

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 704 South Manlius Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fayetteville State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 13066-2598

County Onondaga County

Telephone (315) 692-1600 Fax (315) 692-1055

Web site/URL  
<https://www.fmschools.org/fayetteville-elementary-school/> E-mail elux@fmschools.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. Craig Tice E-mail ctice@fmschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District Tel. (315) 692-1200

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Ms. Marissa Mims  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	46	34	80
1	46	50	96
2	45	45	90
3	60	46	106
4	52	38	90
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	249	213	462

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 6.5 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 3.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 83.3 % White
  - 4.3 % 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: 4%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	492
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Arabic, Chinese, Turkish, Ukrainian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
6 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 17 %

Total number students who qualify: 79

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
48 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>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>27</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</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: 9
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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
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.	20
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	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 2020.

<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.

Our mission is to build on our commitment to academic excellence with a focus on authentic learning experiences, civic responsibility, and innovative programs.

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.

Based on feedback from a community survey, state safety protocols and facility space, our district (K-12) is operating under a hybrid schedule with three student cohorts. Cohort A attends Monday and Tuesday for in-person learning and is remote Wednesday-Friday. Cohort B attends Thursday and Friday for in-person learning and is remote Monday-Wednesday. Cohort C is fully remote Monday-Friday. We framed classes so that every child had a physical or virtual chair in a classroom, allowing for fluidity across cohorts based on families’ needs and creating a stronger sense of community for all students, regardless of whether they are a remote or in-person learner. On Wednesdays, teachers hold remote office hours, synchronous small group remote instruction, and offer parent support. Teachers have continued to engage in collaborative planning and professional learning.

In general, students remain in their classroom as a pod with the exception of some Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and special education services. Special area classes take place in the classroom or outside following appropriate safety guidelines. On Wednesdays, fully remote students participate in special area classes. Special area teachers have implemented a number of solutions to continue providing a quality education within the new hybrid schedule.

To maintain district consistency and program fidelity, we utilized as our primary curricular resource research-based instructional videos created by Teachers College as well as our own

teacher-created videos. Teachers have integrated learning management systems to enable this hybrid environment: students and teachers K-2 use Seesaw, and grades 3-4 use Schoology. A shift from spring 2020 remote instruction is that all teachers are now following a set pacing guide for all content areas that was created with teacher input districtwide to ensure equitable core instruction regardless of the cohort or class placement. To account for identified gaps in our spring instruction, we adjusted the 2020-21 instructional calendar to teach some units in the current school year that would typically have been taught in the prior grade. Technology has been instrumental in our success. To ensure equity, we switched to a 1:1 device program to accommodate remote learning.

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**

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The Fayetteville Elementary (FE) community actively engages all participants to create an environment where students are supported in their academic, social-emotional, and cultural development. Our students, staff, teachers, and parents collaboratively build this culture through in-classroom instruction and supporting programs, such as our character education program. FE is part of the Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District (FMCS D), and we embrace the district's vision to inspire students and promote personal success by innovative programming that enables students to develop a curious mindset.

FE is located in Central New York in a small suburb of the City of Syracuse. We are surrounded by universities, teaching hospitals, and an agricultural and manufacturing industry. Our culturally and socio-economically diverse population is a direct result of families moving here to study or work in these institutions or industries.

Our school motto is to make a "Better Environment for Everyone (B.E.E.)." An extension of our school district's hornet mascot, we often say, "FE is the Place to B.E.E." Our school pledge reminds us every day of this expectation, and we partner with our community to ensure our students feel safe, supported, and respected. Our daily pledge is: "To Make a Better Environment for Everyone, I will B.E.E a problem solver, B.E.E caring, B.E.E. respectful, B.E.E. responsible, and B.E.E safe." Reinforcing these messages is one way in which we have created a positive school climate for our students and their families and our staff.

Our monthly faculty meetings allow staff time to collaborate and share learnings from conferences, promote schoolwide events, and share new techniques with one another, such as our weekly "Wonder Wednesday" questions that are posed to students to foster collaboration and creative thinking. Recognizing the importance of literacy, new library books are highlighted. In addition to the monthly meetings, classroom teachers meet daily to refine lessons and share innovative practices to encourage student inquiry.

The staff and families of FE have worked hard to create a positive school climate and a culture that celebrates kindness, compassion, and inclusion. Our character education program has been instrumental in creating and maintaining this culture. The program is grounded in the tenets of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and has been adapted to meet the unique needs of our students and community. We have five behavioral schoolwide expectations, which are taught and reinforced through direct lessons, assemblies, and literature and are embedded in our school pledge.

We recognize and reward all students for prosocial behaviors and celebrate students and staff who go above and beyond. Encouraging these prosocial behaviors helps us build a strong positive school climate and reinforces our values and mission. Recognitions include classroom certificates, slideshows at assemblies, pictures taken with our school mascot, and special award breakfasts with staff and family. Our assemblies bring the entire school community together to celebrate our students and staff as they bring to life our school motto of creating a better environment for everyone.

To further support our character education program, we created the B.E.E Council, which is a program unique to FE. Each classroom elects two students as grade-level representatives, and they meet monthly to discuss issues that are important to students and to brainstorm ways to improve our school community. Recent B.E.E. Council projects include installing an outdoor water fountain, creating a living laboratory in the school courtyard, and purchasing a bench for the playground, which we call a buddy bench, so that no student feels left out. The B.E.E. Council also plans events to support our local community. Over the last several years, the council has raised money and collected donations for various non-profit organizations, including the Samaritan Center, Clear Path for Veterans, and The Salvation Army. Through the B.E.E. Council, students learn collaborative decision making.

To foster and celebrate our school community, parents and guardians create skits each year that highlight our school traditions. Staff are invited to make cameo appearances, and show proceeds are donated to a local charity.



We have adapted our programming to meet the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. While we cannot gather together physically, we have turned to virtual assemblies that are filmed and shared with the entire school. Our main goal of the assemblies is to reinforce our school community's behavioral expectations. Classroom teachers share the videos with their classes on the same day, and students and staff wear school spirit shirts on these days, creating a feeling of community among all students, including those learning remotely due to the pandemic. Our B.E.E. Council worked closely with the Samaritan Center, which serves people in need, to donate essential winter items like hats, gloves, and socks to be distributed safely in the local community.

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

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

The FE curriculum is aligned with New York State Next Generation Learning Standards (NYS NGLS) and FMCS D’s vision of inspiring students and promoting personal success. We provide a rigorous curriculum guided by research on best practices that focus on authentic learning experiences, civic responsibility, and innovative programs. Since moving to remote learning in the spring, the district hired a full-time online learning specialist to support teachers in developing their courses and building an online community that takes into account student academics and wellness. Throughout the school year on Wednesdays, staff members have participated in targeted professional development focusing on remote teaching and learning skills and concepts.

NYS NGLS in English Language Arts are addressed through a workshop model comprising explicit, whole class mini-lessons and independent/small group work. This model recognizes and emphasizes the interrelationships of reading, writing and phonics along with the transfer of skills and strategies. Our current instructional model maintains our robust curriculum and workshop framework. Units of study for reading, writing, and phonics are interrelated and emphasize a spiralled progression that has provided additional support for students during the pandemic. Students benefit from the exposure, practice and mastery cycle that spans multiple grades. Authentic, diverse texts are utilized across all instructional areas, both as teacher models and from which students can select. Writing with purpose and audience is at the forefront of our lessons to support authenticity and voice.

Data-driven decisions are made for each student. Formative assessments include observations of students, work samples, rubrics, checklists, progressions, and conferring. We have continued to utilize aimswebPlus and Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmarking as universal screening measures for comparative data to identify striving students and to assess our curricular gains and losses during the pandemic.

The mathematics curriculum is aligned with NYS NGLS and provides organized and sequential lessons that build strong mathematical skills. A primary emphasis is for students to develop problem-solving skills and articulately express mathematical reasoning. Students explore concepts through an investigative model that includes whole-class discussions, collaborative groupings, and independent practice. This curricular approach promotes teaching and learning in meaningful and connected ways and builds a positive mathematical community.

While mathematical tasks presented to students remain consistent with previous years so as to maintain the conceptual instructional philosophy, it has been critical that we continue to assess and adjust. Teachers maintain classroom-based formative assessments within units and districtwide summative assessment of math unit content. Teachers rely on student observations, informal assessments, and student work samples. The teacher is the facilitator of student learning, therefore, instruction is adapted based on formative assessments. This allows teachers to make informed decisions about the practice and reteaching of concepts. In addition, summative assessments are districtwide end-of-unit assessments. These exams drive decisions about students’ instructional needs.

Scientific thinking is developed through our experiential-based science curriculum. FE uses the Smithsonian-based curricular units to support the implementation of the New York State Science Learning Standards and 1996 standards based upon the state’s implementation timetable. Remote instruction allows for at-home, hands-on science experiments. Teachers design and create instructional video lessons with content and experiment instructions embedded. All science experiments and STEM challenges have been modified for household materials and intentionally designed for equity. Student work is scaffolded with a journal for all grade levels to capture authentic student work. The journals are a combination of written and drawn observations and are instrumental in giving teachers a lens into students’ thinking.

Science texts are incorporated into lessons and provided in text and audio format. There is a mix of direct instruction, observation, and hands-on experimentation. Science extensions include STEM challenges, nonfiction book collections, and additional differentiated experiments to meet students’ needs. Classroom

teachers incorporate discussion questions and read-alouds to introduce and review unit concepts. Future units are continually adjusted based upon student performance and needs. Student journal responses guide the instructional approach.

Our social studies curriculum is focused on the concepts and practices delineated in the New York State Social Studies Framework. Students work through packets that coincide with lessons delivered online and practice engaged citizenship while exploring the world around them. Across grade levels, the curriculum shifts from *Myself and Others* (kindergarten), to *My Family and Other Families* (grade 1), to *My Community and Other Communities* (grade 2), to *My Country and Other Countries* (grade 3), and to the *Geography and History of New York State* (grade 4). Through this scope and sequence, students develop an understanding of who they are in the context of our diverse and democratic society. Formative performance tasks are part of each lesson. Tasks vary widely and include illustrating, sorting activities, labeling diagrams, labeling maps, note taking, annotating, writing letters, and writing short responses. As in previous years, formative assessments occur in every lesson and serve as stepping stones that guide students from one lesson to the next.

**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:**

Education of the whole child is made possible through a student’s experience in other curriculum areas, referred to as “special areas.” All students attend physical education (PE) every other day and art and music on a four-day rotation. Every student receives library and computer instruction at least once a week. Health is taught on a trimester schedule in grades 1-4.

In art class, students use a wide variety of mediums and techniques to explore self-expression. The art curriculum combines traditional elements and principles of art and also explores contemporary literary references and diverse contemporary artists. Students learn to develop their artistic voice and problem-solving techniques in order to investigate such concepts as culture, identity, and emotions through the arts. Our school celebrates the accomplishments of our young artists by displaying their artwork throughout the school, community, and at districtwide art shows.

The Orff-Schulwerk Model, Dalcroze Technique and the use of Solfege Syllables are the foundation for our music instruction program. Using these methods, students sing, dance, and play instruments while learning age-appropriate rhythmic and melodic patterns. Concerts provide all students an opportunity to showcase learned dances, instrumental skills, and vocal prowess. Grade 4 students have the opportunity to develop their musical skills by playing a string instrument in the FE Suzuki Program.

Our staff shares in Shape America’s goal for PE, which is “to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity.” Physical education is inclusive and developmentally appropriate with a curriculum rooted in state and national standards. Students have opportunities at all grade levels to improve fundamental motor skills and movement patterns and to deepen their knowledge of health-enhancing behaviors and engage in activities that help achieve social/emotional benchmarks. In addition to our regular PE curriculum, a district health teacher pushes into each classroom to provide targeted instruction that emphasizes personal health, fitness, hygiene, and safety.

Our scaffolded library curriculum, which is aligned with the National School Library Standards, fosters a culture of reading and lifelong learning; promotes print, digital, and media literacy; guides the research and inquiry process; develops responsible and caring digital citizens; introduces students to coding and

programming; supports active learning and personal creativity through makerspace opportunities; and strengthens collaboration and problem solving through the use of Breakout EDU activities.

In the hybrid model, teachers are engaging all students through the use of virtual classrooms, creating original instructional videos, and providing greater access to library materials with home delivery. In order to meet district health and safety protocols related to COVID-19 and limit student transitions, music, art, and library teachers push-in to the classroom for in-person learning. Teachers continue to follow their curriculum despite the space challenges and limited use of equipment shared by students. PE teachers created lessons and designed a new teaching area to effectively utilize outdoor space while at the same time continuing to implement a district curriculum that aligns with state and national standards.

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

FE utilizes a three-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) model to meet all students' literacy needs. Student growth is closely monitored and supported. Progress of students who are below grade level is monitored in language arts on a weekly basis. Data is collected quarterly, and the RTI Committee analyzes the data from aimswebPlus and F&P Benchmark Assessment System. Our RTI Committee (principal, psychologist, reading specialists, speech-language pathologist, and classroom teachers) analyzes information and ensures that research-based interventions are provided. Annual data is analyzed to adjust core curricular needs. This is a fluid process, and the goal is to meet students' needs and allow them opportunities to grow as readers.

This spring, based on assessment data, we determined that kindergarten and first-grade readers needed additional support. We developed a before-school program to target early literacy skills and minimize academic regression. We are also planning to offer a summer school in-person option for families.

Students' common assessment scores in mathematics are analyzed to determine eligibility for math AIS. Districtwide assessment data are analyzed biannually to determine service eligibility. Students in grades 2-4 who demonstrate limited understanding of grade-level math skills (identified by performing in the bottom 10% of district and state scores) receive AIS support twice each week. This includes a combination of push-in and pull-out supports tailored to each student. Standards-based instruction is targeted to remediate specific skill and concept gaps based on progress monitoring. Assessment data is used to measure students' progress toward end-of-year standards, reveal skills that need re-teaching, and evaluate program effectiveness.

Our workshop model lends itself to differentiation. In addition, the FMCS D Academic Enrichment Program extends, enhances, and enriches curricula for all students in grades K-8. The academic enrichment teacher co-teaches with classroom teachers to promote inquiry. Students in grades 2-8 also have an opportunity for small group pull-out instruction to enhance research skills, and all curriculum is designed to adapt to students' diverse learning styles. Although challenging, we have maintained our programming for all students regardless of their cohort.

FE's special education population includes autism, orthopedic impairment, other health impaired, learning disability, speech-language impairment, and visual impairment. Students eligible for special education are serviced through various models, such as consultant teacher, resource, and 12:1:1. Inclusion is an integral aspect of our programming, and students in a 12:1:1 program are fully integrated into regular education classrooms. Special education students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that include student goals aligned with state standards, and curriculum is differentiated and modified based on each student's needs. In 2015, 0% of FE special education students received a Level 3 (minimum score considered proficient) on the New York State English Language Arts Grade 3 Assessment. It increased to 17% by 2019. For our 2015 NYS Grade 4

science exam, 22% of special education students received a Level 3, which increased to 39% in 2019.

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

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

FE is committed to providing an optimal learning environment in which all students feel a sense of belonging. Teachers foster a classroom climate of exploration and inquiry that engages students and motivates them in and out of the classroom. Our B.E.E. Buddy program has been successful in helping to build community by matching classrooms and planning community building activities. For example, a fourth-grade class paired with a kindergarten class work together on character education initiatives. We also promote leadership skills in a number of ways, including organizing such jobs for fourth graders as bus buddies, kindergarten helpers, and filling the school bird feeders.

Student engagement and exploration is an integral aspect of our math program. Teachers pose deep, open-ended questions to students, and students are active participants in making sense of mathematical concepts through the use of physical and virtual manipulatives. Games are a motivating way to encourage and embed review and practice. Within the hybrid model, teachers have worked to maintain as much mathematical discussion as possible—both among students in the classroom and between student cohorts. We are proud of, and rely on, the technology-based support offered to our students to ensure meaningful engaging practice. We use Greg Tang Math, which helps students with flexible thinking and meaningful practice. In addition, at the K-2 level, we rely on the ToDo Math app that is installed on all student iPads. For grades 3-4, we use I Know It Math, which is a differentiating math practice website.

“FE is the Place to B.E.E. a Reader” is a new virtual program that we adapted this year in collaboration with our library media specialist and Home and School Association (HSA) Students are engaged in themed days, and teachers give out incentives to encourage students to read at home. A highlight has been our Mystery Reader program. Staff volunteers made videos of themselves reading picture books that were shared with students and posted on the school’s Schoology homepage. Many professionals volunteered their time, and students enjoyed trying to determine who was reading the book. Engaging the entire school through this program was a success.

FE is a member of The Tri-State Consortium, whose membership includes high-performing school districts from Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. We actively collaborate through study groups and site visits. This networking has allowed our school to share innovative practices and to engage in professional dialogue to enhance our students’ learning experience.

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

We are committed to supporting and fostering partnerships that ensure all students feel a sense of belonging and as integral members of our school community.

We work closely with our parent-led HSA, which enhances the school experience for all students. It supports such activities as back-to-school picnics, field trips, guest speakers, author visits, after school courses, and language clubs. There are multiple opportunities for families to be involved. Connections are made through such events as grade-level activity nights that allow families to experience the PE curriculum firsthand, and families help celebrate student learning during an annual gymnastics event and an end-of-year field day. These events promote the importance of physical activity and cultivate the home and school relationship. In addition, families attend curriculum nights, open house, parent visitation, and adult/student hobby showcases.

Because of the pandemic, the HSA reimagined our annual back-to-school picnic and held an “Anti-Social/Ice Cream Social.” Families drove through the school bus circle, saw our school mascot and received a treat. For Halloween, it organized a similar event in which families were invited to bring their students to school for a drive-thru trick-or-treat experience and to drop off carved pumpkins that were displayed outside the school. Inflatable Halloween decorations created a festive atmosphere that students and their families enjoyed.

Our Home-School Liaison has been instrumental in supporting our students, especially our remote learning students. We collaborated with our local Lions Club, which supported some of our families in need during the holiday season and made student desks for those who needed to set up work spaces in their homes. These desks allowed students to be more present and engaged during remote instruction.

We closely work with two local libraries to keep books in our students' hands and encourage a love of reading. The local librarians visit our students at school, and we take a walking field trip to the closest library to create that community connection. The libraries offer opportunities for students to engage with 3D printers and other STEM activities.

We also look for and create opportunities to collaborate with local experts to support our school community. For example, we promoted to our families a parent night featuring a local clinical psychologist who talked about childhood anxiety. This same clinician also presented to staff during a recent staff development day. These types of collaborations help support student success.

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

Research demonstrates that highly-skilled and expert teachers are the most important school-based factor contributing to student achievement. Teachers are strongly encouraged to engage in sustained professional development to advance their skills, share expertise with colleagues, and support the district mission, vision and strategic planning goals. The ultimate goal of all professional development at FE is to positively influence student achievement through teacher growth and expertise.

The district Professional Development Team (PDT), which includes FE teacher and administrator representation, plans opportunities throughout the school year to meet the needs of teachers with varying experience levels and a wide range of discipline areas. Professional development is dynamic, evolving, and occurs throughout the school year. Activities and offerings are research-based, aligned with district and building goals, and matched with individual staff and student needs. In addition to districtwide professional development days offered three to four times a year, professional development is supported through such activities as graduate courses, workshops, curriculum development, conferences, grade-level collaboration meetings with specialists, and a wide array of customized FMCS D in-service courses. Training for teaching assistants, special education and general education teachers and leaders has taken place on topics of RTI, computer and assistive technology, and the TEACCH Model, which offers principles to support students with autism. Over the past two years, FE teachers actively participated in school-sponsored professional book clubs and study groups. Books read include, "Daring Greatly" by Brene Brown, "How to Raise an Adult" by Julie Lythcott-Haims, and "How to Be An Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi. These activities and a high level of teacher participation contribute to a culture of high expectations and excellence.

This past school year, all FE teachers participated in weekly professional development that focused on online learning pedagogy and instructional changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers quickly and masterfully developed specialized skills to establish online learning communities to address student learning in a hybrid instructional model. Examples of weekly topics include Building Netiquette and Digital Literacy in an Online Learning Classroom, Student Engagement in an Online Learning Environment and Collegial Sharing of Best Practices. Additionally, teachers had the opportunity individually and in grade-level teams to collaborate and plan with the district's online learning specialist, a new position the district created specifically to support teachers during the pandemic. The teachers at FE demonstrated outstanding commitment and perseverance during this challenging time, further underscoring the culture of excellence.

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

The principal fosters the leadership potential of every member of the school community with the ultimate goal of furthering student achievement. The principal seeks the voice and participation of all staff and encourages leadership roles through such committees as the building action planning team, literacy team, professional development team, and district curriculum council. For example, the building action planning

team meets throughout the school year to review and refine short-and long-term goals. Our literacy team and a literacy coach promote instruction and support teachers. This committee traveled to Lesley University for extensive training, and the collaboration led to nationally recognized authors and trainers from Lesley University coming to our district to provide direct training for our K-4 teachers. All teachers who attend conferences have the opportunity to share their expertise with their colleagues at faculty meetings or optional breakfast meetings. The building principal supports best practices and continuous improvement through modeling, coaching and shared accountability. As an instructional leader, the principal attends conferences and focuses on instruction. Feedback is given to teachers through informal classroom visits and observations, which result in professional dialogue to celebrate successes in instruction as well as opportunities for improvement. Our literacy coach meets with all teachers to work on individualized goals to improve instruction. Each of these groups is ultimately focused on student achievement.

We support new teachers through a mentor program and encourage all staff to take advantage of in-service courses taught by their colleagues. On average, 50 in-service courses are offered annually. Teachers teaching teachers promotes an atmosphere of true collaboration. The principal encourages teachers to take risks and try new innovative practices. During this current school year, the principal has supported teachers as they navigated technology that, for some, has been new and challenging.

Administration has worked very closely with classroom teachers to ensure that all students are safe and engaged during this hybrid schedule. Communication has been key to our success. The building principal, counselor, psychologist, and home-school liaison meet at least weekly to discuss how to best support students. Home visits have been arranged, and parent conferences have been set up.

To support our teachers during the pandemic, we implemented targeted professional development. Wednesdays are remote instructional days for all students, which allows teachers time to participate in collaborative planning and professional learning. We intentionally scheduled remote office hours and parent support times, which have been critical to student success.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

To address the diverse needs and backgrounds of our students, families and staff, we intentionally focus on equity and culturally responsive teaching and learning. Staff purposely choose current literature and primary sources that are inclusive of people from different racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and ability backgrounds. Our library media specialist collaborates with teachers to ensure our library collection is representative of all people and that read-alouds feature diverse characters and experiences. Teachers discuss all family structures and choose books that reflect those structures. During read-alouds, they discuss characters' feelings and perspectives to help students understand, identify with and feel for characters who are similar and different from them. The principal and counselor annually visit classrooms to read books that demonstrate acceptance to help students understand New York State's Dignity for All Students Act. We seek out guest speakers who support and enhance instruction. During our We All Learn Differently (WALDO) event, students "walk in the shoes" of people with physical or mental disabilities to understand their challenges. Our mentoring program allows staff members and students to spend non-academic time together fostering meaningful relationships.

Throughout the year, we focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) and character education. Teaching empathy is critical to supporting all students. Direct lessons through SEL and character education are the ideal route for this message and teach students vocabulary and skills about empathy, emotion management and problem solving.

Our Site-Based Team (SBT), a teacher and parent group, worked on a program that solicited families and staff to share their cultural backgrounds at an evening event called "Won't you B.E.E. My Neighbor," modeled after the caring theme of Mister Rogers. Due to the pandemic, we



plan to reschedule the event. The SBT has previously hosted workshops to help families practice the same emotional and behavioral management strategies and mindfulness skills that are used at school.

The FMCSB Board of Education established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and it is creating districtwide goals. Board members, district administrators, and faculty are reading common books to promote a districtwide dialogue, and professional development is offered to help teachers continually grow in this area. For example, one course recently offered is “Building Civic Engagement in the Classroom.”

We address current events and social movements in age-appropriate language. For example, the principal addressed the recent national unrest by recording a video for students with the message that kindness matters.

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

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The one practice that is most instrumental to our school's ability to successfully educate and support students is the prioritization of the social-emotional well-being of students and staff, particularly given the stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have adapted our SEL curriculum to target learning skills, empathy, emotions management, and problem solving. All grades K-4 students have participated in virtual SEL lessons. We utilize the Second Step SEL curriculum, which focuses on skills students need to be successful learners and engage in prosocial behaviors.

Particular emphasis has been placed on teaching and practicing emotional regulation skills to provide students with strategies to manage strong feelings as we know students are under unique stressors due to the pandemic. Teaching empathy, assertive communication, safety awareness and problem solving has also been a priority. For students who require additional support and practice, small group and individual counseling has been provided in-person and virtually.

Weekly meetings with administration, home-school liaison, school psychologist and counselor to discuss student engagement concerns or families who may require additional supports have been instrumental in our success. We monitor student attendance and gather teacher feedback to make decisions about how to best help our struggling students. Now more than ever, we are reaching out directly to parents via Google Meets, phone calls, emails and stopping at student homes to offer words of encouragement during this challenging year and opportunities for parents to share their frustrations, challenges and concerns so that we can problem solve with them. Elementary students in particular rely on their parent or guardian and by ensuring that the parents have a positive social-emotional outlook, we are more likely to ensure that the student's own social-emotional well-being is positive as well.

We have focused on lifting teachers' spirits through random acts of kindness and such activities as Friday coffee carts, morning trivia games with prizes, and an "Orange you glad it's Friday" event in which we place fresh oranges on all staff members' desks. Administration keeps open lines of communication with staff to truly listen to teachers and to offer suggestions and ideas as teachers navigate this unprecedented year. We know if our staff are feeling positive, safe, and cared for, those feelings will trickle down to our students and ultimately create an optimal environment for teaching and learning.