill Elementary works closely with a robust, involved, and supportive parent community, as well as several local business partnerships. The Fairhill Parent Teacher Association sponsors numerous family events and instructional initiatives. Parents are an important part of the instructional program, both inside and outside the classroom and across the grade levels. A strong emphasis on home-school partnerships assists students in achieving their greatest potential.

Fairhill is made up of a student body of 573 students and 80 staff members. Our students are diverse, and we love celebrating them! Our student body speaks over 34 different languages and comes from over 40 different countries. Our student body is economically diverse as well. 25% of our student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch and 25% of our student population are English Language Learners. 11% of our students receive services through our special education program. We have a 13% mobility rate. In addition to our diverse student body, our staff is also diverse. There are 17 male staff members and 63 female staff members working at Fairhill, representing over 20 different countries and over 11 different languages spoken. We are truly fortunate to learn and work in such a rich environment.

One of the key strategies we employ as a staff Fairhill are regular Data Dialogues led by our Instructional Coach and Administrative team. Our Data Dialogues are half-day meetings once per quarter with each grade level team where we focus on improving teacher practices and responding to changes in a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support approach after looking at progress monitoring. We use the data to guide our implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 remediations, as well as opportunities for extensions and enrichments. While looking at the data, we look for patterns, categories, and trends that then impact teacher professional development, planning, and instruction to meet the needs of each individual student, covering the entire spectrum of learners.

As a non-title one school, we have used our funding from Fairfax County to acquire an instructional coach, who is the driving force behind the data digging and reflective practices used in our school. Throughout the school year, she works with teams to enhance student learning and teacher efficacy, while building capacity among our grade level Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs).

We have a Literacy Lab that is staffed by our special education lead teacher. She works with students who have special needs and students who require extra support in reading. She provides individualized reading instruction to small groups to improve their literacy skills, utilizing research-based literacy intervention programs to target specific student needs. This has allowed us to ensure all of our students who need intensive reading intervention are served.

Our Before School Learning Academy is a before school program that focuses on our students who need intense remediation or re-teaching to be successful on their Standards of Learning (SOLs). The academy is staffed by classroom and special education teachers and takes place twice a week for an hour before school.

Students are invited to the academy based on formative and summative data from teachers and county-wide division assessments.

Our mentor programs are one of the various ways we ensure that students have a connection to someone in the building. Our adult-to-student mentoring program is called Tiger Pals. Our upper class (6th graders) and lower class (kindergarten-3rd grade) mentoring program is called Fairhill Friends Forever. Both programs meet weekly. Students are considered for these programs if they fall into one of our historically underperforming student groups or if they are referred by a parent or staff member.

We are a proud Positivity Project school. The Positivity Project is a program with resources, training, and strategies to teach positive psychology's 24-character strengths and empowers our students to build positive relationships. Every Monday, we introduce a new character strength each week with our guidance counselor on our school morning news show that all students and staff watch, and our staff wears their Positivity Project t-shirts to continue the energy around the character trait. Then our teachers reinforce the character trait of the week with daily lessons in their classrooms. This ensures that Fairhill is a great place for staff to work and for our students to learn.

## **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

Our standards are based on the Virginia Standards of Learning and our Fairfax County Program of Studies, as stated in grade-level Planning and Pacing Guides. These guides provide a roadmap for our instruction in the depth, breadth, and sequencing of subjects. The Planning and Pacing Guide for each unit within each subject directs teachers to research-based strategies, curriculum, and resources so that our teachers are providing instructional based on the best practices outlined by professionals in our field.

Our teachers employ project-based learning as a process for authentic learning. This instructional strategy creates learning opportunities in which students address a real-world problem or situation by determining everything from what needs to be known to solutions generated through a project. The curriculum and standards are met through authentic learning, critical problem solving, and completion of projects.

Teachers use instructional technology in a way that allows for exploration, differentiation, and demonstration of learning. Students have the opportunity to read and explore topics on different computer applications that focus on reading and language arts like MyOn, Tumblebooks, PebbleGo, and Newsela Pro. Programs like Wixie and Dreambox Learning allow teachers to target specific students, with specific skills based on classroom instruction. Technology also allows students to demonstrate their learning in digital ways, such as Wixie creations, Google Drawings, Google Sites, and assessment platforms like Horizon. Additionally, teachers partner with our School-Based Technology Specialist to learn about best practices in using technology in the classroom. Teachers leverage technology in meaningful ways to engage students in learning and using meaningful data from these platforms to inform their instruction.

Teachers use formative data to inform their instruction and improve their practice. As a Collaborative Learning Team (CLT), they reflect on their teaching practice and student data to inform them on how to move forward. Based on student data, they can reteach, remediate, or enrich. Technology platforms like Horizon allow students to complete summative assessments online, while teachers can analyze the data in a variety of ways to discover strengths, challenges, and other trends. The data and the ways in which it can be sorted are an essential tool that drives instructional practice.

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

For Language Arts instruction, we use the Reading and Writing Workshop model. Within this model, there are opportunities for whole group, small group, and individualized instruction. The workshop model is best practice for literacy instruction because it allows for direct instruction, differentiation, and provides scaffolds that support students towards independence.

Each workshop begins with a focus lesson that is based on the Virginia standards for a grade level. To plan for the focus lessons in the workshop, teachers use the county planning and pacing guide and plan instruction for the standards within the units of study. Each teacher uses a variety of instructional methods for the lesson- inquiry, demonstration, an interactive read aloud, or direct instruction that best fits the teaching objective. During a focus lesson, students also have an opportunity for guided practice which is a chance to try out the strategy or skill being taught.

After the focus lesson there is time for independent reading and for small group instruction. During this time, students are engaged in reading activities that include independent reading, reading with a partner, reading on the computer or listening to stories online, word work activities, and or writing reading responses. While students are working independently, the teacher will be working with reading groups. These reading groups are formed based on formal and informal assessment data. Students may be grouped together based on a common reading level, or similar instructional need. The reading workshop usually ends with a time for sharing and reflection about what learning occurred during the workshop that day.

Instruction for writing follows a similar format of Reading Workshop. During the independent time during the writing workshop, students are working independently on their writing. Teachers will either meet with students individually to conference and teach to that student's needs or pull a small group of students to focus on teaching a specific skill. Writing workshop also ends with a share time. This is a great way to reinforce the teaching point when students have tried it in their writing that day.

We use a variety of assessments to monitor student progress. Each year, students are given a Universal Screener that helps us identify students who might have possible reading difficulty and identify specific areas of need so we can perform more diagnostic assessments to help us determine a specific instructional focus. One assessment we use to help us learn more about our readers is the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA 2) which helps us identify the text level a student can read independently, as well as a focus for instruction. Within instructional units, pre- and post-assessments are given to help teachers select teaching points for their class as well as a summative assessment to know if students learned what was taught. Other informal assessments like anecdotal notes, running records, and analyzing student writing are given to monitor progress and make instructional decisions.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Collaborative teams at Fairhill work in CLT meetings to deepen understanding of the Standards of Learning for mathematics set forth by the Virginia Department of Education and Fairfax County. Teams move through the CLT Cycle, answering the Four Critical Questions (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). Teams unpack the standards and learning outcomes for the unit and determine the big mathematical ideas that are essential for student learning. Teams then work together to name success criteria, or what it will look and sound like when students have met the essential standards. To create a unit of instruction that will best meet the needs of all students, teams match resources laid out in the Planning and Pacing Guides with their essential standards. This plan is flexible and adjusted based on pre-assessment data and data collected during instruction.

Specific instructional approaches used at Fairhill for mathematics have included: Math Workshop, sense-making routines, and rich mathematical tasks. Teachers engage students in the Math Workshop model daily, using one of three models laid out by Jennifer Lempp in her text *Math Workshop: Five Steps to Implementing Guided Math, Learning Stations, Reflection, and More* (2017). Teachers employ various levels of differentiation in their instruction to support all students in accessing “low floor, high ceiling” mathematics, giving all students an entry point into the task or lesson. Sense-making routines bring all students into the learning, and teachers learn together about new sense-making routines frequently in CLTs. Some of the routines teachers at Fairhill use regularly are: Number Talks (both whole number computation and fraction, decimal, and percentage computation), Steve Wyborney's *Esti-Mysteries*, and *Splat* series, and routines like *Which One Doesn't Belong?* or *Same But Different Math*. To support task-based instruction, teachers use tasks from the VDOE, from Graham Fletcher's *3-Act Tasks*, and from Robert Kaplinsky's *Open Middle* site, and teachers also create rich tasks of their own. Additionally, teachers engage students through the use of technology, such as *Dreambox Learning* and *ST Math*. All of these opportunities allow students to engage in exploring and creating an understanding of mathematics conceptually.

Teachers use frequent formative and summative assessment data to support student understanding in mathematics. Formative assessments, like exit tickets, allow teachers to see immediately which students might need in-the-moment support in a guided math group. Summative assessments, like unit post-assessments, support teams in analyzing their instruction overall and determining which students have or have not met the essential learning outcomes set forth in their unpacking prior to the start of a unit. All of this data aids teams in determining the next steps in instruction and planning for Tier 2 reteaching groups both during and after a unit in mathematics. As a school, this data supports our school in seeing overarching areas of strength and opportunities for growth in both student learning and instruction. This gives us the chance to reflect on strategies that are being used in various grade levels to support mathematics learning and teaching, and it allows us to determine areas in which we might provide support, in the form of professional development or coaching, to ensure the success of all students and all teachers.

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

Fairhill Elementary's science core curriculum stems from the Virginia Standards of Learning and Fairfax County's Program of Studies. Each grade level's specific science units cover topics such as life processes, living systems, physical science, and Earth and space systems. Throughout each of these units, students develop an understanding of the natural world by taking on the role of a scientist through observation, investigation, data collection, and analysis.

We utilize a variety of instructional approaches and best practices to meet the needs of our students. In addition to direct instruction and FCPS lessons, students engage in the 5E Learning Model to explore topics and design experiments and Project Based Learning (PBL) to ensure that the learning has real-world relevance. Much of our PBL work includes using technological resources. Students in grades 4-6 also engage in Jason Project readings and videos, in which they observe scientists working in the real world and solving today's problems. Primary grades utilize Project Clarion, conceptual science units that engage students and develop critical and creative thinking skills.

Students are assessed using formative and summative assessments, including teacher observations, classwork, questioning, exit tickets, rubrics, quizzes, and tests. When students engage in PBL, assessments, and feedback are given throughout the process so that the final product demonstrates student mastery of the content. High-quality feedback throughout experiments, activities, and projects allow for teachers to remediate swiftly and appropriately through whole group review of common misunderstandings, small group, and one-on-one support.

Fairhill student scientists also engage in a wide range of science field trips, grow plants in our school rain garden, learn strategies such as SCAMPER (Substitute Combine Adjust Modify Put to other uses Eliminate Reverse) to think like innovators, engage in our school-wide annual Innovation Fair and Family Science Night, and learn robotics from neighboring middle and high school STEM clubs.

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

Fairhill Elementary's social studies core curriculum stems from the Virginia Standards of Learning and Fairfax County's Program of Studies. Each grade level's specific social studies units cover topics such as how people of the past have influenced the present, recognizing the structure of government and the relationship between rules, laws and becoming a good citizen, reading and analyzing maps, and understanding the impact of geography and economics on culture. Throughout each of these units, students develop an understanding of these standards by taking on the role of a historian and engaging in observation and analysis of maps, primary and secondary source documents, comparing and contrasting historical events, interpreting historical perspectives, and discussing and debating how things change over time to understand the impact of the past on the present.

Fairhill utilizes a variety of instructional approaches and best practices to meet the needs of students. Planning and Pacing Guides are being enhanced to include culturally responsive pedagogy to engage culture and empower students as learners and human beings. Thinking Routines are utilized to promote visible, critical, and creative thinking skills. Project Based Learning opportunities are implemented to provide real-world relevance. PBL's include the use of technology resources such as Wixie, Google Slides, Google docs, and Flipgrid. Fifth grade students engage in the GATP (Global Awareness Technology Project).

Students are assessed using formative and summative assessments. These include exit tickets, teacher observations, quizzes, conversations, unit activities, rubrics, PBL's and unit assessments. Students receive immediate and high-quality feedback to adjust their learning in order to reach mastery of concepts. Regular spiraling back to big concepts helps students make connections and deepen their understanding of concepts being taught. Fairhill students engage in a wide variety of field trips to receive hands-on learning. They participate in Constitution Day and Veteran's Day activities to celebrate historic events.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Fairhill is host to a Pre-K Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP)/Head Start class that is run and managed through Fairfax County Public Schools' (FCPS) Early Childhood Office. All academic and social/emotional curriculum is guided from this office and our single Fairhill classroom implements the curriculum based on CLTs and guidance from this department. The social/emotional curriculum used is Conscious Discipline.

FCPS shares that a child's early years are essential in developing a foundation for school success. FCPS works hard to provide programs and services that prepare young children and parents who need extra guidance and support to be ready to start kindergarten feeling confident and ready to learn. High-quality instruction in the Early Childhood classroom supports children's social and emotional development by providing an integrated curriculum that focuses on improving their self-control, mental flexibility, and working memory.

All students are held to high expectations. The eight areas of focus for learning are math, science, social studies, Language Arts, music, art, health and physical education, and approaches to learning social and emotional development. Teaching teams work together to continuously plan and instruct students in a variety of ways to foster individual growth and development.

Early Childhood supports students and families in being ready for school. This includes developing the well-being of the whole child so that it aligns with the Kindergarten expectations. Incorporated into this specific program is collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers, collaboration between schools and families, ongoing instructional communication and alignment of curriculum.

In addition to the program of study developed by the FECEP/early childhood office, Fairhill also provides art, physical education, and music with a specialist during the week for our pre-k class. The FECEP/early childhood office in FCPS offers a lot of different resources to help provide students in the pre-k program with opportunities for academic learning. One of the most powerful tools/resources is the planning and pacing guide that the county offers that is customized to this age group using state standards.

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

All our students have access to an enriched curriculum and an enhanced learning environment at Fairhill. Through Responsive Instruction, The Positivity Project, and Project Based Learning (PBL) opportunities, we work to promote a collaborative family of learners with a focus on teaching and learning innovations.

In performing arts, students in fourth through sixth grades can participate in band, chorus, and/or strings class to supplement their music instruction. This elective program begins in fourth grade when students can choose a stringed instrument. Fifth and sixth graders choose band or chorus. Fairhill makes sure adequate time is devoted to all three electives through the master schedule.

In addition, Fairhill students participate in a weekly standards-based visual arts curriculum. The art teacher and grade level teams collaborate to include content-area connections. Fairhill students are selected yearly to participate in the Falls Church Pyramid Art Show. Contest participation is encouraged for all Fairhill students.

Fairhill students receive health and physical education instruction at all grade levels (pre-k-sixth). Students with disabilities have access to adapted physical education programs required by their individualized education plan (IEP). The health and physical education program teaches students the skills, knowledge, and attitudes essential to a healthy lifestyle as well as safe and healthy behaviors.

We also have two beyond the bell programs focusing on the physical well-being of our students. Fitness Fanatics and Fairhill Flyers' explore fun ways of staying active and fit. All students in grades 3-6 are invited to participate in these teacher-led programs. The goal of the programs is to encourage positive emotional, social, mental, and physical development.

The Foreign Language in the Elementary School/Language through Content (FLES/LTC) program teaches students a world language through Science and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) integrated content. The program at Fairhill provides Chinese language learning opportunities to all students in grades kindergarten to six. This model supports the five goals of the national standards for world language (communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities) and is aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning for World Languages.

Technology integration is enhanced by interactive projectors and whiteboard technology in each classroom, wireless laptop carts, and a production studio. Teachers and students are provided with enhanced learning opportunities through increased access to technology devices and applications in the classroom. Applications such as DreamBox (a math program), NewsELA (application for relatable content for young readers), and Wixie (a visual program to support young learners) help to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.

Fairhill's library is dedicated to developing and maintaining students' love of reading and learning. By encouraging the use of the library's diverse reading materials, both individually and in the classroom, we strive to support students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge by building our collections based on identified student interests and areas of curiosity, teaching active reading and listening skills through interactive read-alouds, helping students develop their critical thinking and research skills through the use of PBLs and inquiry-based learning, and helping students develop an understanding of empathy and our global community.

Each year Fairhill hosts a Career Fair to expose students to a variety of careers in order to jumpstart thinking about their future. By preparing early, students are more likely to be college and career ready after high school graduation. Students in grades 4-6 participate in the Career Fair. Younger grade students meet community helpers that closely align with their learning inside the classroom.

Fairhill has chosen to be a Positivity Project (P2) partner school to encourage and develop positive character strengths in students. The program relies on the relationships of students and staff to help identify positive character traits in themselves that help students recognize that #otherpeoplematter. Through weekly lessons, students build character education by learning the different traits that exist in all people.

At Fairhill, we base our schoolwide discipline on The Responsive Classroom approach. This program offers practical strategies for teaching, rather than formulas telling our teachers what they must do in the classroom. Teachers adapt and customize the strategies to address different students' needs in each classroom. The Responsive Classroom approach develops teachers' competencies in key areas and fosters students' love for their classroom and school environment.

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

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

We have striving students across grade levels, as is the same in most schools. Throughout the year we are constantly looking at data to ensure the needs of every student are being met. During weekly CLT meetings, teams engage in conversation around assessment and anecdotal data. They use this data to create a plan to make sure that students are meeting their potential.

At the school level, we use a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support approach. Embedded into our master schedule is a Tier 2 remediation and intervention block that we call Tiger Time. The purpose of this time is to ensure that all students have time for re-teaching and interventions based on their needs. We use data to inform instructional practices for striving learners in Tiger Time groups. Through data discussions, we are able to identify the students who may need additional support and are performing below grade level in certain areas.

Once students' specific needs are determined, the team identifies the targeted outcomes by creating learning

targets aligned with those needs. The students are then broken up into different groups that will maximize their learning with different teachers based on a number of factors. One factor is group size, while another is teacher expertise. Generally speaking, we try to keep group sizes as small as possible to ensure as much individualized instruction for our striving learners. We also make sure that students are paired with a teacher that has expertise in that area.

We also create a plan to follow up on these intervention groups to ensure that students are getting what they need. Groups are changed every 2-3 weeks after teachers administer a form of progress monitoring that matches the needs of the group. If students are not making progress, we consider putting a more intense intervention in place. If they are making progress, we continue to monitor but remove the intervention.

Students that are significantly below grade level receive a more intensive (Tier 3) intervention that best meets their needs over a longer period of time. Students requiring a Tier 3 intervention typically work with a specialist to receive this intervention on a regular basis.

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

At Fairhill Elementary we have a Local Level IV (also known as a self-contained Advanced Academic Program) and Young Scholars Program. Young Scholars is an initiative that is designed to increase the proportion of historically underrepresented students in Advanced Academic Programs (AAP). School administrators, teachers, and the Advanced Academic Resource teacher work together to find and nurture advanced academic potential in young learners. Through flexible grouping, students are provided an educational setting that raises their personal expectations and prepares them for more challenging and rigorous coursework and academic programs.

Teachers and the Advanced Academic Resource teacher collaborate and work together to ensure students are exposed to critical and creative thinking strategies, promote access to PBL, concept-based instruction, and inquiry-based teaching strategies. At Fairhill Elementary, we differentiate instruction through the use of resources in the AAP curriculum framework. We work together as a staff to recognize and nurture gifted behaviors in diverse populations of learners and develop growth mindsets in the school community. Differentiated instruction is provided through more challenging content, assignments, resources, and flexible grouping in one or more areas of academic strength.

In addition, at Fairhill Elementary we work to cluster young scholars, providing challenges through curriculum and instruction while supporting students on multiple levels. We provide and encourage ongoing Professional Development for Teachers in using advanced curriculum and awareness in culturally responsive teaching practices. Our goal is to nurture high academic potential at an early age so students will be prepared to engage in challenging subject matter and rigorous courses in upper elementary school, middle school, high school, and beyond.

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

We have been working on closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities by creating innovative and new approaches for effective instruction and progress monitoring. Our special education action research project over the last two years has helped our special education team learn and grow in many ways.

The action research grant awarded by our regional office in Fairfax County made a significant impact on our team and on our school. Our research grant work focused on being provided quarterly team planning days with support from Fairfax County's Office of School Support. This gave us vertical planning time, data digging, and professional development in understanding co-teaching, processing deficits, accommodations, use of county data tools, and effective math instruction techniques.

Beginning in 2018-2019, Fairhill started to implement an innovative structure in which two special education teachers are available for grades 3-6 math blocks for co-teaching. This allowed grade-level teams to analyze student achievement as a whole grade level and use flexible grouping to match instructional needs. Special education teachers became classroom teachers in this context, providing general education

curriculum math instruction. We moved from using math intervention programs to focusing on quality Tier 1 instruction. Flexible grouping across the whole grade level also enabled smaller class sizes for each teacher, which many teachers felt had a positive impact.

A Literacy Lab was also created by the special education team to support students' specialized needs in reading, allowing special education teachers assigned to specific grade levels to fully focus on quality co-teaching in the core curriculum and Tier 1 instruction in reading. Grade level teams, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support team, and the special education team collaborate and determine student needs and fit for the Literacy Lab. Research-based literacy intervention programs are used in a small group setting to target specific student needs in the area of reading. This system ensures that students who need intensive reading intervention are served and that programs and data collection are implemented with fidelity.

This year, we have the opportunity and access to have quarterly team planning days again in order to continue our growth in best practices and analyzing data for our students. This year's focus is on effective instruction in reading comprehension. The work on co-teaching, effectively using county data tools, and digging deep into understanding processing deficits and our students' needs was extremely powerful. We also have continued a second year of Literacy Lab to continue the support of students' specialized needs in reading.

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

We strive to provide equitable, quality Tier 1 instruction to all of our diverse learners. Our collaborative learning teams utilize the CLT cycle to analyze data to drive instruction, unpack standards, plan for differentiated whole group and small group instruction, and design assessments to reflect and refine instruction.

Co-teaching is utilized in classrooms with English Learners and students with disabilities to ensure the instruction supports the various individual student needs. In addition to quality Tier 1 instruction, Fairhill implements Tier 2 (re-teaching of essential standards) and Tier 3 (foundational gaps in learning) intervention groups to meet the diverse and individual needs of various student populations. As teams analyze data, Tier 2 groups are formed at each grade level (K-6) to meet the needs of students missing essential standards. These groups are progress monitored throughout to assess mastery or help guide the next steps in instruction. For foundational gaps, like the achievement gap of 10 or more percentage points between all students and those of any reporting group, Fairhill implements Tier 3 intensive intervention groups in both reading and math. These small groups utilize research-based approaches to target the essential skills and close the achievement gap. Progress monitoring during the intervention, along with classroom and district assessments, help teams to reflect on the effectiveness of the interventions to ensure we are meeting students' diverse needs.

**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:**

We have a lot to celebrate. Looking at the 2019 Fairfax County Virginia Working Conditions Survey, the data shows that teachers and staff are happy to be at Fairhill and 92% of staff returned for the 2019-2020 school year. At the start of the school year, we come together as a staff family. We engage in team-building activities and learning together so the adults in the building establish and continue strengthening meaningful relationships. One of our first activities as a staff is a “Welcome Back” bus tour before school starts, where we stop at designated neighborhood locations and greet our students. We take our mascot “Terrance” the tiger with us and hand out popsicles. It's a great way for our students to meet their teachers and get excited about the school year and our school community.

We ensure a positive environment for our students by being a proud Positivity Project (P2) school. The P2 program is a nationally recognized program for students with resources, training, and strategies to teach positive psychology's 24 character strengths that empower our students to build positive relationships. Every Monday, we introduce a new character strength each week with our guidance counselor on the morning news show, and our staff wears their P2 t-shirts to continue the energy around the character trait. Our teachers reinforce the character trait of the week with daily lessons in their classrooms. All staff took a positivity project character trait strength test to find out the character trait they are the strongest in and then created large nameplates outside of their classroom or office to display their top character trait strength. The community enjoys reading everyone's strengths, and we talk about them and refer back to them all year long, which helps build our positive culture.

One way we take care of students' essential needs is through donations made through our community partners. The donations from our community partners include backpacks, school supplies, coats, gift cards for clothes and grocery stores, and food. We are proud to have strong community partnerships.

Supporting academic growth is what we are all about. We start first by believing that all students can learn. Our staff embodies this by having high expectations for all. In every classroom you will find learning targets for the day, and students are able to explain what they are learning in their own words. As we try to increase student success, we use our Student Innovation and Improvement Plan to help guide the instruction and focus for staff and students. Our job as administrators is to support teachers in every way so that they can do the heavy lifting and directly teach our students.

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

Open communication with our school community has been paramount. By having open lines of communication through different mediums we are able to reach all families and community members for the betterment of student education. Each week we send home a weekly newsletter called the Fairhill Forum. In this communication, the school administration relays important information to the community about upcoming events in an effort to be transparent. Families are given information about events in our school building and our local community. As part of the Fairhill Forum we include sections where families can get information from the local middle school and high school. As a school pyramid, we are very proud and try to relay the pride throughout our own school community through the hashtag #WeAreFC (for Falls Church High School).

In addition to school-wide communication through our electronic newsletter called the Fairhill Forum, each teacher and/or grade level also sends out weekly communication in order to give more details as to what is happening in the classroom. When classroom teachers send out communication they are able to invite parents to have a better understanding of how to help support their child inside the classroom in terms of academic and social/emotional support.

In order to be successful in working with family and community members for student success and school improvement, Fairhill has found that having a positive working relationship with the Parent Teacher

Association (PTA) is essential. There is a lot of overlap between the PTA events and school events and working together ensures that the events are seamless and parent involvement is crucial. There are many events that are overlapped between school and PTA and they all involve parent and community involvement.

Two events that bring our community together are our Literacy Night and Math Night, held annually each year. These events are run by the school and invite families in for an evening of fun and engagement in either subject area. Parents learn exactly what students are learning and receive takeaways to help support students in these areas at home.

We have many events throughout the year at Fairhill that encourage family involvement and we co-plan with our staff and PTA to make this happen. One example of this is the Fun Run, where we work in tandem with the PTA in order to raise money for the school for technology and for building diverse classroom libraries. This one event helped raise a large amount of money and it was truly a team effort. There were teachers taped to walls, principals “sleeping” on the roof of the school and extra recess earned among tons of other things that really brought the entire school community together for a common cause.

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

Fairhill is a Professional Learning Community, and staff members work in collaborative teams to meet the needs of all learners in the building. Much of the work that directly impacts students takes place in teams’ weekly during Collaborative Learning Team (CLT) meetings. The teams include general education teachers, special education teachers, resource team teachers, the instructional coach, and administrators. Teams move through the CLT Cycle, leaning on the work of the DuFours and their four critical questions, to ensure that they know students by name and by need and develop high-leverage instruction that will support all learners. At the start of each school year, teams work together to create working agreements, which ground the members of the team throughout the year in a common mission and vision for how their team will function. With the support of the instructional coach and members of the resource team, teams engage in job-embedded professional development specific to their needs on a regular basis.

In addition to working in collaborative teams, Fairhill staff members work in a Professional Learning Community, where they learn together throughout the year. The learning opportunities for staff members align with the school’s vision and focus for the year, and there are also various opportunities that pop up on an as-needed basis, depending on teams’ and teachers’ needs. The schoolwide focus for professional learning this year has been on equity and the language we use about and to students, and the staff has been using the text *Schooltalk*, by Mica Pollock, as a mentor text. Staff members have dug into big ideas like culture, race, identity, and intelligence, while considering how their own biases and beliefs impact how they interact with these ideas. By working as a schoolwide team to learn together and consider how our words impact students, we have created a professional environment where staff members feel safe unpacking topics that can often cause discomfort. This work that staff has been engaging in as a Professional Learning Community impacts our students, which is our ultimate goal, as staff members learn together and bring that learning back into their classrooms every day.

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

Our administrative philosophy is that all students can learn, and every staff member can be excellent with the right support. Prior to the 2018-2019 school year there was a downward trend academically for two reporting groups (black and/or African American students and students with disabilities) that we as a school needed to overcome.

The principal started to change the culture during her first year. She enrolled the school’s team leaders in a yearlong cultural proficiency course. The team included each grade level team lead, the resource team (special education lead teacher, reading specialist, English language learner teachers, school-based technology specialist, advanced academic resource teacher, and school counselors) and administration. In addition, the entire staff was trained in four sessions led by the Cultural Proficiency Manager for Fairfax County.

We also believed our instructional practices needed to align with this work. During the principal's second year she dedicated the school's budget to invest in the purchase of an instructional coach. Our instructional coach works tirelessly to carry out the vision of the administrative team.

We also believe that for our students to learn we must make our students feel emotionally, mentally, and physically safe. At the end of the Principal's first year, she started to explore the Responsive Classroom approach with the staff. During the principal's second year the entire staff was trained. We have maintained this effort by engaging in ongoing professional development around Responsive Classroom during the principal's third year.

With the overall philosophy that all children can learn, the administrative team continues to focus on the whole child. During the principal's second year and current assistant principal's first year at Fairhill, we launched two major mentor programs to support our belief that every child in the building should have a positive connection with someone else in the building. We have two mentoring programs: Tiger Pals, an adult-student mentoring program, and Fairhill Friends Forever, our upper class to lower class student mentoring program. Students qualify using many different criteria. The first group of students we target are historically underperforming students in certain categories. First, we matched those students with a mentor, then we take teacher and parent referrals. The administrative team ensures that we are on track academically through frequent classroom observations and a strong Multi-Tiered Systems of Support team that meets weekly to engage in conversations around the school's data performance, interventions, and academic supports.

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

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One of the key strategies employed by the staff of Fairhill is Data Dialogues led by our Instructional Coach and Administrative team. According to education professor and author, Mary Anne Raywid, “regular meetings between teachers and instructional leaders are frequently constrained by time.” A data dialogue, when done well, can significantly impact student learning. Not only have we sought to support teachers in analyzing and using data to drive instruction, we also work to ensure teacher decisions align with student needs so students do not become stagnant in a program that is not helping them to grow academically. We know the key to a good dialogue is great facilitation. We recognize that each team at Fairhill is at a different location on the Professional Learning Community continuum. Our leadership team pre-planned these data discussion protocols to meet the needs of each individual team in order to maximize time and limit frustration among classroom and special education teachers.

While examining the data, we look for patterns, categories, and trends that then impact teacher professional development, planning, and instruction to meet the needs of each individual student, covering the entire spectrum of learners. This is the data and conversations that led us to have a Before School Learning Club (BSLC) for students who need additional remediation.

As a school, we recognized the need to hire an instructional coach who can help guide our practice and hone in on professional development. This helps support our teachers that will in turn support student learning. Although our school was not staffed with an instructional coach position, as a school we felt we needed to subsidize the position that inevitably helps support staff and students alike. Our coach works with teams to enhance student learning and teacher efficacy while building capacity among our grade level Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs). This is the work that has changed our practices to increase student learning. The academic growth made over the 2018-2019 school year is something we continue to celebrate.