

***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) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 7420 Reservation Drive  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Springfield State VA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 22153-1327

County Fairfax

Telephone (703) 644-8200 Fax (703) 644-8297

Web site/URL https://sangsteres.fcps.edu E-mail ALJankovich@fcps.edu

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Scott Brabrand E-mail SSBrabrand@fcps.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fairfax County Public School District Tel. (571) 423-1010

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Ms. Ricardy Anderson  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, 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):
  - 141 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 26 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 28 High schools
  - 2 K-12 schools

197 TOTAL

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	40	32	72
1	43	42	85
2	50	45	95
3	64	69	133
4	95	77	172
5	72	67	139
6	105	86	191
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>	469	418	887

\*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
  - 11 % Asian
  - 7 % Black or African American
  - 8 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 60 % White
  - 14 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 4%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	887
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Hausa, Farsi/Persian, Arabic, Spanish, Dari, Bengali/Bengla, Tagalog/Philipino, Amharic, Japanese, Turkish, Portuguese, Urdu, Thai, Vietnamese, Czech, Chinese/Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Kanarese/Kannada, Korean, French, Polish, Mongolian, Tigrinia, Telugu, Russian, Kachi, Creole, Pashtu, Greek, German, Slovak, Burmese, Hungarian, Nepali, Fuchen, Bulgarian, American Sign Language, Georgian

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %

Total number students who qualify: 27

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %

96 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.

10 Autism

0 Multiple Disabilities

0 Deafness

0 Orthopedic Impairment

0 Deaf-Blindness

18 Other Health Impaired

6 Developmental Delay

29 Specific Learning Disability

2 Emotional Disturbance

29 Speech or Language Impairment

0 Hearing Impairment

0 Traumatic Brain Injury

2 Intellectual Disability

0 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	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	41
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	18
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 27:1

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	98%	97%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
 Yes  No

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

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

Sangster's school mission, in alignment with Fairfax County Public Schools, is to engage, inspire, and thrive.

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.

From August 2020 to February 2021, Sangster ES participated in an all virtual model of instruction and learning with the exception of a select number of special education students who were in the building two days a week. As of February 23, 2021, some students returned to the building for concurrent instruction (in cohorts) for two days of in-person instruction, beginning with kindergarten students on February 23rd, first and second graders on March 9th, and third through sixth graders on March 16th.

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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At Sangster, “We Imagine the Possibilities for Every Child!” Sangster is a magical place where each one of our 887 kindergarten through sixth grade students in our high-performing, community invested, and welcoming suburban school are recognized and celebrated for their academic and personal growth. Included in our total enrollment are over 200 students we welcome from neighboring schools to attend our full-time Level IV Advanced Academic Program Center, focused on academic depth and complexity in core subjects for eligible students in third through sixth grade. Sangster’s 83 dedicated staff members include classroom teachers, special education teachers, specialists, resource teachers, support staff, and instructional assistants.

At Sangster, we focus on the whole child and are equally dedicated to seeing students grow academically, emotionally, and socially to become productive and contributing citizens in our ever-changing global community. We believe that students learn best in a safe, caring, and positive learning environment that stimulates intellectual curiosity, fosters a commitment to lifelong learning, strives for excellence in academic achievement, and promotes strong character development. For this reason, we are a proud Positivity Project school that embeds the learning of 24 character strengths in our daily morning meetings and encourages students to have an “Other People Matter” mindset. We employ a positive behavior approach as a management system and teachers utilize Responsive Classroom language and practices to set expectations and build relationships. The clinical team also screens all students for emotional wellness at the beginning and middle of each school year and completes individual check-ins to determine possible interventions for at-risk students. These approaches to supporting the social and emotional well-being of our students has enabled them to feel connected to their school community during virtual learning.

Sangster students come to school ready, willing, and eager to learn. Each child is valued and accepted by a staff that provides learning experiences that develop, enrich, and extend the curriculum in order to meet the instructional needs of every child. Sangster is recognized as a Model Professional Learning Community school where teams are committed to providing students with high quality tier one instruction through collaborative planning, data analysis, and responsive instruction. During our daily intervention and enrichment Falcon Time block, teachers use data to inform timely and personalized instruction for each student.

Our high academic standards are evident in our rigorous and differentiated instructional practices. All teachers practice balanced literacy and tailor instruction based on continued formative assessments. In math, teachers focus on conceptual and procedural understanding. Sangster’s Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) program empowers students as they problem solve and utilize their mathematical thinking while tackling real-world inspired engineering design challenges. The Portrait of a Graduate (POG) skills of Communicator, Collaborator, Goal Oriented and Resilient Individual, Critical and Creative Thinker, and Global Citizen are intentionally embedded in core instruction. Our teachers intentionally embed and fully integrate technology and online resources in daily learning to enhance the curriculum and differentiate instruction. During COVID-19, our strong foundation in accessing instructional technology proved to be greatly beneficial as we transitioned to virtual learning.

We believe in the shared partnership of the school, parents, and community in achieving our goals. The Sangster community benefits from an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that works in collaboration with the administrative team and teachers to support instructional programming, cultural arts assemblies, and family engagements throughout the year. The ideal combination of devoted parents, and talented and dedicated educational staff members gives students multiple opportunities for success at Sangster. The PTA supports a robust after school program so students can explore interests and showcase talents in clubs such as Musical Theatre, Odyssey of the Mind, Chess, Robotics, and Run Fit Kids.

Sangster has been recognized as a Virginia Distinguished Purple Star School for supporting its over 150 military connected families. These families are registered with our PTA sponsored Military Spouses Group (MSG), which provides support to and offers advocacy for military families. An extension of that group is Sangster’s Ambassador Program, which connects current Sangster students with new military children for mentorship and comradery. The Military Spouses Group is instrumental in coordinating military speakers

and volunteers for our beloved Veteran's Day celebration, a well-known school community event that inspires a strong sense of citizenship and patriotism.

Sangster is often recognized for its academic success and the many programs mentioned above, however, the magic of Sangster is truly in its people. We could not "Imagine the Possibilities" without our dedicated and "can do attitude" staff. Sangster's strength lies in our positive culture and welcoming and celebratory environment, where everyone who walks through our doors is valued and appreciated.



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

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

Sangster Elementary's approach to instruction allows students to be active participants in the learning process and shifts the focus from knowing facts to being able to use and apply information learned in meaningful ways. Teachers help develop the strengths and talents of all students by facilitating learning that prepares them not only for the classroom but for their future careers and endeavors. By consistently embedding critical and creative thinking strategies and visible thinking routines and providing students with authentic opportunities through Problem Based Learning, thinking is revealed, student voice is amplified, and individual strengths are celebrated. Sangster teachers encourage engagement in all subject areas by displaying learning targets in the virtual and in-person classroom. Students can explain what they are learning using specific content based vocabulary, which empowers them to be actively engaged in goal setting and self-reflection.

Teachers plan for rigorous instruction in their weekly Collaborative Learning Team (CLT) meetings in both math and language arts, where they unpack standards based on the Virginia Standards of Learning and Fairfax County's Program of Studies. Teachers follow grade-level planning and pacing guides that promote the use of research based strategies and resources that encourage higher level thinking. During CLT meetings, teachers engage in backwards planning by considering what essential knowledge they want students to identify in each subject area and develop formative and summative common assessments that effectively measure understanding. Teams also use the iReady Universal Screener, the Developmental Reading Assessment, and district wide assessments using the Horizon platform to determine student growth and gauge mastery of state identified standards assessed at the end of year. Detailed analysis of all assessment data leads teams to identify student strengths and plan for further instruction and individualized interventions and enrichments. Throughout distance learning, teachers have creatively gathered anecdotal and formative data by using tools embedded in virtual learning platforms such as polls, chats, and breakout rooms. Students demonstrate thinking and understanding through interactive digital platforms such as Pear Deck, Kahoot, Padlet, and Google Suite that allow teachers to correct mistakes, clarify misconceptions, and celebrate critical and creative thinking in real-time.

Sangster uses a balanced literacy approach for language arts which includes direct instruction and guided and independent practice through the reading and writing workshop model to meet students where they are and take them to where they need to be. In the virtual and in-person settings, teachers model reading strategies through interactive read alouds and meet with differentiated guided reading groups while students engage in leveled texts to apply and expand upon skills taught during focus lessons. Students also use digital readers and interactive writing websites such as Literacy Footprints and No Red Ink. Rigorous instruction in language arts is achieved by giving all students opportunities to access Advanced Academic Language Arts Curriculum Resources so they can display and improve their higher order critical thinking skills. Students receiving programs through their special education services also have the opportunity to receive core instruction.

In Math, teachers utilize the workshop model to meet the differentiated needs of all learners and focus on conceptual understanding by encouraging students to become problem solvers and critical thinkers while making connections to prior learning. By engaging students in number sense routines at the beginning of each lesson, students grow as communicators and listeners by sharing divergent thinking through academic conversation. Whether virtual or in-person, teachers introduce students to multiple strategies during focus lessons, promote independent practice using math manipulatives, and pull small groups of students who struggle with concepts. Protecting Falcon Time during the 2020-2021 school year has continued to be a priority in order to provide additional time for individualized instruction so students can practice math skills through computer adapted technology, engage in Tier 2 math interventions, participate in specialized math programs, and access accelerated and enrichment math activities.

In Social Studies, primary students are introduced to history, geography, civics, and economics, while upper grade students apply the concepts learned in previous years to world cultures and American history. Our teachers share information from a multitude of perspectives and encourage reasoning based on evidence so

that students can generate their own thoughts, questions, and conclusions. Through discussions and the use of visual thinking routines, teachers also empower students to look beyond the facts learned and consider ways they can be positive contributors to the global community.

In Science, teachers create authentic learning experiences and embed real-world connections allowing students to make discoveries, identify relationships, and determine inferences. Through integrated STEAM lessons that focus on Portrait of a Graduate skills, students are encouraged to work cooperatively to take creative risks as they recognize the value of a systematic approach to problem solving. Despite the many educational challenges faced this year, our commitment to providing critical and creative thinking opportunities throughout the school day to develop 21st century leaders, innovators, and learners has remained constant.

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

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The Sangster Specials consists of Physical Education, Art, Music, Band, Strings, Spanish FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary Schools), STEAM, and Library. Specialists serve students in grades K- 6 to provide enriching and authentic opportunities for students to explore their potential in a supportive culture where they feel accepted and safe to express themselves.

Sangster provides a unique and robust STEAM program that is committed to strengthening student's Portrait of a Graduate skills while enhancing and supporting the math and science goals for the school. In 2019, Sangster was awarded the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Foundation Grant which provided funding for additional materials that promote hands-on-learning experiences in science. Beginning in kindergarten, students are taught the engineering design process to foster creative problem solving, develop perseverance, and build interpersonal skills through collaborative experiences. STEAM students learn algorithmic thinking through coding and robotics while learning about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics careers.

Sangster's library program supports the schoolwide goals of equity and literacy. Our centrally located library is a safe and welcoming space where collections are intentionally curated to provide access to diverse materials. Grades 4-6 receive bi-weekly instruction focused on inquiry, critical literacy, research, and genres. Grades K-3 engage in weekly multicultural texts with the librarian paired with problem-solving activities in STEAM, to maximize students' critical and creative thinking and provide authentic connections to literacy. Library services has adapted to the challenges of COVID-19 with additional purchases of digital resources, weekly curbside checkout, and an enhanced website with instructional videos and virtual learning opportunities.

Students in all grades experience an art program that includes a wide range of visual media. Art teachers address state standards and work closely with teachers to provide multidisciplinary connections to deepen understanding and ensure all students have opportunities to express themselves in various ways. Student artwork is celebrated and displayed in the Principal's Gallery, Yearbook, and shared in an online gallery.

Students in grades K-6 also participate in a diverse music program through general music and opportunities for chorus, band, or strings in the upper grades. Music teachers incorporate various genres of music, knowledge of music, as well as teaching students about musicians who have been influential in the field. Students are given the opportunity to experience music through movement and by playing instruments, singing, and composing.

The Physical Education (PE) department provides weekly instruction utilizing gross and fine motor skills needed to perform physical activities. Students learn the structures and functions of the body as they relate to movement and fitness. PE teachers promote health and wellness throughout the school community during the student led morning news show Wellness Wednesday segment.

Students in grades 4-6 receive Spanish Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) instruction weekly. Students are taught Spanish language and culture while applying the Portrait of a Graduate attributes of Communicator and Global and Ethical Citizen. The FLES curriculum infuses content based vocabulary and provides students with opportunities to practice conversational Spanish.

During virtual and concurrent learning, specialists have embraced interactive technology tools such as Pear Deck, Flipgrid, and Jamboard to enhance student voice, choice, and engagement. Students also benefit from the specialists' creation of comprehensive websites, interactive escape rooms, asynchronous learning opportunities, and choice boards.

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

At Sangster, we use a strategic approach to ensure instruction, interventions, and assessments are meeting the needs of all students. First, students needing remediation or enrichment are identified early through data collection, parent input, and teacher collaboration with multi-disciplinary teams such as the Local Screening Committee (LSC) and the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) committee. Then, based on student needs, purposeful planning goes into creating a master schedule, class placements, professional development opportunities, and program matchings. Teachers and staff work in collaborative teams to analyze data for the implementation and continuous monitoring of high-quality tier one instruction, socio-emotional and behavioral supports, common assessments, and interventions. Assessments used include: Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Developmental Reading Assessment Progress Monitoring, Core Phonics, Standards of Learning (SOLs), Universal Screener, specialized program assessments, and grade level common and district-wide assessments.

Sangster teachers use small group instruction as well as the workshop model to implement focus/mini lessons in math and reading and to provide all students opportunities for both remediation and extension within their classrooms. All students participate in Falcon Time, a daily block of time dedicated to the delivery of extensions and interventions. Student needs are also met through: exposure to Advanced Academics Program (AAP) resources including Caesar's English and Jacob's Ladder, incorporation of Project Based Learning (PBL) into Language Arts instruction, integration of pre/post writing rubrics, implementation of Lucy Calkins' workshop model in primary grades, implementation of Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) with the Sangster reading teacher, and consistent use of online resources that compliment grade-level instruction such as Dreambox, ST Math, Pioneer Valley, Imagine Learning, and No Red Ink. Furthermore, all primary-grade teachers are trained in Foundations, a multisensory and systematic approach to phonics, spelling, and writing.

Sangster is fully immersed in the MTSS framework of identifying students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes or who experience socio-emotional or behavioral concerns that impact their learning. The MTSS committee meets bimonthly and is comprised of a multi-disciplinary team of specialists and teachers from various grade levels. This committee revisits students regularly to evaluate progress and to offer teachers specific suggestions for interventions/supports. At Sangster, evidence-based academic and social/emotional interventions include Reading Success, V-Math, Zones of Regulation, Mind Up, and Unstuck and on Target. After careful monitoring and data collection, students not responding to an intervention after a designated amount of time may be referred to the Local Screening Committee for possible testing and identification of special education services or a Section 504 Plan.

Sangster strives to provide equitable Tier 1 instruction for all English Learners (ELs) and students receiving special education services. These students participate in core instruction with accommodations and necessary services along with their general education peers whenever possible. Classroom teachers work in collaboration with the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher and special education teachers to frontload academic vocabulary and foundational skills in order for these students to access the general education curriculum. During distance learning, these subgroups were provided additional interventions on Mondays to eliminate gaps in their learning and to provide time for relationship-building with staff and social interactions with peers.

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

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

Sangster Elementary provides many ways to engage and motivate students to foster their academic, social, and emotional well-being. We believe building relationships and creating a safe and nurturing environment for all students is key to student success. By knowing each child individually, we can prepare tailored and authentic learning experiences that address their varied learning styles while connecting to their strengths and interests.

Sangster is committed to utilizing the Responsive Classroom approach by focusing on engaging academics, effective management, positive community, and developmental awareness. Daily morning meeting time is embedded in the master schedule to build community and build a sense of belonging, trust, and fun. Sangster is a Positivity Project (P2) school, where students are educated weekly on 24 character strengths and encouraged to recognize the traits in themselves and others. Our Student of the Month award ceremony celebrates a student from each class who displays an “Other People Matter” mindset in their daily interactions. In addition to P2, Sangster participates in RULER, a systematic approach to social and emotional learning, where teachers and students use a mood meter to identify and chart their daily emotions. Regular check-ins have been instrumental in responding to students' social/emotional needs in a timely manner during COVID-19.

Academically, teachers instill a love of learning through targeted, student-centered instruction that amplifies choice and voice. Teachers encourage engagement by providing meaningful learning targets that are clearly displayed in classrooms. Students can explain what they are learning in age appropriate language, empowering them to be actively involved in their learning as they work toward their goals. Teachers' use of visual thinking routines promotes active learning and helps to reveal students' thinking. By consistently using technology tools such as Pear Deck, Padlet, Jamboard, Google Apps, and breakout rooms students are provided opportunities to collaborate and connect with their classmates and teachers.

During virtual learning Sangster continues to encourage engagement through spirit days and connects to families through online social media platforms such as Twitter. Sangster's student led WHSE (What's Happening Sangster Elementary) news show remains a constant in connecting the school community with its creative segments related to upcoming PTA events, spirit days, wellness, and diversity.

In addition to the news show, students have leadership opportunities through the Student Council, safety patrols and library helpers. Students thrive in our wide-variety of after-school clubs such as Robotics, Odyssey of the Mind, Run Fit Kids, and Sangster Musical Theatre, which all provide opportunities to explore strengths and interests while feeling a sense of belonging that extends outside the classroom and across grade levels.

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

At Sangster, we recognize the integral role that communication and connection play in building trusting relationships between key stakeholders. To foster strong partnerships with families and our community, we share information via a plethora of mediums including weekly messages from the principal, surveys, monthly grade-level newsletters, parent information nights, the school website, and our social media accounts. In addition to being transparent and consistent in our outgoing communication, we also solicit feedback by asking questions, listening, and responding in a timely manner to concerns, especially when dealing with critical issues like global pandemic.

Sangster values and embraces on-going partnerships with local organizations and businesses. For over five years, Parkway Bible Church has called Sangster home each Sunday. During that time, consistent communication between school staff and church leaders led to volunteers reading with students as well as donations to support families who have experienced financial hardships. Sangster has also partnered with Ecumenical Community Helping Others (ECHO), a local non-profit, by regularly holding food drives to

replenish their food pantries and by collecting winter clothing donations to benefit local families. Recently we have started partnerships with Mentor Works and FCPS Transportation services to have bus drivers mentor at-risk students.

The Sangster PTA is a dynamic organization which empowers families and community members to contribute to the success of all students through a variety of events and clubs such as Spring Carnival/Silent Auction, Musical Theater, and Share the Love, an event where students pack food bags for a local food bank. The PTA-sponsored Military Spouses Group provides support to military students, contributes to military-focused events like “Veterans Day” and “Month of the Military Child,” and coordinates involvement of military families at Sangster. The PTA remains in constant communication with the school social worker to continuously support families who have been identified as needing assistance due to hardships. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the PTA has contributed to the overall mission of the school, to engage, inspire, and thrive, by collecting and delivering household supplies to families in need and co-hosting curb-side pick-ups of school materials so virtual learning could continue at home. The Sangster Staff and PTA also work closely to promote family engagement events such as Math and Science Nights, where families participate in a fun evening of interactive games and activities. This not only connects the community, but also gives parents insight into the strategies we use so they can reinforce that learning at home.

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

Just as we acknowledge that students can’t achieve until they feel that they belong and are valued in their classrooms, Sangster’s administrative team recognizes the importance of maintaining a positive culture where staff members feel safe to learn and collaborate with each other. We begin each school year by ensuring all staff members participate in and reflect on their StrengthFinders assessment. This helps individuals discover their strengths and those of their colleagues in order to build a stronger collaborative learning team where all perspectives are valued.

Sangster has developed a results-oriented culture. We have a strong sense of shared responsibility where each student is treated as one of our own as we make collective commitments in our grade level CLTs to help students grow. Shifting our focus from teaching to learning, has resulted in embedding professional learning related to our school goals in monthly staff and team leader meetings. We aim to build capacity among staff, empowering them to lead the learning by sharing their expertise and successes with each other. Understanding that we need to meet staff where they are, we also provide differentiated learning opportunities based on teacher feedback to ensure everyone has an opportunity to grow professionally. For example, this summer we responded to teacher concerns about virtual and concurrent instruction by creating an online summer learning interactive site. This resource allowed teachers to participate in synchronous and asynchronous instruction to better prepare them for our 2020 return to school.

We intentionally build in celebrations and recognitions at Sangster during our monthly staff meetings, weekly staff newsletters, and fun social events so each member of our school team is acknowledged for the special gifts and talents they contribute to the success of our school. Having the foundation of a positive and collaborative culture made all the difference during COVID-19 as we needed to lean on each other for emotional support, share the responsibility of creating lessons, and reflect on our practices for continuous improvement. Our administrative team worked in conjunction with the PTA to improve staff morale during the pandemic by delivering treats and yard signs to staff homes, sending motivational postcards, and creating a Sangster Family Cookbook. The magic that is Sangster’s caring and positive school culture is more alive than ever as we face each new challenges together and remain resilient with our #SangsterStrong attitude.

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

Our administrative team believes that focusing on the effectiveness of our collaborative learning teams is the leverage point with the greatest potential for strengthening and refining our daily instruction. Sangster has been recognized as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model School by Solution Tree, and we have witnessed the power of what a shared belief system and collective action can do in positively influencing

student outcomes. By attending CLT meetings and training team leaders to be facilitators, our principal and assistant principals ensure teams are using the learning cycle to plan for instruction, analyze data, and determine interventions. Recruiting and hiring knowledgeable and collaborative educators with an understanding of the PLC cycle has been instrumental in distributing the leadership among our staff. For example, our Advanced Academic Resource Teacher supports CLTs in their planning and utilization of rigorous instructional resources, while our Special Education Lead Teacher facilitates a weekly CLT to ensure that programs are administered with fidelity and align with state and federal mandates. There are also several leadership opportunities for our staff on multiple committees to ensure we remain accountable in maintaining our mission, vision, and goals. Such committees include Multi-Tiered System of Supports, Technology, Positive Behavior Management, and the Sangster Green Team.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Sangster's principal and assistant principals have been servant leaders by listening with empathy, acknowledging fears, proactively preparing for challenges ahead, and frequently communicating with staff to provide them time to process the challenges ahead. The principal and assistant principals remind teachers to keep a growth mindset and measure their progress, not perfection, as they navigate through difficult waters. The administrative team never asks others to do anything they would not be willing to do themselves, whether it be distributing hundreds of bags of materials in car pick-up lines or learning how to utilize all the new technology for concurrent learning.

This year the emotional and physical wellness of every staff, student, and their respective family members became just as important as maintaining the safety and security in our building. We gave equal weight and time to leading with empathy and ensuring our staff and community members felt heard. This enabled us to address individual needs and put procedures in place to help all stakeholders feel safe and supported throughout the multitude of transitions we faced. The administrative team's passion for caring personally and listening to individual concerns, helped to alleviate stress and only strengthened the supportive school climate we believe is at the center of our success.

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

Sangster shares FCPS's belief that our diversity is our strength, and, therefore, we recognize the importance of fostering a welcoming and culturally responsive environment where all stakeholders feel valued and supported. We are mindful that although our diversity may not be visible throughout our halls, we are a community that benefits from the many cultural backgrounds and experiences of our families. Over the last three years, our staff has made a concerted effort to analyze and reflect upon our inclusive practices during training on cultural competency and trauma informed classrooms. The knowledge gleaned has led to embedding equity in our daily instructional practices and has better informed our responses to recent racially and politically charged current events. We lean on familiar resources from these trainings to guide us in providing timely, empathetic messages to our community, parent resources to promote coping and resilience, and developmentally appropriate instructional resources for classrooms.

While we recognize the potential in every student at Sangster, we are cognizant that the playing field is not equal for all students. We believe it is our responsibility to eliminate gaps in opportunity, access, and achievement. Sangster received the 2018 Superintendent's Excellence in Equity Award for making gains in improving school performance across all subgroups as a result of our work to carefully analyze subgroup (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and English learners) data on grade level, districtwide, and state assessments, and develop a timely and tailored measurable plan of action in response to the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student.

In 2020, we assembled an Equity Team reflecting the diverse perspectives of our staff members to do the important work of assessing our culturally responsive practices and creating steps for improvement. In acknowledging that discussions around equity issues can be challenging, we

normalize these courageous conversations and provide structures such as the Courageous Compass to help guide productive dialogue. The administrative team is also in the process of conducting empathy interviews with parents of students of color. The interviews seek to understand the experiences of students and families within our school and will guide our work in creating a caring culture where every student has a strong sense of connectedness and belonging. Following these interviews, we will invite parent representatives to participate as active members of our Equity Team.

Finally, we are committed to continuing our successful efforts in hiring a more diverse staff that represents the demographics of our school community. We recognize that we need to choose candidates that may not fit the preconceived mold at our school, but possess a strength, perspective, and voice that may be missing in our staff.



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

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Sangster has established a strong foundation of clear communication structures that have contributed to our ability to successfully educate and support students during the global pandemic. Since school closures began, we have continued to meet in collaborative learning teams and have maintained our commitment to instruction through professional learning communities. Maintaining a high level of collaboration early in the pandemic was instrumental in sustaining our academic success as teams planned for quality tier one instruction, analyzed student progress to determine interventions, and collectively problem solved ways to improve student engagement using technology. Sangster's administrative team continues to collaborate with team leaders to regularly disseminate information, brainstorm and address critical issues, and share best virtual instructional practices through vertical articulation. Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process has continuously helped us organize and analyze data related to student wellness and academic engagement throughout the last year. Our MTSS core team continues their close monitoring of students with academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional wellness concerns and works closely with the clinical team and classroom teachers to address student concerns in a timely manner throughout virtual learning.

Throughout the pandemic, the administrative team has relied on consistent two-way communication with stakeholders by asking, listening, and responding to concerns. At the end of the 2020 school year, we surveyed teachers, parents, and students, to gather reflections on distance learning in the areas of engagement, technology, and communication. Careful analysis of the responses led us to implement and refine structures and supports for students and staff for the 2020-2021 school year. For example, the development of an Attendance Intervention Team resulted in an 87% increase in attendance rates of identified at-risk students from the Spring to the Fall of 2020. In addition, increasing teacher-parent communication via weekly e-mails, monthly newsletters, and bi-monthly phone conversations contributed to stronger school-home partnerships. Sangster's Summer Professional Learning Institute and website, led by our School Based Technology Specialist and teacher leaders, provided staff with the synchronous and asynchronous sessions they desired to better prepare themselves to integrate technology and engage students in virtual learning. Finally, we enhanced our communication structure by determining new ways to utilize our school Twitter account and website to frequently communicate the multitude of ways staff and students were succeeding in the virtual setting. Communicating these improvements over the last year, coupled with multiple parent information nights and weekly check-ins with teachers, we have only strengthened Sangster's caring culture and deepened the commitment of our staff to do whatever it takes to improve the academic success and socio-emotional wellness of each child.