

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Jacob C. Fruchthendler Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7470 East Cloud Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Tucson State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85750-2204

County Pima County

Telephone (520) 731-4400 Fax (520) 731-4401

Web site/URL https://fruchthendleres.tusd1.org/ E-mail mary.anderson@tusd1.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. Gabriel Trujillo E-mail gabriel.trujillo@tusd1.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Tucson Unified School District Tel. (520) 225-6000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Adelita Grijalva
(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, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 62 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 11 High schools
 - 4 K-12 schools
- 88 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	20	29	49
1	40	40	80
2	25	28	53
3	29	22	51
4	32	33	65
5	36	18	54
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	182	170	352

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 4 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 32 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 52 % White
 - 9 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 10%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	39
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	383
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Japanese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24 %

Total number students who qualify: 84

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
37 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>3</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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.

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	95%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Fruchthendler Elementary School's Mission Statement is to develop a passionate learner with the highest quality education and to achieve one's maximum potential through our core values of kindness, respect, safety, and responsibility.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fruchthendler Elementary moved to an on-line mode of instruction in March 2020.

Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) began the 2020-2021 school year with most students learning remotely. District students, deemed most vulnerable, including children in foster care, McKinney Vento, and profoundly disabled students, were provided the opportunity to return to school buildings for distance learning. For the first three academic quarters, Fruchthendler has had a group of eight students from those categories whose parents opted to send them to campus for supervision of on-line learning.

In anticipation of reopening our schools in a hybrid model, parent preferences for in-person or remote learning were gathered in October and again in November but plans to reopen did not occur. For the fourth academic quarter, the decision was made to reopen the district elementary schools for five full days of in-person instruction; families can choose to return students to school or can remain in an on-line learning mode. The school received feedback from parents that Fruchthendler families were struggling to decide largely because they did not want to risk losing their child’s current teacher for the remainder of the school year. Therefore, the faculty met as a team and the teachers decided to teach both in-person and on-line learners simultaneously. Based on our current survey results, if we had opted for separate teachers for the two groups our on-line learners would

have been placed in a multi-grade class with a teacher who might be learning several new curricula at once. Teaching everyone simultaneously will be another difficult challenge for our teachers, but we felt strongly that keeping classes intact with their teacher is in the best interest of all our students. Like so many schools all over the country, frequent changes to our operating model this year have necessitated flexibility and patience!

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

PART III - SUMMARY

Located at the base of the Santa Catalina Mountains in Tucson, Arizona, Jacob C. Fruchthendler Elementary has been an exemplary elementary school in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) for almost 50 years. We have a mix of neighborhood students and open enrollment students who attend our school. With our dedicated staff, large parent volunteer organization, and desire for excellence, our students are empowered to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

At Fruchthendler, you will always find students “Rocking the Firebird Way.” Our core values of kindness, respect, safety, and responsibility are the fundamentals of our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This PBIS code of conduct, in conjunction with being a Ben’s Bells’ Kindness Campus, lets everyone know the behavioral expectations in every part of the school. As a Ben’s Bells’ Kindness Campus, we are proud of our “Be Kind” mosaic and our Kindness Crew, a group of third through fifth graders who support this focus of kindness. Staff and students interact with kindness and respect; and, our campus is clean and organized to ensure student safety. Students show responsibility by taking ownership in their learning. Our principal has created a culture of caring, respectful, hard-working, dedicated, collaborative individuals who strive to excel. You can feel it as soon as you enter our doors – we are truly living our vision!

Our quest for excellence is seen across our school through our outstanding test scores and extra-curricular activities. Fruchthendler Elementary was awarded the A+ School of Excellence during the 2017-2018 school year. Fruchthendler is among the top performing schools at the Southern Arizona Regional Science Foundation fair. We sought to improve our reading scores on the statewide assessment; during the 2016-2017 school year we began using the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) reading program. We saw our reading scores improve steadily from a 55.6% in 2014-2015 to 81.8% pass rate in 2018-2019.

Our school is unique in two ways. First, since all our teachers have their gifted endorsement (or are within a couple of classes of receiving it), all our students are able to reap the benefits of gifted education. Second, we are an Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA) Gold school. This is a comprehensive program that impacts the education of every student at Fruchthendler. OMA Gold is a fine arts program that integrates the arts into the curriculum to assist in the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge. We are fortunate to have an OMA Arts Integration Specialist (AIS) and other artists who work with our students to integrate the arts into the curriculum. All students receive weekly lessons with our AIS and perform at least twice a year.

Fruchthendler has a strong Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Without our families, we would not be the school we are today. Our parents have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic to support our school. We have Art Parents who provide regular art enrichment instruction online with teacher supervision. Our PTA has provided art supplies which are distributed quarterly. Parents and community members helped to raise \$76,688 in state tax credit money this year. These donations provide funding for our school for technology and physical education (P.E.) instructors, tutors, and the OMA fine arts program. During the non-COVID-19 school year, our PTA provides families an opportunity to give back to the community through “Families Helping Families,” providing gifts, food, and household items to families in need during the holiday season. This year our Student Council and PTA collected food and monetary donations to support the Tucson Community Food Bank. Because of the changes due to COVID-19, our PTA has added new “Dining for Dollars” fundraising events at local restaurants that allow families the opportunity to see each other in a social, yet still distanced way during the pandemic.

This year the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated many changes. Our teachers have met the challenge of supporting the social and emotional needs of our students by providing daily community circles. As soon as school closed last March, our principal started to deliver her morning announcements via phone and email - a charming touch of routine to start the day! Students and staff are recognized in “shout outs” during these announcements. Our library assistant provides weekly curbside check-out of books. Parents have stepped up their support of on-line instruction, and communication between teachers and parents has increased. We are using virtual platforms for Professional Development, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Staff, PTA, Site Council, and Family Engagement meetings as well as Parent Teacher Conferences, Open House, and

Literacy Nights. We realize the importance of staying focused on our core values and our pursuit of excellence.

We are proud to be Fruchthendler Firebirds! We set high expectations and work hard as a community to reach them. Together, our students and families, staff, and teachers create a learning environment that is enriching, fun, and exciting, even virtually. When you visit our classrooms, you will see a community of learners that strive for excellence in all they do.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Teachers deliver curriculum to students using the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS) and participate in weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLC). During PLCs, teachers collaborate to develop Common Formative Assessments (CFA) to inform instruction and provide interventions. Data drives instructional planning, interventions, and enrichment in language arts and math.

Our English Language Arts (ELA) program is a diverse program that covers a variety of topics including history and science and allows us to easily integrate social studies with our ELA curriculum. Teachers provide whole-group instruction and small-group guided reading lessons. Teachers plan for two different lessons to teach the standards. The skills portion provides comprehensive instruction in foundational reading skills, language skills, reading comprehension, and writing instruction. The knowledge portion is centered around complex narrative and informational read-aloud texts. It focuses on background knowledge and vocabulary acquisition, analysis of complex text, and speaking and listening. Our teachers embed writing instruction and practice into all content areas. Teachers also use Next Steps Guided Reading Assessment to determine reading levels to inform guided reading groups, pinpoint instructional focus and select the appropriate text to teach the lesson. A universal screener is used with graded K-3 students to demonstrate reading readiness; we have moved from DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) to Waterford this year because it is an on-line screener.

In math our teachers use standards-based lessons for mathematical inquiry and problem-solving, which develop students' conceptual understanding and critical thinking. They provide explicit math instruction and inquiry-based activities so students can use multiple strategies to solve problems. Using formative assessments daily, weekly, or at the end of each topic allows teachers to pinpoint weaknesses and strengths in student understanding and allows us to work with these students in utilizing a strategy that will help them succeed and provide enrichment.

Science is important at Fruchthendler. Our district provides Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits, which include all the materials teachers need to teach the science standards in a hands-on, inquiry approach. Teachers use the assessments and observations to assess mastery and students' ability to problem-solve and collaborate with peers. This year teachers are using FOSSweb, an online version to teach science. Each grade embraces field trips as another way to enhance teaching science, this year in a virtual format. Fruchthendler has been an award-winning school at the Southern Arizona Regional Science Foundation (SARSEF) fair. Members of the Tucson science community judge our student projects, providing our students with meaningful scientific feedback. During the pandemic, students were provided the opportunity to compete in SARSEF, and we had many winners. Our fifth-grade students take the Arizona state science assessment; this assessment provides summative results of learning from kindergarten through fifth grade.

By integrating social studies and ELA we can build the background knowledge our students need to be more successful readers and writers, allowing greater depth in both topics and skills. Our students' writing has noticeably improved as their background knowledge expands. The social studies content in our ELA program engages them to question and think critically. Teachers use current events and other resources, such as Newsela and our multicultural library, to provide students opportunities to examine questions about social issues and the problems facing their own communities. Students demonstrate knowledge through cross-curricular projects, written reports, and presentations.

Everyone has been pleasantly surprised at the overall success of teaching on-line. Teachers have kept their same structure and instructional minutes, teaching live lessons for the entire school day. We believe in providing students with 90 minutes of uninterrupted language arts and math instruction daily. We have been fortunate to use most of the same curriculum (online) as in past years, along with additional digital resources. At the beginning of the year, assessments posed a concern because teachers felt many students were receiving help. Once we educated parents on the importance of true student data and explained it was used to inform our instruction, our parents resisted the urge to help. Teachers feel that using community circles, being face-to-face on Zoom, and "social hour" during breaks and lunch has helped students build

strong relationships with teachers and one another. They also feel student leadership skills and creativity have blossomed with the utilization of the on-line strategies they provide. They all agree, although difficult at times, they still can provide the one-on-one and small-group interventions online. Teachers especially appreciate the strong partnership they have with parents this year. One teacher recently stated, “Parents are seeing instruction firsthand through Zoom in their homes; they guide me in parent teacher conferences instead of the other way around. I had a parent during parent teacher conference outline specific skills and issues she wanted to address with her son. Her concerns matched mine.” This type of formative assessment from parents is invaluable. As one of our teachers commented in a recent meeting, “Parents are truly our co-teachers.”

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Fruchthendler is an Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA) Gold School. OMA is a fine arts program that integrates the arts into the curriculum to assist in the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge. We are fortunate to have an OMA Arts Integration Specialist (AIS) and other artists who work with our students to integrate the arts into the curriculum. In kindergarten, students work with two symphony artists on their ELA skills using instrumental music. In first grade, three musicians teach the writing process through opera. Each class demonstrates their understanding of opera, music, and storytelling through the creation of an original opera they perform. Our second graders have a dance teacher who teaches and supports the math and science curriculum in creative ways, helping the students interpret ideas through dance and movement. In third grade, our AIS teaches students how to read music and play the recorder. All students learn to play the violin with lessons twice a week in fourth grade. Fifth grade students have a choice between advanced orchestra or band twice weekly. All students receive weekly lessons with our AIS and perform at least twice a year.

All our classes have volunteer art parents in charge of teaching art enrichment lessons with teacher oversight. Art parents strategically plan lessons to align with the curriculum. They go above our expectations in planning, implementing, and displaying the work created during art lessons. Our hallways are full of a variety of student artwork showcasing many different mediums. Fruchthendler also has a kiln on site used to create clay projects. Through the years students have created ceramic art that decorates our campus. At the end of the year, the PTA sponsors an art show where each student’s favorite art piece is framed, displayed, and can be purchased. We are fortunate that our art volunteers have been willing to continue working with our students online.

Physical education (P.E.) plays an important part in educating the whole child. We are fortunate that our PTA provide funds for our P.E. specialist. Fruchthendler has award-winning track and cross-country teams. During on-line instruction students continue to receive weekly P.E. classes. In addition to these lessons, our teachers use an on-line program called Go Noodle and other strategies to get students out of their chairs and moving. It is not unusual to see teachers provide students with a choice of different physical activities they can do to answer questions and stay engaged. During the pandemic, we have encouraged families to participate in fitness-related activities.

Fruchthendler utilizes technology to teach students and support curriculum. We realize that students need 21st century technological skills to thrive. Therefore, we continue to provide all students access to daily technology instruction as well as weekly lessons with our technology specialist. Internet safety, coding, and robotics are a few of the topics taught. The use of technology enhances lessons, improves communication, and provides tools to improve student performance.

Fruchthendler students are busy learning through class instruction and project extensions. After-school interest-driven clubs provide opportunities for reinforcement of classroom learning. We are still offering several extra-curricular programs online during the school closure.

3. Academic Supports:

Fruchthendler utilizes the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework to meet the academic and behavioral needs of students. Our team meets twice a month to develop MTSS Plans for students who need support. This team consists of primary and intermediate teachers, a special education teacher, counselor, curriculum specialist, and the school's principal. Teachers and parents work together to develop targeted interventions for struggling students. All meetings and interventions have continued on-line this year.

Fruchthendler uses donated tax credit money to pay for tutors who provide small-group academic support in reading and math. In response to being online this year, all teachers participate in the new Academic Recovery Program by selecting three to five students who need support. Teachers work with the students three times a week for thirty minutes to work on missing concepts while the rest of the class is working asynchronously. Teachers also use breakout rooms in Zoom for differentiated instruction. Many teachers use the IXL intervention program for reading and mathematics instructional support. One teacher stated, "One benefit of these programs is that we can assign tasks that meet the students where they are." Another teacher stated, "In the online setting different students can have differentiated reading assignments without anyone knowing." These interventions are ensuring that students' needs are met.

At Fruchthendler we believe in supporting our diverse learners. Our teachers have received training to meet the needs of our gifted population. Currently, all our teachers have their Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) endorsement or are within a couple of classes of receiving it. This unique distinction benefits every student in the school since they are all exposed to enrichment and extension of learning. Identified GATE students are placed into classrooms with their intellectual peers to enrich their classroom discussions and increase their learning. Teachers use extension projects and menu choices to challenge their students' thinking and provide enhanced learning experiences. GATE students also receive 90-minute pull-out services from an itinerant GATE teacher.

The school's special education resource teacher helps the classroom teachers make the necessary accommodations and/or modifications to support students' learning as indicated in their Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Our school principal works with parents and teachers to create 504 plans. Both educators are sensitive to the needs of the students as well as the learning goals and objectives of the teachers. Each week, general education teachers email their lesson plans to our resource teacher, who then utilizes different materials and programs to teach the state standards while addressing individual learning needs. She provides additional support to students with IEPs as well as to other students experiencing challenges. Students needing speech or other therapies receive pull-out services from specialists. All special education services are provided online this year.

In addition to the school curriculum, this year our English Language Learners (ELL) receive on-line pull-out support services twice weekly from our English Language Development (ELD) teacher. She also provides additional individualized services to kindergarten students who need further practice in English acquisition. Classroom teachers work with our ELD teacher to ensure student progress in phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and English language fluency.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Fruchthendler is more than a school, it is a community. Our values of kindness, safety, respect, and responsibility are evident throughout. We work together to create a welcoming environment. Our students and teachers have developed a growth mindset regarding on-line learning. Teachers have provided a climate and culture of support and this has allowed our students to demonstrate excellence.

Teaching on-line has been challenging, but our teachers and parents have partnered to ensure we engage and motivate our students. Teachers create opportunities for students to engage with the academic and social/emotional content. They provide learning experiences using attention-getting materials - most from previous years as well as new digital resources. They continue to provide opportunities for collaboration, as well as time to reflect on learning using self-assessments and data chats. Students still demonstrate and complete tasks using high levels of critical thinking. Teachers have shared that there is more peer-to-peer teaching on-line, and students use creative approaches to demonstrate knowledge.

Teachers realized asynchronous learning was not working when we went into lockdown; so they adjusted quickly, providing live instruction using Zoom. Teachers have acquired on-line resources and have adjusted their instruction to provide many learning opportunities for students. Teachers provide choices, differentiated instruction, and project-based learning. They have embraced the use of breakout rooms to provide collaboration between students. Students work in groups according to skills and interests. The students who need explicit reading and intervention skills meet with the teacher. The grade-level and above-level reading groups meet in breakout rooms using digital books from our reading program or from the Pima County Library.

Teachers begin their day with community circle, providing students social and emotional support. One teacher shared that she has added a compliment circle. She stated, “I pair students. They stand and give each other compliments. The students have gotten to know each other so well that they are giving deep compliments about behavioral, emotional, and academic strengths rather than just - you have a cute shirt, etc.”.

During on-line instruction teachers have noticed that students have stepped up and taken more of a leadership role in their classroom. A teacher shared, “One of my students has started a Hungarian breakout room. Every Friday she prepares a PowerPoint presentation teaching her native language and culture. Her parents commented that they are, “so pleased with how her interest in her home culture has blossomed, and her classmates love it!”

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Fruchthendler, our vision is “Together, we Expect Excellence.” Not only do we expect this excellence from our school faculty, administration, staff, and students, but we also expect it from our families and community partners. All Fruchthendler stakeholders support our school to ensure that our students achieve the excellence we strive for in our vision.

Our Parent Teacher Association (PTA) works tirelessly to raise money for our classrooms. This year during the pandemic we have had limited opportunities, but our virtual Spell-a-thon fundraiser and our monthly Dining for Dollars events have been highly successful. Parents support our school by serving on the Science Fair Committee; they organize the event and recruit judges from the Tucson community. Students created Science Fair projects even during remote learning. Our art enrichment program continues online with parent volunteers teaching weekly lessons in each classroom. Our PTA provides the supplies for each child during our quarterly supply distributions; in this way all students can have the art supplies they need to participate in lessons.

During COVID-19 we have continued our partnerships with several community organizations. The Rincon

Rotary Club donated dictionaries to our third graders. Lawyers for Literacy, an organization of lawyers and judges, usually reads with students who need additional support. This year they provided a generous gift of books for our students. The Scripps Howard Foundation also provided books for at-risk students. Many local business owners and stores have provided our school with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for students and staff. We look forward to continuing our robust community partnerships when we return to in-person learning.

We need community support to provide our students with the supplemental learning opportunities they deserve. Since our school does not receive Title I funding we rely on donations from partnerships in the community. One way we overcome this challenge is by having students reach out to community donors through handwritten letters asking for Arizona tax credit donations. Students personally write about the meaningful programs like technology classes, tutoring and OMA that they enjoy due to tax credit donations. Letters are mailed to community members and followed by thank you letters when donations are received.

We believe it takes a team to help everyone be successful. Keeping this in mind we actively include our school Site Council members and PTA in decisions that impact our community and students. Overall, the active participation of our families and other stakeholders truly contributes to the success of our school.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Fruchthendler has a culture of professionalism. We recognize that parents expect our teachers and school to be accountable for student learning during the pandemic. Professional accountability drives us to ensure students develop a deep understanding of instructional content. Teacher preparation is crucial; they must not only master the content, but also present the information in a way that makes students want to learn.

Fruchthendler values the learning of adults; each week we meet for professional development (PD) and work as a team to make decisions that affect teaching and learning. These meetings are an integral part of the Fruchthendler culture with student achievement as the focus. During PD, spirited conversations and ideas are shared, and a collaborative approach is used when making decisions. Every voice matters as we discuss topics across grade levels and have courageous conversations about what is working and what needs improvement. This year our PD has focused on solving unforeseen problems, improving our technology skills, and learning to use new digital resources. Teachers have attended trainings offered by the district; they bring back information to share with the staff. Our principal supports our efforts to improve online instruction by providing time to share strategies we use to keep students engaged.

The principal provides “shout outs” to teachers and staff during morning announcements and weekly PD, recognizing them for their hard work and professional behavior. The principal sends weekly bulletins to staff providing positive recognition and detailing upcoming events for the week and the school year. Over winter break she wrote hundreds of personalized thank you notes to students thanking them for their participation, positive attitude, and perseverance in online learning.

The Fruchthendler PTA regularly provides appreciation gifts to the staff. The Site Council voted to provide teachers who supervise after-school extra-curricular activities a stipend to compensate them for their extra duty. The principal encourages this funding, showing that teachers’ time is valued.

Teachers communicate with parents regularly and address concerns they may have, but if the teacher feels that he/she needs extra support, the principal is always available. As we prepared to open for in-person learning, one teacher shared her thanks to the principal by stating in an email after PD, “Thank you! Through it all, I know we are supported, and that you will help us and set us up for success. We are lucky we have you and our supportive colleagues.”

4. School Leadership:

A successful organization is shaped by strong leadership, and a school is no different. Our students thrive because our community leads by example, and at the forefront is our principal. She has developed a teaching staff that shares her commitment to excellence; and, she inspires everyone to do their part to keep our

students safe and help them succeed. The philosophy of collaborative and participative leadership is fostered through our principal's open-door policy, shared decision-making, and recognition of the importance of maintaining relationships and morale. Her high expectations and attention to detail have invigorated the community, inspired the staff, and encouraged our students to strive for excellence.

Our principal has played an important role during this unprecedented time. Serving as our emotional cheerleader, she has repeatedly shared her belief in the staff's ability to handle the challenges of the sudden move to on-line learning and asked our community to provide grace and patience as teachers learned new technology and adapted the curriculum. She has been in constant contact with teachers and staff, attending to everyone's professional needs and personal situations. She delivered flowers to every staff member's home last spring and facilitated access to vaccination appointments. Her strong personal relationships with staff have helped us thrive as a community.

The entire school community benefits from our principal's ability to plan ahead and stay organized. These qualities have been crucial during the pandemic as district plans, by necessity, changed and then changed again. Each time our principal has been ready with schedule adjustments and procedures governing everything from morning arrival to lunchtime to dismissal, all with an eye toward keeping everyone in the building as safe as possible.

Our principal realizes the importance of being transparent by sharing her reasoning in making decisions. Before it was announced that we could implement simultaneous teaching, she discussed the idea with the staff, had several teachers share their knowledge and experience, and debated the pros and cons of the system. Once the district gave us approval, we were immediately prepared to share our plan with parents. The school leadership team meets monthly to discuss goals, make decisions, and modify plans. The principal led Site Council in the decision to use tax credit money to purchase safety dividers to protect students. Her focus is on what is best for kids and the parents appreciate this focus.

Our principal is a transformational leader, one who empowers all who walk through our doors and is driven to make Fruchthendler the best school in Arizona.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Fruchthendler teachers have received culturally responsive professional development on a regular basis. This training has been provided by the district Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction department. Lessons have focused on teaching our students to learn about information with a focus on different perspectives. Teachers have also been challenged to address stereotypes and implicit bias. TUSD and our Library Assistant work to ensure that students and teachers have access to culturally relevant library resources written from multiple perspectives. Teachers at Fruchthendler choose literature resources for their students to learn about a variety of viewpoints. Our ELA program provides rich cultural units of study and our librarian assistant gathers library books that support these units for students and teachers to enjoy. Teachers also provide students opportunities to examine questions about social issues and the problems facing their own communities.

Under a Federal Desegregation order there has been a requirement to ensure that the teaching staff at all schools in TUSD is diverse. Principals have had to focus on the ethnicity of the teachers that are hired for their school to ensure that there is a diverse teaching staff. As a result of this policy, we gained three teachers who provide a more diverse teaching staff.

Fruchthendler teachers often make home visits to learn about their students and to foster the relationship between the teacher, student, and family. This has continued during this on-line setting, reaching out to those most in need. We are fortunate to have families who support the education of their children; and, as a school we have worked to provide the resources necessary to support the education of our students.

Teachers engage students in conversation about the literature that they read and provide students with choice in terms of how they complete assignments. In this way students can choose projects that are congruent with their learning style and their cultural beliefs. When speaking about our move to online instruction, one teacher stated, “Teachers and kids have learned so much, kids step up to help each other.”

Siblings are working together from home. Older students lend support to their younger siblings on both technology and content. Parents as co-teachers are seeing the content that teachers teach and support their child in the lessons. This culture of collaboration has become an important part of the culture of Fruchthendler classrooms, and it continues to be present during online instruction.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

We have implemented several practices since our school closed in March 2020 to ensure our students are successful both academically and socially. The one practice that influenced many others was our ability to have a positive mindset; this allowed us to focus on what we could gain rather than what we lost. We continued to have high expectations, living our vision — “Together we expect excellence” — and nurturing our relationships, keeping everyone connected to Fruchthendler.

Setting and living high standards is a collaborative community process. Teachers worked together and identified new ways to present our curriculum in an on-line environment. Students and their families understood and embraced the idea that there were no free passes simply because our learning model changed. While other schools were providing asynchronous learning most of the day, we developed a different path by focusing on providing full-day live teaching which included daily positive interactions between teachers and students, keeping everyone connected.

Our principal developed a schedule with each grade level team that included our specials, such as OMA, technology, art, and PE. This provided a sense of normalcy and connectedness; school still felt like school.

We continued our data chats and prepared students for testing with the same level of expectations that we put forth pre-pandemic. As a result, our benchmark scores show little learning loss and that we are the top performing elementary school in our district. Our culture and positive mindset make a difference.

Our overriding focus has been finding ways to strengthen our relationships and connections within our school community. This year, we recognized that taking care of one another would be crucial to our mission of delivering an excellent academic experience. As the events and celebrations that play such an important role in school life were cancelled, we found creative ways to keep those traditions alive and create new ways of building community. Maintaining a routine and a connection to the school, the principal continues to make morning announcements via phone and email. The kindergarten team mailed packets of pancake mix to each child to make at home in place of our pancake breakfast. Teachers created personalized slide shows for Valentine’s Day. Being at home allowed students to share their pets and special family occasions, and themed breakout rooms have encouraged friendships. Virtual dance parties, science fair projects, Student Council-sponsored spirit days, art projects, and virtual field trips have helped the students have fun and stay connected.

We have soared because as a community we established the mindset that even if things are new, hard, different, and out of our comfort zone, we will not take the easy route; instead, we will dig in, explore, persevere, and achieve excellence!