

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

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 600 Liberty Pike  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Franklin State TN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 37064-2923

County Williamson County

Telephone (615) 790-0892 Fax (615) 790-4714

Web site/URL https://libertyelementary.fssd.org/ E-mail pattonamy@fssd.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. David Snowden E-mail DSnowden@fssd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Franklin Special School District Tel. (615) 794-6624

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. Robert Blair  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

---

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 0 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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	17	10	27
K	48	56	104
1	43	39	82
2	51	25	76
3	59	47	106
4	48	35	83
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>	266	212	478

\*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):
- 0.5 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 3 % Asian
  - 8 % Black or African American
  - 31 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 52 % White
  - 5 % 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: 7%

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	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	29
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	445
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Spanish, French, Hindi, Chinese, Arabic, Albanian, Tamil

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 13 %  
62 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 39 %

Total number students who qualify: 186

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>8</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>16</u> Developmental Delay	<u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	28
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	17
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

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%	97%
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.

A school of academic excellence that empowers all students to find their passion and purpose in life through collaboration and partnership with home and community.

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.

Liberty Elementary began the 2020-2021 school year in August with a couple of options for families to choose from. Families could choose to send students to school in person, or they could choose a virtual model of instruction. To start the year, third and fourth grade students spent the first 2 weeks of school learning remotely. This reduced the capacity of our building and allowed us adjust to COVID-19 protocols while to only serving our kindergarten through second grade students. Each grade level has at least one teacher who only serves students virtually while the rest of the team serves in person learners. This model of instruction has been in place throughout the school year.

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**

---

The lure of great barbeque and music festivals is not the only reason people flock to our city; Franklin is known for its outstanding school district, Franklin Special School District. Liberty Elementary is proud to be one of the five elementary schools that serve the families in our district. Even though Williamson County is one of the wealthiest counties in the Nation, Liberty Elementary is a Title 1 school, and we are honored to serve a diverse student population. Our Hispanic families make up 31% of our school population and have influenced our school culture in such a positive way. Without a doubt, our faculty and staff embrace all ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds and are constantly looking for ways to support and celebrate our diverse family.

Our school day always begins with a positive and light-hearted televised morning announcements led by our fourth graders, that broadcasts Liberty news, current weather, the lunch menu for the day, and also highlights an important leader or event in a special segment called, "Now You Know!" Our Principal and Assistant Principal take this opportunity to communicate any concerns or celebrations to the student body and encourage students to do their best during their day. Without fail, they also always end the broadcast with a corny joke. Homeroom teachers then conduct Morning Meetings within their classrooms to continue that feeling of support and encouragement that promotes the great sense of family we all have at Liberty.

"Teach purposefully, learn daily, and love unconditionally" is our school motto we build our instructional programming around. Liberty Elementary prides itself on understanding the importance of teaching foundational literacy skills consistently and purposefully. We have implemented explicit phonics instruction in all grade levels over the past several years with the 95 Percent Group resources. We are quickly closing those phonics gaps, and our teachers are increasing their capacity in the process. Our third and fourth graders are learning the six different syllable types with the explicit implementation of our Multisyllable Routines. We have also embraced an explicitly taught program for morphological awareness called Vocabulary Surge. Our second, third, and fourth graders are learning how to attack words by identifying the Anglo-Saxon and Latin affixes, as well as the Greek combining forms. We continue to celebrate reading at our school with Read Across America Week each year when our students dress up as their favorite book characters, teachers perform in skits to highlight classic books, teachers and students participate in a Vocabulary Parade, and students compete in a book writing competition. Our students love competing for the Golden Lion Award given to the class that passes the most math lessons with our Curriculum Associates math program, i-Ready. Number Talks happen daily across the school which allows our students the experience of learning math conceptually in lieu of rote memorization.

Liberty is known in our community as a school that embraces and celebrates the diversity of our students and families. We pride ourselves on this reputation. Our school community comes together each year to celebrate our diversity in many different ways. We show our students and their families that they are loved unconditionally at our school. One of the ways we celebrate the various ethnicities at our school with Unity Day. Our families gather in our multipurpose room and set up booths displaying the clothes, food, music, and culture of their country. Our fourth graders participate in a Black History Living Museum. The students choose an historic African American who they have studied and then perform a short autobiography of their person when viewers are present. Cinco de Mayo is always a big celebration at our school. Students have the opportunity to show the beautiful culture of Mexico through their speeches, poems, songs, costumes, and dances.

It has been a challenging year, not just at our school, but around the world. With the exception of our third and fourth graders learning remotely the first two weeks of school, our entire student body has been on campus since August. We have been intentional on the ways we teach our state standards while implementing our Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies. Our faculty, staff, students, and parents have risen to the occasion during this time and have shown tremendous grit and resilience throughout the school year. We have gone above and beyond to ensure that our students are receiving the education they deserve. One of our most touching moments as a school community came at the end of last May after we had been apart from our students for two months. Our teachers were missing our students as much as the students were missing their teachers. As a school family, we decided to have a neighborhood car parade for

our students and their families. Our faculty and staff decorated their cars with balloons and streamers, wrote “We miss and love you!” on our cars. We then proceeded throughout ALL of the neighborhoods in our school zone, honking and waving as we drove by. We were touched by all of the families waving back from their yards with their signs expressing their love for our teachers and school. It was a powerful reminder of just how important it is for us to build strong relationships with our students and families.



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

---

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

Instruction at Liberty Elementary School (“Liberty”) is grounded in the idea that all students can learn and is guided by the Tennessee State Standards in all subject areas. These standards set the expectation by which students will show mastery and drive the instruction of our teachers. Instructional approaches and strategies are chosen based on what will promote our students reaching their academic goals aligned to the standards.

Using the state standards, pacing guides are created for reading/ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies by teams of teachers from across our district which provide the scope and sequence of the learning that will take place throughout the school year. This year these pacing guides were modified to account for the standards missed during the closures last spring. The missed standards were added to the following grade’s pacing guide as prerequisite skills in a way that would make the learning of the missed skills logical and cohesive. During this challenging school year our in-person students have been able to remain in-person with the exception of necessary absences due to illness or quarantine. This has allowed the curriculum, instruction and assessment for our in-person students to remain mostly unchanged from previous years. Masks and face shields have been worn, and social distancing enforced. Teachers have been creative with their use of Promethean Boards and seating arrangements. Manipulatives continue to be used because of their effectiveness and are sanitized after each use. Our student to technology ratio being 1:1 has allowed our students to pivot from in-person to remote learning as necessary. Our virtual and remote students have received the same high level of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as we have adapted how we serve them by allowing them to complete the same assignments and assessments using Kami and submitting them electronically via Google Classroom. They are attending live Zoom classes for instruction as well as watching pre-recorded teacher lessons and online videos, attending virtual field trips, and completing asynchronous activities. Intervention for our virtual and remote learners in Tiers 2 and 3 has been provided since the start of the school year as well. Materials are put together for parents to pick up weekly or bi-weekly to ensure that explicit, systematic, and multi-sensory instruction is delivered. Like our in-person learners, our virtual and remote learners are also progress monitored and instructional coaches conduct fidelity checks for these interventions monthly as well. Our district has invested in GoGuardian which screens students’ activity online for signs of bullying, self-harm, or other concerning behaviors. GoGuardian has been essential in ensuring safety and mental health support for all of our students as they gain 21st Century skills.

Our Tennessee State Standards in Language, Reading, Speaking & Listening, and Writing determine the daily focus for instruction at Liberty Elementary. We put a necessary emphasis on foundational literacy standards such as print concepts and phonological awareness in the lower grades in order to achieve reading and writing proficiency in the upper grades. Our district adopted McGraw-Hill Wonders as our reading resource for our ninety minute reading block which focuses on student-centered learning, small-group teaching, and mini-lessons with embedded support for English language learners. We saw the need for more explicitly taught foundational literacy resources and therefore purchased and implemented the 95 Percent Group Phonological Awareness Lessons and Phonics Lesson Libraries (both Basic and Advanced) for intervention. These interventions screen students and provide the explicit instruction needed for the specific skill deficit. These interventions begin with print concepts and end with silent letters and complex consonants. Due to the success of this intervention, our school has also implemented the Core 95 Percent program in Kindergarten in order to provide solid Tier 1 instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, and handwriting. Our third and fourth grade teachers have also been explicitly teaching the Multi-Syllable Routines in order to give struggling readers word attack strategies, and we have recently introduced Vocabulary Surge for deeper morphological understanding of Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek root words and affixes in the upper grades.

It is important to note that Liberty has been carefully following the Say Dyslexia Bill requirements that were passed by the Tennessee Legislature in 2016. Based on benchmark and spelling screener results, students may be given additional “characteristics of dyslexia” screeners. Those students who fall below percentiles will be guaranteed explicit, systematic, and multi-sensory phonics instruction. Coaches monitor the instruction of all intervention groups monthly in order to ensure intervention is given with fidelity and

provide immediate feedback to the intervention teachers.

Teachers use Curriculum Associates and iReady Math following the Tennessee State Standards. In order to prepare mathematically proficient students our teachers have 65 minutes or more for math each day and focus on conceptual understanding. By allowing students to work with manipulatives to build foundational mathematical concepts, students strengthen their conceptual understanding of mathematical practices. Students move through the progression of concrete, representational, and abstract as they work toward procedural fluency. Students are actively engaged in collaborative discourse through accountable talk and robust discussions where students present their mathematical ideas and defend their thinking to their peers. After completing a book study on the book "Number Talks" by Dr. Sherry Parrish, the majority of our teachers are versed in using Number Talks to develop number sense and mental math strategies.

Science standards are taught using the Stemsopes Curriculum. All units follow the 5E learning model and provide students with the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways. Students are continually challenged to engage, explore, explain and elaborate on a daily basis through rich vocabulary, science journals, hands-on exploration, content connection videos and STEM projects. Teachers also supplement with informational text during Reading and Language Arts instruction to enhance learning. At Liberty, we give our students the tools necessary to become critical thinkers and problem solvers.

At the beginning of each unit, teachers build background knowledge through explicit vocabulary instruction using informational texts, pictures, or charts. Teachers have access to Discovery Education, an online resource, that helps bring science "alive" for our students. Students use their response journals in a variety of ways to show evidence of learning. From making predictions to drawing and writing about their hands-on exploration, student journals are just one tool that encourages students to explain and elaborate on their thinking.

Throughout the school year, our students have encounters with real-world situations either in person or through virtual field trips. In November, Kindergarten students wrap up their study on animals with a visit from a local turkey farmer. Affectionately called, "The Turkey Lady", she brings in her turkeys and tells how she takes care of them. Curious students are given the opportunity to ask questions about life on the turkey farm as well as get up close and personal with these beautiful creatures. After their unit on plants, our first grade students annually take part in the celebration of Arbor Day with a visit from Keep Williamson Beautiful, an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. Their program, Tree Wise, is an educational program for students in grade K/1. Students culminate their learning by being taught how to protect and care for our trees. Students are then given their own sapling home to plant. After learning about weathering, erosion, and volcanoes, second graders were tasked with building a fence to protect a house from an erupting volcano. After working with classmates to design the protective barrier, students were only given tape, craft sticks and playdoh to build their fence. Liberty teachers are committed to bringing the real-world to each and every student.

Liberty's teachers make it a priority to integrate our Social Studies curriculum with Reading and Language Arts. In alignment with the Tennessee State Standards, teachers use a variety of complex texts filled with rich content and vocabulary to help our students fully grasp where we've been and where we need to be as a society. From informational text to historical fiction, our students are exposed to books they probably would not read on their own. These texts along with supplemental articles, virtual field trips and engaging videos from Studies Weekly help mold our students into responsible citizens of their community and school. Fourth grade students annually hold a food drive for a local food bank and students and parents participate in a school-wide campus clean up. Not only are our students learning the importance of map reading skills and text features such as graphs and captions, but they are also learning how to be productive members of society.

Each year students are tiered academically in reading and mathematics based on their beginning of the year benchmark assessments. This data is used in grade level Data Meetings to analyze trends across the grade level, in individual classrooms and within identified subgroups. Students in the lowest tiers are assigned to intervention groups specific to individual needs. These intervention groups receive specific, explicit intervention in either reading or mathematics. This data is also used by teachers to determine how to best

differentiate instruction to allow for small group remediation and intervention. Our school employs many technology based programs to close achievement gaps in fun and engaging ways, including: iReady Reading, Imagine Learning, ReadLive, Reading Assistant, EPIC!, GoNoodle, BrainPOP, Flocabulary, XtraMath, Prodigy and iReady Math.

We use formative assessments including teacher observations, exit tickets, running records, progress monitoring, and weekly assessments as check-ins to assess student mastery of content being covered. This data is used to determine changes to Tier 1 instruction and pacing, small group instruction, and changes in intervention. Summative assessments including grade level common unit assessments and benchmark assessments are used to monitor effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction.

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

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

The preschool program at Liberty provides curriculum and instruction in early literacy and numeracy through the use of the Creative Curriculum for Preschool program, social-emotional instruction, and community building. The curriculum for preschool is academically rigorous. To meet the challenges of COVID-19, the preschool program has implemented safety protocols to protect students and staff while maintaining an environment that allows children to learn through exploring and play. Materials used in learning centers are cleaned after each rotation. Students have designated areas where they sit in socially distanced groups or independently. The academic state standards for preschool align with kindergarten to 3rd grade through our foundational literacy approach. Students are taught similar standards at varying levels as they progress through the grades. This approach helps students build literacy at a developmentally appropriate rate. Our preschool program positively impacts school readiness and success tremendously. Students who attend preschool come to kindergarten with the literacy, numeracy, and social emotional skills they need in order to be successful in the classroom. Because these students have exposure to rigorous academic expectations prior to their first day of kindergarten, they come equipped to attend and engage in the learning process.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Liberty's other curriculum areas support our students in a wide variety of skills and knowledge. Students attend daily physical education class along with art, music, library, and computer lab on a four day rotation. All related arts teachers post weekly lessons on Google classroom for students who have chosen to remain virtual and for any students learning remotely due to quarantine.

Students attend library class during the rotation for lessons in children's literature, research skills, digital literacy, and coding. Our library offers a number of programs to engage students such as reading challenges, makerspace, reading events, and schoolwide units (i.e. Mars Rover landing, Black History Month, Hour of Code) along with our annual Book Writing Contest. To adapt to the spring stay-at-home order and the closing of our local public library over the summer, the library offered curbside book pickup to all students every two weeks. When the school year began, this service was continued for virtual students. During this school year, virtual students are offered book pickups every two weeks and kindergarten virtual students receive a new book every Friday.

Students also attend art every four days for thirty minutes in the related arts rotation. In the art room, heightened precautions for student health and safety have included use of their own school supplies in lieu of shared art supplies along with sanitizing stations set up at each socially distanced work table. An after school Art Club pivoted to an online format this year to support both in person and virtual students. Each Monday, the club meets via Zoom to create new works of art.

Liberty students attend physical education every day. PE lessons are taught in a unit format focused on developing motor skills, enhancing brain development, and fostering interpersonal skills such as

perseverance, problem solving, group work, and goal setting. Each year, we include units like hockey (complete with a full tournament and a visit from the Nashville Predators team), camping skills, a heart obstacle course to learn the workings of the circulatory system, and a boot camp unit honoring Veterans Day.

Music class exposes students to sounds heard around the world and applies physical movement along with kinesthetic/spatial awareness to aid in internalizing and appreciating rhythm patterns. Students have the opportunity to play marimbas, guitars, recorders and other instruments. Fourth graders have the opportunity to strengthen their skills as musicians by participating in the LES Lion Cub Choir. In addition, full musicals, performed and managed by third and fourth graders, are an annual tradition at Liberty Elementary and have included recent performances of *The Lion King*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Aladdin*.

Students also attend guidance classes on a rotating basis. Students have opportunities for small group counseling, individual counseling and social-emotional support. In addition to the guidance program, LES has a partnership with the Mercy Clinic for clinical mental health support.

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

At Liberty Elementary, we constantly strive to meet the needs of all our students. We consistently assess and analyze student scores and collaborate with our teams to ensure that all students are receiving the best instruction and intervention in a way that provides them with multiple opportunities to be successful.

Liberty gives benchmark tests three times a year for all grades using Aimswebplus in Kindergarten through second grade, and STAR Reading and iReady Math assessments in second through fourth grades. After each benchmark testing period, all grade level teams K-4 meet with administration, coaches, EL teachers, and Special education teachers to analyze the data and determine next steps for instruction and intervention for students performing above and below grade level. Intervention groups are then determined for the Tier 2 and 3 students, including the subject, type of intervention, the resources or program that will be utilized, and the interventionist. Specific subgroup data is reviewed to determine achievement gaps between subgroups. This data is reviewed during Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings to individualize lesson plans and adjust support for the various subgroups.

The Phonological Awareness Screener for Intervention (PASI) and the Phonics Screener for Intervention (PSI) are given to students in addition to benchmark assessments to guide our teams during data meetings and PLC meetings when determining future instruction and intervention. Our school is very intentional on closing phonics gaps at the elementary level in order to set students up for success when they leave our building and go onto the intermediate level of learning. We screen students with the aforementioned PASI and PSI screeners, create intervention groups based on that skill deficit, use explicit, systematic, and multi-sensory instruction for three weeks, and then progress monitor to create new groups if needed. This process is followed with fidelity in order to keep these intervention groups fluid so that those phonics gaps can be closed and students can then focus on comprehension. Our adherence and dedication to the importance of the science of reading has shown growth in our phonics intervention groups and has allowed us to introduce the 95 Percent Group Comprehension intervention for those students who are ready to move on. This comprehension intervention is also explicit, systematic, and multi-sensory while teaching students how to incorporate the following processes into their thinking while reading: connecting, questioning, predicting, imaging, inferring, determining importance, and synthesizing.

To close achievement gaps in math our Math Coach and classroom teachers use i-Ready Math reports that indicate skill specific deficits. These reports guide discussions during data and PLC meetings where students are placed in appropriate math intervention groups. Specific and tailored

instruction is created using these reports and other i-Ready Central resources. This instruction is then used during small group times and during math intervention. Students placed in math intervention are provided systematic and explicit math instruction with extended time using concrete manipulatives and pictures as they move toward more abstract application of their growing number sense.

These reading and math intervention groups are progress monitored biweekly or monthly and teams discuss any changes in intervention needed at PLCs with administration and coaches. Coaches conduct fidelity monitoring observations monthly with all intervention groups. If a student is not showing adequate growth, his teacher will nominate him for discussion at our monthly Academic and Behavioral Support Team (ABST). This team consists of administration, coaches, the school psychologist, the school counselor, a special education teacher, and a rotating member of the related arts team. The nominating teacher will discuss her concerns with the team, all interventions and/or accommodations that have been given, and the team will determine next steps with the teacher to ensure success for this student.

On the other hand, Liberty Elementary also takes great care in making sure that instruction, interventions, and assessments are purposeful and effective for above level students. The top 10% of students from each grade level are pulled daily for reading and math Enrichment by a gifted certified teacher in the building. Each year, multiple data points are analyzed for determining which students would benefit from the program. To meet the needs of our diverse population, data is analyzed specifically to reach potential students from the subgroups that may not be noticed in the top 10%. We strive to have the makeup of the classes match our demographics, which may mean pulling students from below the top 10%. In addition, Liberty assesses all 2nd grade students using the CogAT for an additional nonverbal assessment to reach possible ELL and Special Education students that need enrichment in this area. In addition to daily pull outs, the Accelerated Learning Teacher provides a website of regularly updated resources for students who need curriculum related enrichment in the classroom. In addition, a Google classroom is available for all teachers with resources to tailor their instruction to above level students.

Liberty Elementary has a dedicated team of special education teachers who utilize pullout, self-contained, and inclusion models to meet the individual needs of 55 students. Based on their IEP (Individualized Education Plan) and data throughout the year, the special education team purposefully implements the following researched based programs: Edmark, Saxon Math, Wilson Reading, Spire, Number Worlds, the Nancibell Visualizing and Verbalizing Program. These students also benefit from the services of our SLP (Speech and Language Pathologist), OT (Occupational Therapist), and PT (Physical Therapist). A behavioral consultant and autism specialist also provide valuable support for our special education teachers and students. Our special education teachers collaborate with our school nurse to assist with each student's IHP (Individualized Health Plan). Social skills groups have been created by the special education teachers in order to equip our students with effective strategies for interacting with others. We are fortunate that most of our special education teachers and administration have also received certificates in CRT (Certified Restraint Training).

Collaboration with parents, general education teachers, and fellow special education teachers, both at Liberty as well as in the district, is key for success for these students. Our special education teachers send home daily reports to parents to communicate both academic and behavioral progress. Grade level PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) and data meetings are attended by special education teachers as often as possible in order to communicate progress and to collaborate ensuring the success of all students. Liberty's special education teachers attend district monthly Zoom meetings to collaborate with other special education teachers. A Google Drive was

created by the district special education teachers to share resources and problem solve. Our teachers continually use these resources to adapt their lessons and teaching strategies.

With Liberty's diverse population, we have 79 students who are in the ELL program. 62 of the students are active students who receive direct instruction of at least one hour a day from our three ELL teachers. In addition, 14 students are monitored at least once per quarter to assist teachers with interventions and instructional materials. These students are monitored for four years after they test out of WIDA. Our school uses the WIDA assessment to drive instruction to insure proper placement of students. Based on the last few years of WIDA data, Listening and Speaking have been our strongest. So this year our ELL team has focused their ELL services on these two areas. They use a variety of researched based language acquisition strategies to meet the individual needs of their students. Collaboration with the homeroom teachers is a very important part of driving their instruction. In Professional Learning Community meetings, general education teachers are able to share any academic concerns they may have with ELL teachers. This is also a time ELL teachers can share best practices for engaging and supporting ESL students in Tier I. ELL teachers attend benchmark data meetings and ABST (Academic Behavior Support Team) meetings on their students to continually address changes that need to be made in their instruction. Every one of the 62 students directly served has an individual learning plan, based on their WIDA data, and that plan is shared with teachers and parents.

Liberty Elementary utilizes the McKinney-Vento Program to serve our homeless population. Academic, social-emotional, and basic needs are supported for students who qualify. Grants are also provided for students to attend before and after school care for free. During this time, students receive academic support as well as support for their social-emotional needs. Every week, students on free or reduced lunch are given fuel bags for the weekend to help support hunger needs. We work with several local organizations, including Nook, One GenAway, and Graceworks, to provide emergency food boxes, Kroger cards, gas cards, clothing, and other necessities for families that need that support.

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

---

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

Supporting our Lions in their emotional, academic, and social growth is a priority at Liberty Elementary School (“Liberty”). COVID-19 restrictions and stress have heightened the needs of the whole child as we navigate these unprecedented times. The district offered both in-person and online learning this year which has allowed us to support all students even if they are not physically present.

At the beginning of each day, classes participate in a morning meeting to enhance classroom culture as well as to provide opportunities to collaboratively process challenges and emotional needs. Liberty was the recipient of a grant by The Tennessee Department of Education on trauma-informed practices. A core team was trained on trauma-informed practices. This training has helped us guide and support our students through their emotional challenges. Our library is filled with diverse, social-emotional books which are available for our students as well as educators. Kindness Week is celebrated annually and highlights random acts of kindness as well as character building activities. This year, students who were “caught” making a positive difference at Liberty earned the coveted title of “LES Ninja ROARrior” along with a personalized mask. Kindness Ambassadors are selected yearly and serve as leaders and role models at community events.

To support positive behavior, we utilize a Positive Behavior Intervention Support program and have been selected as a Silver Level Model of Demonstration School by the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at Vanderbilt University. Our schoolwide expectations include being Respectful, Organized, Always Safe, and Responsible (“ROAR”). We celebrate students who consistently embody the expectations with “Something to ROAR About” acknowledgements. We reward positive behaviors with ROAR tickets that can be cashed in for prizes and quarterly celebrations.

Extending beyond the homeroom environment, our related arts teachers provide clubs and events such as a Zimbabwean marimba club, art club, book clubs, coding club, podcast club, and chorus. Since we could not have our usual Fall Fling event this year due to COVID-19, we improvised a COVID-19 safe event instead with a socially distanced dance party in the library and events spread throughout our building. Our school counseling program offers large group guidance, small group counseling, individual counseling, as well as special events. In addition, Liberty serves as a pilot school for QuaverSEL social-emotional learning curriculum.

In order to adapt to remote learning in response to COVID-19 protocols, our student to technology ratio is 1:1. This gives our families the option to choose virtual learning by semester. In addition, it allows our in-person students to pivot to remote learning as necessary ensuring seamless academic instruction and student engagement. Students have continued to interact with teachers and peers during times of remote/virtual learning in innovative ways through programs such as Google Classroom, Zoom, NearPod, FlipGrid, Peardeck, and Screencastify.

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

Community and families are a valued part of our school family at Liberty. The pandemic has created extra stress for our families while COVID-19 restrictions have also made reaching them more challenging. Our school coordinated outreach avenues at the onset of the shutdown. Liberty faculty organized a neighborhood parade where teachers and staff rode in decorated cars to connect with our students and families in their front yards. We orchestrated a virtual Spirit Week through social media to connect, share, and promote normalcy. Liberty’s library held curbside book pickup through the summer while the local public library was closed. This practice has continued through the school year to allow virtual and remote students and families to request books. To keep in touch with families and students, our teachers posted video read alouds, activities, and lessons on school social media accounts throughout the extended spring closure and the summer. Instead of our annual Family Learning Night where our families come together to engage in reading and math activities, this year we created grade specific family learning bags and sent them home with every student. These bags contained games, activities, and the necessary materials such as dice,

dominoes, and comprehension cubes. We communicate and engage parents using weekly grade level newsletters, monthly principal newsletters that are shared digitally, and a mass communication system. Liberty's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) that consists of administration, staff, and parents, along with our Parent Teacher Organization, continues to meet virtually. Teachers also held virtual or in-person conferences.

Our community support partners are a crucial resource for our students and families. We use community resources to support the emotional, health, and financial needs of our families. Mercy Community Healthcare partners with our school to provide an on-site clinical mental health counselor who meets with students during the school day. Clinical counseling services on-site ensure students have access to mental health support that could otherwise be hindered by transportation or logistics. Multiple students have had mentors through Big Brothers Big Sisters who build relationships and support the emotional well-being and mental health of those students.

OneSight, Chrysalis, and Interfaith Dental provide our students with eyeglasses and dental care, while Wilson Bank & Trust comes monthly to provide financial literacy opportunities. The Needs Of Our Kids (NOOK) nonprofit program provides for needed clothing, backpacks, grocery gift cards, and other vital needs of our families and students. The Elk's Lodge hosts a holiday gift program to help families with holiday needs.

We also have community helpers who mentor our students with academic needs. Senior citizens tutor students in programs like FLIP (Friends Learning in Pairs) and Against the Grain. A local "READING Paws" tutor visits weekly so that students who may be shy or reluctant readers can read aloud to the certified therapy dog for needed reading practice. Several local churches support our educators and students through wish list donations ensuring equity of learning materials.

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

Professional development and a professional school culture are embedded in Liberty. At the beginning of the school year all staff were trained on Zoom, Kami, Google Classroom, Clever, and other resources to help us adapt to teaching and learning during the pandemic. A summer book study, *Culturize* by Jimmy Casas, focused on positive school culture and morale as we prepared for an unprecedented school year.

The emotional health of our staff is a priority in any school year, but particularly this year. Training in Trauma Informed Schools helped us support our staff and students' emotional needs. We focused on gratitude with activities to encourage and appreciate each other and our successes. "Peers Recognized In a Desire for Excellence" (P.R.I.D.E.) is a peer acknowledgement for faculty members. During the year, teachers can honor a colleague by completing a slip and submitting it to administration. P.R.I.D.E. slips are shared during our monthly faculty meetings. Our faculty uses creative ways to connect with each other such as zoom social events and socially distanced luncheons.

Administrators boost teacher and staff morale throughout the year with "jeans days", snack trolleys, and small gifts throughout the year. Extra planning time at the beginning of the year was provided by administrators to ensure teachers could effectively plan synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Virtual faculty meetings have ensured the safety of our staff while maintaining communication and unity. Each week, our Principal sends a staff newsletter with encouraging words, a staff "shout out" recognizing someone for their efforts, and a brief article or information on teaching strategies, self-care, and other helpful information. Our administrators also have a hands-on approach, never hesitating to take a cafeteria duty or cover a classroom if needed. This fosters a teamwork atmosphere and a feeling of support among our staff.

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

The administrative leadership philosophy at Liberty is simple – everything we do is for the academic and social-emotional benefit of our children. That is our "why" and the foundation of all decisions that are made. Academic growth and achievement of students has always been a focus. In the last few years, social-



emotional growth has taken on more importance as the world has changed.

Due to the pandemic, we have noticed more students with food insecurities, unstable living arrangements, and decreased tolerance for stress. As administrators, we know that children cannot learn academically until they feel safe and their hunger needs have been met. To that end, our district was very intentional about ensuring that meals were available for families during the extended school closure. Liberty has also partnered with a local faith-based organization where “FUEL” bags are provided to identify students each Friday. These bags are filled with staples to ensure food is available to children through the weekend. Liberty has a clinical mental health counselor in our school two days each week. This helps families who may have transportation issues with getting their child to a counselor. The clinical counselor works closely with our school counselor to ensure that appropriate students are quickly identified. Liberty’s faculty and staff have had three years of training from the Tennessee Department of Education toward becoming a trauma-informed school. We have learned much about understanding trauma and how to best support students.

We knew the start of the 2020-2021 school year was going to be a year unlike any other we have ever experienced. As an administrator team, we were committed to ensuring our teachers received open, honest, and clear communication regarding the opening of school, policies and procedures, and COVID-19 safety protocols. We created a safe place for teachers and staff to be vulnerable while encouraging and supporting them every step of the way. Teacher burnout is real, and teaching in a pandemic has certainly taken a toll on teacher well-being. Our administrative philosophy is that emotionally healthy teachers help develop emotionally healthy students. We have extended grace this year, as teachers have had to learn new ways of teaching with virtual platforms, students have been quarantined for weeks at a time, and teachers have had to balance their own family’s health needs with those at school. It has been difficult; however, through it all, the administrator team has been the biggest cheerleaders in the building. We see how hard our teachers are working to ensure students achieve at high levels all while learning how to navigate the challenges of this year. We have made efforts to recognize that in “shout outs” in our weekly staff newsletter, in providing treats on random days, and with handwritten notes of acknowledgment. We have also worked to give our teachers the gift of time. We have scaled back the number of whole faculty training so we can offer teachers more time to collaborate with their teams and plan lessons.

Since the onset of COVID-19, a great deal of focus has been placed on student and staff social-emotional wellbeing. However, this does not mean that academic growth and achievement has become less of a priority. On the contrary, as administrators, we recognize the learning loss that happened as a result of the extended school closure last year. We have worked to give our teachers the instructional guidance necessary to close gaps in all students. Written feedback is given to teachers on weekly lesson plans. We believe in cultivating a shared accountability mindset at Liberty. One of the many ways we achieve this is through our weekly professional learning community (PLC) meetings with each grade level team. At these meetings, we analyze student data (as a whole and by subgroups), we create common formative assessments, and we dig into our State standards for clarity as to what is being taught. We have empowered our instructional math and reading coaches to spend much of their time working directly with teachers to improve instruction so our students will achieve at high levels. The administrative team meets with our Director of Schools three times a year to share our school’s data, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Finally, this administrative team has focused on excellent customer service. We know that our students, their families, and our community are all our customers. We want all of them to feel connected to and welcomed at our school. COVID-19 has certainly presented challenges in this area, but our increased social media presence has offset some of the disappointment in having to limit visitors in our building this year. When guests walk in our doors, we want them to immediately feel welcomed and wanted. First impressions are important, and our goal is that our front office staff consistently makes great first impressions. This administrative team regularly interacts with families via personal phone calls, emails, and in-person and virtual meetings. Teachers are encouraged to submit student names to administrators for “Good News” phone calls to parents. Administrators have students in the office with them when the parent is called to share academic progress, improved behavior, or for demonstrating our ROAR expectations. This is a wonderful experience for all parties involved. Students are warmly greeted daily by several different adults as they make their way throughout the school building. Every adult in the school is expected to model

courteous and respectful behavior with one another and with our students. We have a peer-recognition program in place for the adults in our building, as well as a “Gratitude Locker” that we received as a grant recipient from The Big Gratitude Project. This helps the adults focus on gratitude, because we know that gratitude helps drive out anxiety and fear. We also have a Parent Advisory Council that consists of representatives from each school team and a variety of parent representatives. Meetings are typically held quarterly, and the administrative team uses these meetings to share information and seek input from these stakeholder groups.

Everything we do at Liberty is with the children in mind. Our goal is to grow academically-strong students, who are socially and emotionally healthy. As administrators, we stay focused on this goal.

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

In order to serve our diverse student population, Liberty has invested in resources and support systems to level the playing field and create equity for all learners. A bilingual family liaison is a crucial staff member that serves our Spanish speaking families. Our family liaison translates newsletters, communication, and information in writing and by phone to ensure all families can invest in their child’s education. In addition, the family liaison translates for parent-teacher conferences and a variety of meetings as needed during the year. We are also proud to have a bilingual social worker who assists families with basic needs and community resources. Also, programs such as Latino Achievers give former Liberty students the opportunity to give back to their alma mater by being reading buddies to our Hispanic students.

Liberty is fortunate to serve as a QuaverEd pilot school in order to promote social-emotional growth. QuaverMusic and QuaverSEL provide culturally responsive lessons and diverse resources for all students. Social-emotional learning, social skills, music education, and celebrating all students are features of this program. Quaver is aligned with The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), American School Counseling Association (ASCA), Tennessee School Counseling Association (TSCA), as well as National Association for Music Education (Nafme) standards to promote student success in the real world.

Students also attend guidance classes on a rotating basis. Classes focus on real-world life skills including diversity, respecting differences, communication skills, emotional regulation, careers, and interpersonal relationships. A diverse, culturally rich curriculum is utilized to ensure all students receive skills for support and success. Students have opportunities for small group counseling, individual counseling and social-emotional support. In addition to the guidance program, LES has a partnership with the Mercy Clinic for on-site clinical mental health support.

Our district has invested in GoGuardian which screens students’ activity online for signs of bullying, self-harm, or other concerning behaviors. GoGuardian has been essential in ensuring safety and mental health support for all of our students as they gain 21st Century skills.

The demographics of Liberty convey a multitude of races from a variety of countries and cultures. Liberty embraces its diverse student population and is intentional about teaching students about the social issues that are impacting the world outside of our school building by celebrating and recognizing our uniqueness's. Our morning television show shares facts and information about diverse events such as Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, Military Child Month, and diverse religious events such as Diwali and Hanukkah. These are often paired with special displays in the library and throughout the hallways of our building. Morning meetings are times when students build connections and relationships with their peers and increase

their social awareness. Through these times of engaged sharing students learn empathy, respect, and seeing things from someone else's perspective.

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

---

The one practice that is the most instrumental to successfully educating our students is connection. LES believes that connection is an absolutely critical component of reaching our students, our families, and our stakeholders. Building relationships is purposeful and happens every day. Everyone in our building - teachers, custodians, cafeteria and office staff, teacher assistants, and administrator - work daily to connect with students. Students are greeted each day by numerous adults as they enter the building. Teachers hold daily class meetings to strengthen social-emotional skills, check in with students, and build community in their classrooms. Our school has had training toward becoming a trauma-informed school, and we have implemented practices to help students (and adults) with regulating their emotions. When the school closure happened last spring, it was important to us that our teachers and families continue to feel connected as a school family although we were not able to be together in our building. We increased our social media presence to include teachers reading stories, doing fun learning activities, and virtual spirit weeks. Teachers were dropping off work packets at students' homes, there were three schoolwide packet pick up days, and we organized a staff parade where many teachers and staff drove our entire school zone greeting students and families. Since the parade was a first for us, we weren't sure how to allocate our time. We had given approximate times that we would be coming through the various neighborhoods. The parade took longer than we planned, but because of the power of connection, some families waited for over an hour for us to get to their neighborhood. There were tears (from the LES teachers and staff) and cheers (from our precious students and their families). This speaks to the level of connection that we have with our students and their families. Cultivating positive, healthy relationships with students and families is a non-negotiable in our building.