

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

Official School Name Fonda-Fultonville K-4 School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 112 Old Johnstown Road P.O. Box 1501  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Fonda State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 12068-1501

County Montgomery County

Telephone (518) 853-3332 Fax (518) 853-1455

Web site/URL https://www.fondafultonvilleschools.org E-mail mcollins@ffcsd.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\* Mr. Thomas Ciaccio E-mail tciaccio@ffcsd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fonda-Fultonville Central School District Tel. (518) 853-4415

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Matthew Sullivan  
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	25	25	50
K	45	36	81
1	34	46	80
2	42	37	79
3	39	34	73
4	43	42	85
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>	228	220	448

\*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
  - 0.4 % Asian
  - 0.2 % Black or African American
  - 4.2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 92.2 % White
  - 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: 13%

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	23
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	35
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	58
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	448
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish, Japanese

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 448

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

55 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>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>34</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1

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.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 19:1

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	95%	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.

<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. 2009

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

At the heart of our school is a mission rooted in partnership with our community in order to empower and challenge every student to become a lifelong learner and responsible citizen.

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.

FFES offered a remote only model with a full semester commitment to all of our families. Quarters 1 & 2 had 50 fully remote PK-4th grade students. We then opened the remote only option up again for semester two (quarters 3 & 4) and had 48 fully remote PK-4th grade students.

FFES opened as a hybrid model (for those who did not opt for remote only instruction) for the 2020-2021 school year. Our hybrid model had students in person for three full weeks followed by one remote week of learning.

In November of 2020 we removed the remote week of learning for our PK program.

In January of 2021 we removed the remote week of learning for our K students.

In March we removed the remote week for grades 1, 2 and 3.

In April we removed the remote week for grade 4.

Effective April 12, 2020 all students who were enrolled in our hybrid model were all in person every day, every week.

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 Fonda-Fultonville Central School District mission is to work in partnership with our community to empower and challenge every student to become a lifelong learner and a responsible citizen. The Elementary school staff knows how important it is to provide a strong foundation. Our school is filled with dedicated, hard-working staff that work as part of a larger team to foster a learning environment that exemplifies high expectations for student success. Visitors are greeted by a friendly office staff which is followed by a physically attractive building where the hallways are decorated with student work and the “Brave Traits”: Respect, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Perseverance and Citizenship. Most recently we hung our “No Place for Hate” banner. Both the elementary and middle school buildings joined the No Place for Hate movement to create a more equitable and inclusive climate two years ago.

Fonda-Fultonville Central School District is a rural community nestled in the Mohawk Valley along the Mohawk River in upstate New York. The school is the center where many come together to celebrate academic success as well as athletic, art and musical success. Fonda-Fultonville’s traditions are steadfast, and the small town feel of the school mirrors that of the community. In fact, this is a destination school for families seeking a safe and supportive community with a rich tradition of academic excellence.

Each month a grade level virtually shares a presentation that highlights one of the “Brave Traits.” Students receive quarterly awards that recognize academic and social achievements. Each Friday “Caught Being Good” tickets are randomly drawn for each grade level and students come down to select a prize. Our fourth graders read the daily morning announcements which include: birthday celebrations, the daily lunch/weather, the Pledge of Allegiance, reciting our School Promise (No Place for Hate), and a joke of the day.

Our FFCS families work together, in partnership with our teachers and staff to provide the supportive environment that is necessary to enable each and every child to succeed as a learner and citizen. The entire educational community of Fonda-Fultonville Elementary has worked incredibly hard to maintain our Balanced Literacy Model (using Lucy Calkins Units of Study as core Phonics, Reading and Writing tools). Teachers continue to work towards mastering the pedagogical practices to teach Balanced Literacy with embedded professional development and support. The new elementary math program, Ready Classroom, has strengthened teaching practices while facilitating meaningful discourse that encourages all learners to develop a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. During the 2019-2020 year the district adopted a “Data Protocol” process to collect and analyze data in five-week intervals to drive instruction. The elementary staff uses multiple data points to inform instruction as a best practice. These practices have created professional habits that reinforce a growth mindset and results in student success.

Fonda-Fultonville Elementary has been recognized as a high performing school over the past fourteen going on fifteen years. Prior to COVID-19, the 3rd and 4th proficiency level on the ELA assessment (2018-2019) was 68% level 3 or 4, compared to the state proficiency of 50%. That same year the 3rd and 4th proficiency level on the Math assessment was 75%, compared to the state proficiency of 52%. Schools across our region and extending to the Capital Region ask to visit or schedule meetings to learn about our instructional practices, core curricular tools and pedagogy that yields success year after year.

While teaching through a pandemic is not ideal and presents many challenges, here at Fonda-Fultonville Elementary our staff has been resilient, embracing every roadblock as an opportunity to become more resourceful. Through the use of technology we have developed effective strategies and practices that we will continue to use well beyond this pandemic. We are proud of our success, but are steadfast in our commitment to continuously improve as we maintain the high expectations that all National Blue Ribbon Schools must possess.



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

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

Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School’s curriculum includes reading, writing, math, science and social studies. As much as possible, we integrate writing, science and social studies into our reading and literacy program. However, each K-4 student receives thirty minutes of additional science. Our students begin to receive science and social studies as “separate” subjects when they enter the fourth grade. We believe this will prepare students for when they enter fifth grade and begin rotating through departmentalized classes.

Our school uses a balanced literacy program, students see reading and writing modeled, share in the reading and writing with the teacher, are coached, practice independently, and are actively engaged in word study. Pre-K teachers use Foundations and the thematic units provided by the New York State Department of Education that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. K-4 teachers use the units of study in Writing to provide explicit instruction in opinion/argument, information, and narrative writing. The teachers use learning progressions to observe and assess students’ writing. K-4 teachers use the units of study for teaching reading. The units provide a comprehensive, cross-grade curriculum in which skills are introduced, developed, and deepened. The performance assessments help teachers progress monitor, provide actionable feedback, and help students set goals for their reading. Our K-2 teachers use the units of study in Phonics as an instructional pathway to introduce high-leverage phonics concepts and strategies to support reading and writing. Our 3-4 teachers engage students in word work using spelling lists, increasing high-frequency words, and through centers. Our K-4 students also use an online program, i-Ready reading, to help students become thoughtful, analytical readers. Each student takes a reading diagnostic and is then placed on a personalized instruction pathway to meet each reader at their level.

Our math program is a comprehensive program that makes math accessible to all students. The program includes an instructional design that allows students to take ownership of their learning and rigorous practice opportunities that build conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. Our K-4 students also take a math diagnostic test and use an online math program (i-Ready math) to support students’ individual pathways. The tailored instruction addresses splintered skill, provides remediation and as needed acceleration to support individual student needs.

Our teachers follow New York State’s guidance and P-12 Science Learning Standards. The P-12 Implementation Roadmap serves as an at-a-glance guide for our teachers. Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School uses the P-2 and 3-5 Learning Standards documents which show science and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas and crosscutting concepts. Our teachers have access to online videos and lessons which includes standards-based videos, reading materials, quiz games and activities. Teachers bring in hands-on, minds-on learning experiences as often as possible as well.

The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary Building uses the New York State Education Department K-12 Social Studies Framework to prepare students for college, careers, and civic life with courses that are rigorous and aligned to the New York Learning Standards for Social Studies. The Framework provides K-4 vertical articulation in Social Studies Practices.

The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School adapted its curriculum in June (2020) through horizontal and vertical grade level meetings, knowing that our students would present with significant gaps in their knowledge due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 16, 2020 New York State schools closed in two-week increments that forced schools to pivot to remote only instruction. New York State schools remained remote only for the duration of the 19-20 school year, nearly 14 weeks. Pre-K met with K, K with 1st, 1st with 2nd, 2nd with 3rd, etc. not only in the Elementary School but across departments all the way up through 12th grade. The vertical team conversations discussed priority standards that were not taught via explicit instruction due to our COVID circumstance and identified what standards and/or skills would need to be addressed during the 20-21 school year. Teachers provided asynchronous instruction primarily from March 16, 2020 - June 24, 2020.

The Fonda Fultonville Central School District prioritized the elementary grades and created a model that

would allow for expansion. In the first half of the year the Elementary Building's hybrid-model has pre-k, k-4 in person for 3 full weeks followed by a remote week. In April the Elementary was able to have all Pre K - 4 students in-person on a daily basis aside from those families that chose remote only.

The remote weeks in the first half of the year transitioned from asynchronous to fully synchronous remote learning. Significant professional development and training was provided to all teaching staff. In addition to synchronous learning, instruction was adapted to increase student engagement. Teachers embedded Social Emotional Learning and mindfulness activities into their daily routines. Teachers and students interacted 1:1 or in small groups via Google Meets, Flip Grid, Google Docs, Google Slides, Seesaw Learning (PK-1), etc. for all core areas: reading/ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies/history/civic learning. As a Google District, we chose these approaches to complement the technology available and to use technology to augment and modify instruction to the extent possible. Our shared Google Drive provided a place for teachers to not only track learning standards, but to ensure cohesion from unit to unit, and ultimately across grade levels.

The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School has used a tiered instructional process (Response to Intervention) with fidelity for decades. In light of the pandemic and not having New York State 3-4 assessment results, pre-K and K teachers screened every incoming student, K-4 teachers administered a benchmark Fountas and Pinnel reading assessment or early literacy screening the first three days of school to all students individually. Gathering the F & P assessment data in three days as opposed to traditionally four full weeks was essential. All K-4 students took an i-Ready reading and math diagnostic within the first three weeks of school. Previous Academic Intervention Specialist and/or teacher recommendations combined with the in-person data launched us into the tiered instructional process. As a result: the lowest 10% of students in each grade level were placed in Academic Intervention Support tier-three groups by the third week of school, teachers were able to differentiate instruction and provide tier-two supports, i-Ready instruction for both reading and math provided technology-based support to all students in school and outside of school (remote weeks and often as homework), which resulted in every student having access to both high quality tier-one instruction and supports to enrich or address splintered skills and close achievement gaps over time.

During the 2019-2020 academic year the Fonda-Fultonville Central School District adopted a Data Protocol. All grade levels and departments analyze a set of data every five-weeks to enhance, modify or change pedagogy. The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary building used both formative and summative assessments to analyze and improve student and school performance. Beyond the i-Ready reading and math diagnostics and Fountas & Pinnel reading benchmarks teachers analyzed: Lucy Calkins thematic units of study pre/post assessments, Ready Math Classroom assessments, student writing with a common rubric, K-4 Generation Genius assessments, Social Studies unit quizzes, tests and projects, oral reading fluency and more.

We believe the gains we have achieved can be attributed to our hard work in becoming a school where instructional staff provides quality instruction that is grounded in scientifically based research. During the 2019-2020 year Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School had a full-time literacy and math coach. The coaches were supervised by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, received quality professional development with the Center for Educational Leadership, BOCES, coach Professional Learning Communities and more. The coaches provided embedded coaching, facilitated small and large group professional development and supported both building and District initiatives. The District has found value in the Data Protocol, vertical team/department conversations, a literacy coach, a math coach, and using data to inform all instruction prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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

Fonda-Fultonville Central School offers pre-kindergarten for four year old students. Our pre-kindergarten program offers standard based instruction in all core curriculum areas. The students are instructed using Foundations, Creative Curriculum and NYS Learning Modules for ELA and Math instruction. These

programs aid in offering a balanced literacy approach to learning. Foundations is a systematic multi-sensory, hands on approach and is motivating to students. The students who receive Pre-Kindergarten Foundations instruction go on to Kindergarten with strong pre-literacy skills. The Creative Curriculum includes developmentally appropriate goals and objectives that closely follow New York State Next Generation standards. The four main categories of interest are: social/ emotional, physical, cognitive and language. Our pre-kindergarten program also offers ELA and Math instruction using the New York State learning modules (Engage NY). Engage NY ELA domains and math modules prepare students for the rigor of ELA and math instruction in Kindergarten.

Our pre-kindergarten program made many modifications/adaptations to meet the challenges posed by Covid 19. Our pre-kindergarten classrooms were redesigned to allow students to remain six feet apart and protected by a clear NYSDOH approved barrier. Students were also offered the choice to learn fully remote or take part in our hybrid program where most learning took place within the classroom. Students were instructed using Seesaw, an interactive computer learning program, google meet and in-person instruction.

Pre-kindergarten teachers meet consistently with Kindergarten teachers to align academic standards on a regular basis. The teachers discuss what standards are overlapping and where instruction should begin in kindergarten as well as any standards that need improving throughout the pre-kindergarten school year to prepare students for kindergarten.

Students who participate in Fonda-Fultonville pre-kindergarten score higher on the Kindergarten entrance assessment mostly scoring in the 80 - 99 percentile ranking. This indicates that the students are beginning kindergarten with early literacy and early math skills firmly in place. Students who attend pre-kindergarten at Fonda-Fultonville Central School also receive early intervention if necessary which aids in school success in the primary grades.

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

Our students have access to 8 classroom Chromebooks, a Chromebook cart and a computer lab to engage in activities that correlate with their classroom instruction. Students also receive art, music, physical education and library/media classes on a weekly basis.

All K-4 students receive forty-minutes per week of library/media instruction where the media specialist and/or a teaching assistant makes every attempt to support literacy activities taking place in each classroom. The media specialist communicates with the teachers in order to correlate and enhance instruction.

Music classes take place for each elementary student forty-minutes per week. Classes and curriculum follow the standards for New York State and students receive hands-on experiences in performance and instrument playing. To conform with COVID-19 regulations only our 4th graders play an instrument (recorder). Each student has their own recorder and half of each class leave to play in our choral room. Students playing the recorder are 12' or more apart while the other half of the students engage in a music lesson or activity in their classroom. Every other week the 4th graders alternate between playing recorders with the Music Teacher and in-class instruction taught/supervised by a Teaching Assistant.

Each grade level performs at one of our "No Place for Hate" assemblies which also recognizes our "Brave Traits", Respect, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Citizenship and Perseverance. These traits promote high standards of behavior and character not only in the Elementary building but across the District. Due to COVID-19 each grade level (K-4) pre-recorded a performance that was viewed in each classroom once a month. The positive feedback and improved sound quality has the Building Leadership Team deciding if this would be another way to showcase student, class or grade level performances moving forward.

Physical Education/health/nutrition classes are held twice per week (forty minute sessions) for our students and the curriculum follows the New York State Standards. Prior to COVID-19 our students swam in the District pool for one of the two Physical Education sessions. Despite the challenges of social distancing and adhering to Montgomery County rules and regulations that comply with COVID-19 our K-4 students have had Physical Education outside of their classroom twice a week. Students enjoy playing in the Elementary

Gym, outside on the large fields, using the outdoor track and more. During the pandemic yoga and station based high interval training circuits are amongst the top favorites.

Art classes are held for forty-minutes each week and the curriculum follows the New York State Standards. Prior to COVID-19 the Art teacher hosted an Elementary Art Show for our families where works of art from every student in the Elementary School was displayed. Student art is still on display throughout the hallways of the Elementary School; however families see images of projects shared via Google Slides and see their child's artwork as it is sent home in January and June.

Students have access to programs like Odyssey of the Mind and an elementary art club. In addition a robotics unit is taught in 4th grade. We also partner with the office of mental health to provide an after school program. Our after school program provides targeted support (in collaboration with the classroom teacher), recreational activities, homework assistance, crafts and more.

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

Fonda-Fultonville Elementary uses a tiered intervention model. All k-4 students take the i-Ready math and reading diagnostic at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Academic Intervention Teachers, classroom teachers and administrators have access to historical data from the diagnostics. The classroom teachers individually meet with the principal and Academic Intervention Specialists to review their data in the beginning and middle of each year. Fonda-Fultonville believes in triangulating data, therefore classroom formative and summative data is analyzed as well as teacher anecdotal notes and observations. When students perform above grade level teachers provide enrichment opportunities to challenge those students. i-Ready instruction creates an enriched learning path for these students, in addition to teachers providing texts to match the accelerated student's abilities. Similarly with math beyond i-Ready math pathways teachers can use enrichment activities and lessons from the math teacher toolbox to challenge students who excel in math.

When students have an achievement gap of 10 or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of any subgroup, the students are placed into a tier-three intensive intervention with an Academic Intervention Specialist to diagnose and prescribe an intervention. The specialist progress monitors students regularly to see if the intervention needs to change or if a student is ready to exit the intervention group. In tandem the classroom teachers are skilled at providing tier 2 supports to all students below grade level.

If a teacher is noticing a lack of progress with students receiving tier two supports they refer them to the Instructional Support Team that is facilitated by the Building Principal and includes the school social worker, a literacy or math coach (during the 2019-2020 year), a Speech Pathologist, Academic Intervention reading or math teacher and sometimes a special education teacher. The Instructional Support Team always includes the student's parents or caregivers. The team discusses what strategies the teacher has tried, how the student has responded to interventions or strategies and brainstorms new interventions to try both in the classroom and often at home. The team reconvenes after six-full weeks and discusses the outcomes. Sometimes after a second or third Instructional Support Team meeting the team refers the student to the Committee of Special Education for further testing.

Students identified with disabilities receive special education services. In the Fonda-Fultonville Elementary building students often require: speech and language services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, counseling, a co-taught classroom placement where specially designed instruction is received, and occasionally special class for math or literacy. Students with a 504 plan or Individualized Education Plan have an annual review facilitated by the Director of Special Education.

Students who are classified as English Language Learners receive push in and/or pull out services from a certified English Language Learner (ELL) teacher. The district has 1.5 full-time ELL teachers.

Migrant and/or homeless students are supported by the social workers and the Director of Special Education in partnership with the building principal. Our students and families that do not have consistent access to enough food for every person in the household (food insecurity) receive weekend bags of food to bridge the gap between breakfast and lunch meals received at school through weekends or vacations. This is called the “Backpack” Program. The Fonda-Fultonville Central School District also provides Thanksgiving meals, winter holiday gifts and jackets to students or families in need.

The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School in partnership with local businesses and agencies believes in meeting the needs of each student academically, socially, and emotionally. We believe our students must be well fed, feel safe, provided access to a quality education that meets each child where they are at while exposing them to the rigor of grade level expectations. We believe this is the best recipe for the whole child excel. This is what makes Fonda-Fultonville Elementary so unique and special.

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

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

The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School continues to engage, motivate, and provide students with a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth by increasing access to in-person learning for students in our hybrid-model, while offering both synchronous and asynchronous learning for families that opted for a full remote only learning experience for the 2020-2021 year.

Since the beginning of the pandemic the Fonda-Fultonville Elementary and District has reimagined education and created a detailed reopening plan for September, 2020 that was viewed as an exemplar model across Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery Counties and beyond.

In March of 2020 the entire district was remote and mostly asynchronous to get us through the last day of school. Student engagement dwindled from March to April, April to May and May to June. The elementary building is not one-to-one with devices and many of our rural students have been affected by broadband inequality. Many of our students without broadband were unable to access online curriculum, had limited access to their teacher and were unable to complete research or access online curriculum. Students were relying on phone calls and physical materials to be delivered by the district school buses to help bridge the gap. The Fonda-Fultonville Central School District Superintendent of Schools testified before members of the New York State Legislature on 9/9/20 during a public hearing about improving access to high-speed internet in rural areas. The Superintendent said, “A student’s ability to thrive in a digital world should not come down to where you choose to live.” The staff and families of the Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School appreciated his advocating on their behalf.

The District reopening plan focused on safely reopening, increasing student engagement, training our staff to provide synchronous learning all while providing a myriad of opportunities to share our plan and seek input from all stakeholders. The District offered a fully remote option (with a full semester commitment) and a hybrid-model for September of 2020. In the elementary building 48 Pre-K-4th graders were fully remote and the remaining 400 students were part of our hybrid-model which had students in-person for three weeks and remote one week a month. Our goal was to continuously build on this model until all students were in-person. By the end of the first semester, we had grades PK-3 fully in-person and by April 12th all grades up to 8th grade were in-person learning 100% of the time. This gradual change from 75% to 100% in-person learning increased student engagement and was notably the largest adaptation towards our students academic, social and emotional growth. It may also have had the largest impact on the stress staff, families and students were experiencing a full year into the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

At the heart of the Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School is a mission rooted in partnership with our community in order to empower and challenge every student to become a lifelong learner and a responsible citizen.

The Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School has found the most success in working with family and community members for student success and school improvement. The elementary school has a strong Parent Teacher Student Association that supports building and grade level events. The PTSA supplies rewards and incentives for our Character Education and Literacy Programs.

Our Backpack Program works in partnership with several local agencies who provide generous donations and support. Amongst those who help us address food insecurity are the local food pantry, Hill and Markes, an award winning, family-owned wholesale distributor of foodservice and other supplies, and Stewart’s Shops, another family-owned and operated chain of convenience stores and gas stations in New York and Vermont.

Our school partners with institutions of higher education to host student teachers and education students who

need prerequisite hours. Union College, The College of Saint Rose, Russell Sage College and the State University of Albany are some of the institutions we partner with.

Throughout COVID-19 we have worked hard to engage the parent community and keep open lines of communication. Specifically, over the summer we had a series of reopening panels that focused on key elements we planned for in collaboration with Montgomery County Health and the New York State Department of Education. Parents and community members sent in their questions and concerns ahead of time so each presentation could address the questions and concerns. In addition, our Building Leadership Team has a parent representative to contribute towards our shared decision making.

Although COVID-19 has created many challenges such as not having visitors in the building, schoolwide assemblies, etc. at Fonda-Fultonville Elementary we have learned to rely on each other, think outside the box, use technology to engage both students and families, and we have steadfastly remained optimistic and proactive in our overall approach.

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

Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School promotes teachers feeling valued and supported. Teachers have a voice, their ideas are considered and most importantly listened to by not only their peers, but the building administrator. Each monthly faculty meeting begins with staff shout outs which could be a success in or outside of school. After the building administrator completes routine walk-throughs (non-evaluative) often thank you notes or verbal words of praise are delivered to the teacher that same day. The walk-throughs not only make the administrator visible on a regular basis, they also allow for every teacher and class of students to have a brief interaction with the administrator. Fonda-Fultonville Central School District has always been data-driven, which allows teachers to “own” their data. The Data Protocol showcases areas of growth and achievement while simultaneously revealing negative trends in skills or standards. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction works with building administrators to support teams/grade levels/departments and individual teachers with creating an actionable plan that can start the next day or week to address deficiencies which most often are changes to the teacher’s pedagogy.

Fonda-Fultonville Central School District anticipated the anxiety that teaching remotely or synchronously would have on instructional staff. The district immediately took a proactive approach. We found out on March 12, 2020 that schools in New York State would transition to a “two week” remote only model. That evening the Network and Systems Administrator worked with the Director of Curriculum of Instruction to create a platform on our website. The next morning all district staff met in the auditorium to learn about the plan and answer any questions (there were many). Every grade/team/department then began to post daily assignments and in many instances prerecorded lessons for the first four to ten days. That same day: office staff helped photocopy materials, Teaching Assistants helped pull accessible books for all students to have a bag of “just right” books for students, Chromebooks and chargers were deployed to students and families most in need, hotspots were deployed, transportation helped sort materials by bus slot so items could be delivered to students doors at the start of the remote window, and the food service crew helped make meals to be either picked up or delivered to families in need. Fonda-Fultonville Elementary’s full-time Math and Literacy coaches played an instrumental role in partnering with teachers and posting activities to enrich student learning. Every staff member worked collaboratively to ensure that all Fonda-Fultonville students Pre-K through twelfth grade had what they needed to be successful.

Our Technology Coach and Network and Systems Administrator provided professional development to small groups and large groups by topic. As a Google school much of our professional development focused on the application of the google platform and all of its capabilities. Teachers received training over the summer, after school, during planning periods, and throughout scheduled staff development days. In the elementary school, the grade level common planning block supported specific technology training that each grade level could attend together. This increased collaboration and built internal capacity and expertise within each grade level. “Success is determined not by whether or not you face obstacles, but your reactions to them. And if you look at these obstacles as a containing fence, they become your excuse for failure. If you look at them as a hurdle, each one strengthens you for the next.” (Ben Carson, Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story)

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

A leadership philosophy is essentially a belief system that guides decision-making. At Fonda-Fultonville Elementary there is a building administrator, a grade level leader per grade level, a department chair for Academic Reading Intervention Services, a full-time social worker, a department chair for each special area, a Building Leadership Team, and a Parent Teacher Student Association. Our shared belief system is that all decision-making must support what is best for students. Our elementary building ensures all perspectives are accounted for by listening to each stakeholder.

As a small school district, the Director of Special Education, School Business Administrator, Superintendent of Schools, the Middle School administrator and the High School administrator all support the Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School (often daily). Fonda-Fultonville Central School District is exceptional. This is due in part to the collaborative approach towards supporting each student throughout their entire academic career until each student crosses the stage with a diploma in hand. We not only want our students to be college and career ready, but we also want our students to be outstanding citizens.

School leadership ensures that policies, programs, relationships, and resources focus on student achievement. Policies are reviewed by the Board of Education on an on-going basis. Programs are carefully vetted before selected to align with learning standards, units of study and our FFCS Brave Traits. The administrator of Fonda-Fultonville Elementary has positive relationships and solid communication skills. Staff and parents appreciate having emails and phone calls returned within 24 hours. When a face to face conversation is requested there is an open-door policy with the building administrator. Due to COVID-19 protocols there have been more Google Meets in lieu of in-person meetings throughout the 20-21 school year. Parents are appreciative of the focus on safety and the ease of virtual meetings.

Lastly, our school has been a safe learning environment largely in part to our COVID coordinator, school nurses, amazing buildings, and grounds crew! The Fonda-Fultonville Central School District has followed all health and safety guidelines from the New York State Department of Education and Montgomery County Public Health. The Elementary Principal's role has worn some new "hats" this year such as, assistant contact tracer, monitoring proper mask wearing, and keeping an eye on social distancing during transitions and outside recess. In addition to COVID health and safety, Fonda-Fultonville partners with local law enforcement to ensure the safety of all students and staff. A school resource officer is on site PK-12 on a daily basis and is an integral part of our overall culture in the elementary building. The health and safety committee meets regularly and the elementary principal attends all meetings to ensure the elementary building is adhering to all safety guidelines.

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

Fonda-Fultonville Central School District is a community school that serves about 1,350 students within a 140 square mile area. Even though Fonda-Fultonville is comprised of 10 different townships within three counties there is a sense of togetherness and community pride that echoes throughout this agriculturally rich area. Our student population is not very diverse, however, we do have a large population of migrant families within our community. Our diversity lies within our socioeconomic status with a poverty rate of 50%. To meet the COVID-related economic downturn, this year we provided free and reduced priced lunch to all of our students. Our school addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff by creating cultural awareness and empathy through books, research, and teaching.

In our elementary school, we celebrate our differences. As an example, at one of our monthly assemblies students watched as their classmates that are English Language Learners (ELL) shared their cultural heritage. This was an amazing opportunity for students to wear clothing from their native land, sing songs in their language and teach the entire school about their culture at large. Prior to COVID-19, foods were shared from each student's country as well.



Fonda-Fultonville Elementary is very selective about the books we purchase for our classroom libraries and school libraries. Throughout the 2019-2021 our school literacy coach purchased culturally responsive books for students to listen to or read. The “windows and mirrors” metaphor was at the forefront of all book purchasing. A mirror is a story that reflects your own culture and helps you build your identity...A window is a resource that offers you a view into someone else’s experience. We understand that students cannot truly learn about themselves unless they learn about others as well. As a school that is not as diverse as other area schools, it is important that students have books that open up the world beyond their own experience. We understand the power of a great classroom library. Every classroom in Fonda-Fultonville Elementary has a robust classroom library that offers a multitude of culturally responsive texts.

Our ELL teachers are an asset to our students, staff, and parents. Newsletters and forms are always sent home in a families’ native language. The principal often shares articles with grade levels or the faculty to read and discuss. Recently, an Edutopia article was shared: How leaders can improve their schools’ cultural competence. Although the article was from 2016 it addressed helping students learn to accept differences is one way to overcome the hate we see in so many facets of our society today. This is an example of how the elementary building reinforces our “No Place for Hate” initiative while understanding “cultural competence.” “Cultural competence means first understanding, as educational leaders, that we come to school with our own sense of who we are, and that unless we are reflective about our own identity and how it creates a lens through which we view the world, we will not be able to honor the identities of the students and faculty we serve.” (How Leaders Can Improve Their Schools’ Cultural Competence, Chris Lehmann, 2016).

At Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School we embrace culturally responsive teaching to help inform classroom environments, classroom libraries, curricula, and instructional methods that reflect diversity and experiences of all students.

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

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Fonda-Fultonville Elementary School employed a multitude of strategies to help teachers successfully educate and support students since school closures began in March of 2020. Our school identified the vertical team meetings as the one practice that has been most instrumental to help drive academics.

Our teachers have a common planning time which allows for horizontal collaboration and alignment. In 2020 we used some of our Superintendent Days and contractual professional development after school sessions, to have vertical team meetings. These meetings increased communication across grade levels and from building to building so teachers, collaboratively, could identify expectations at each grade level, share prioritized learning standards, and plan ahead from June 2020 to September 2020. The final vertical team meetings in June 2020 gave a space for teachers to communicate what skills, standards or deficits they anticipated students to have due to March through June closures for remote only teaching. The elementary building anticipated the “summer slide” in literacy skills to compound the negative impact on our students. Before the last day of school in June, every department and/or grade level had an opportunity to not only discuss anticipated deficits but more importantly share tools and resources to help plan forward. Each vertical meeting had an administrator present and careful notes were taken by grade level chairs and/or department chairs. Meaningful conversations about what should be retaught, spiral reviewed or embedded into an existing unit or topic were invaluable. Teachers went into their summer well equipped to make adjustments for teaching and learning for the 2020-2021 school year.

These vertical meetings did not only impact academic instructional plans, but it also focused on social-emotional concerns as it related to specific individual students and families. Our crisis counselor and school social worker developed plans and reached out to community agencies to support families and individual students struggling with isolation and depression. These vertical discussions ensured teaching and counseling staff were made aware of students that truly needed emotional support and/or coping strategies to navigate through these challenging times.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction adopted the vertical meetings as a best practice not only for the entire Fonda-Fultonville School Central District. The focus of vertical meetings will be fluid and remain beyond COVID-19.