

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 2755 4th Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Sparks State NV Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 89431-2239

County Washoe County

Telephone (775) 353-5510 Fax (775) 353-5512

Web site/URL https://www.washoeschools.net/drake E-mail ntruax@washoeschools.net

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. Susan Enfield E-mail Susan.Enfield@washoeschools.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Washoe County School District (Area 4) Tel. (775) 789-4659

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 Ellen Minetto Ms.  
(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 signatures 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 71 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 18 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 17 High schools
  - 5 K-12 schools
- 111 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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	11	7	18
K	25	15	40
1	24	14	38
2	13	18	31
3	24	18	42
4	14	18	32
5	18	15	33
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>	129	105	234

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 57 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 32 % White
  - 6 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 15%

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	32
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	211
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 12 %  
27 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 234

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 12 %  
27 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |                                                |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <u>6</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 10
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	13
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	100%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

<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.

Maintain high standards in partnership with families and the community to ensure academic and social emotional growth for ALL students in a safe and nurturing environment.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.washoeschools.net/notice>

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Downtown Sparks, Nevada, is a reminder of our past and our city’s origin with a railroad traveling through town. The Southern Pacific Railroad built the switch yard in 1904, and the town developed around it, earning the nickname of “Rail City.” Just 1.5 miles from downtown Sparks, Nevada, is Florence Drake Elementary School.

Florence Drake Elementary School is in Washoe County School District (WCSD), which is the second largest district in the state of Nevada and the 59th largest district in the country. The 111 schools within WCSD span an area larger than the state of Connecticut. There are 103 public schools, 65 of which are elementary schools and 31 of which receive Title I funding.

Florence Drake ES has had the highest reading and math proficiency rates of any Title I school in WCSD since 2017-18, even surpassing 69% of non-Title I schools in math proficiency and 60% of non-Title I schools in ELA proficiency. For the past three years, our school has increased proficiency annually across all tested areas as measured by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and far exceeded district averages. In 2020-21, Drake had the second highest math proficiency rates for FRL and IEP populations and the top three highest ELA proficiency rates for FRL, IEP, and EL populations across all 66 WCSD elementary schools.

### **School Community:**

Florence Drake Elementary School, serves Pre-K through 5th grade and is considered a small school in our district, with an enrollment of 239 students. One hundred percent of our students are served by Title I funds, and our free and reduced meal percentage is 88.10%. Fifty-seven percent of our students are Hispanic, with roughly 30% qualifying for ELL services.

Our school consists of two teachers at each grade level Pre-K through 3rd, with one teacher in 4th, and one in 5th. Our small school environment allows for personal interactions with families. We are a neighborhood school with a one-mile zone radius. Often our families walk their students to and from school, which allows for daily in-person communication.

Unique to Florence Drake Elementary School are our specialized programs. Our school houses a special education behavior intervention program for students with autism or intellectual disabilities. Our students in these programs are mainstreamed during lunch and recess. We are the only school in Washoe County School District with this program. We also have a special education program that supports high functioning students with autism called Social Resource. We are one of two elementary schools in our district with this program. Students in Social Resource receive 30 minutes daily of social skills support and spend most of their day in the general education classroom.

Our inclusive model for students, which includes promoting a positive climate and culture, contributes to our school’s success. Positive behavior supports are embedded in our school community. Our students SOAR daily, demonstrating Safe, Outstanding Learning, Always Respectful, and Responsible behaviors. Students earn incentives for demonstrating these behaviors. Our schoolwide expectations are communicated through emphasizing SOAR behaviors. Our school day begins with “words of wisdom” and supporting character traits, and our students are reminded daily to be the best they can be in academics and behavior and within their community.

### **Beliefs and Unique Learning:**

Collective efficacy and high expectations for all students to achieve and grow are the foundational beliefs of our staff. At Florence Drake Elementary School all staff are responsible for the teaching and learning of our students. We refer to this belief as “all hands on deck.” This shared belief is the reason for our increased proficiency over the past five years. Our staff has implemented a schoolwide “walk to learn” instructional block. Students Pre-K through 5th attend this forty-minute instructional block four times a week. Students

are grouped according to ability and instructional need, based on a common schoolwide focus. For example, during second semester the primary grades focus on reading comprehension and building vocabulary while intermediate grades focus on reading, math, and science curriculum specific to the SBAC assessment. All staff teach during this instructional block, including the dean of students and principal. With “all hands on deck,” instructional groups are small with approximately six to ten students in each group.

In addition to the academic focus during our “walk to learn” block, staff focuses on Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Students participate in SEL activities, which include self-reflection and strategies for successful learning. Because of small learning groups, staff connect with students and establish relationships with them outside of the traditional classroom setting.

Our school community provides a safe and nurturing environment for our students where behavior expectations and academic rigor are clearly communicated and modelled. Our shared belief in our students’ abilities to achieve and our collaborative efforts are what have propelled our students’ progress, as reflected in their daily performance and on state examinations.

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

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

#### **1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:**

Florence Drake ES has experienced increased performance and student growth on our state assessment over the past several years. From 2018 to 2021 our SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) proficiency rates have increased 12 percentage points in English Language Arts, 19 percentage points in math, and 15 percentage points in science. We attribute these impressive gains in proficiency to a shared vision and common focus across grade levels; is to maintain high standards in partnership with families and the community to ensure academic and social emotional growth for ALL students in a safe and nurturing environment.

All staff are held accountable for student learning and growth. Our goal is to prepare our students for college and career readiness. This goal begins in Pre-K, and our teachers vertically align instruction and strategies to achieve this goal.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Overarching strategies in English Language Arts that have contributed to student progress include vocabulary building, writing, project-based learning, and differentiation.

Vocabulary building is integral in maintaining student growth. As stated in *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences in Young American Children*, by Hart and Risley, "... by age 3 the children in professional families have heard more than 30 million words, the children in working class families 20 million, and the children in welfare families 10 million." Our second language learners and students from low-income families often lack academic vocabulary. As a result, every grade level, including Pre-K, commits to teaching academic vocabulary. Vocabulary is embedded in daily discussion and across subject areas, and it is presented in a variety of modalities, including music.

Evidence of academic vocabulary can be found in our students' writing. We utilize *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing*, by Lucy Calkins, to teach writing. Students are required to write one published piece in each of the three genres. Expectations for writing include writing across all subject areas, including science and math. Grades K-5 focus on writing with common writing organizers for narrative, information, and opinion writing.

Another overarching strategy is project-based learning. Grade levels create interdisciplinary projects addressing 21st century skills, including communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Project-based learning provides opportunities for inquiry and problem solving. For example, a kindergarten project explored cause and effect relationships, which required students to look at weather patterns for a designated city, then determine what to pack when visiting this city, based on an assigned month. Students examined graphs of weather, discussed weather patterns, and explained rationale for packing their selected items in written and verbal expression. As a culminating event, students interviewed a meteorologist to learn more about their job and the science of predicting weather.

ELA lessons include whole group instruction as well as differentiation. Grade levels plan 90 daily minutes of ELA instruction, utilizing the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) and the Benchmark Advance curriculum. Teachers identify essential standards and use backward design for lesson planning. They give weekly formative assessments to measure comprehension of standards. Teachers then analyze student data to determine instructional needs of students. Students are grouped according to their instructional needs and receive targeted instruction. Reading A to Z leveled readers are a resource for teachers to address students' abilities. Reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and writing are all areas of targeted instruction, and progress is measured by grade level Developmental Reading Assessments

(DRA) and Quantitative Spelling Inventories (QSI). In addition, each trimester students take the ELA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to determine growth and attainment of grade level standards. Because MAP is an adaptive test, data from this assessment is also used to plan enrichment and remediation.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Vertical alignment and data analysis are essential for planning our math instruction at Florence Drake ES. Grade levels and vertical teams meet weekly to analyze formative common assessments and determine essential standards for instruction. This vertical collaboration includes unpacking the standards and deciding on appropriate pacing to prepare students for end-of-the-year exams.

We use the gradual release model as a strategy for our 75 minutes of daily math instruction: “I do, we do, you do.” Teachers utilize district pacing to plan whole group instruction based on the NVACS. Whole group instruction is interactive, and students engage through discussion and problem solving. Teachers use Number Talks as a critical thinking strategy and as an informal assessment. Number Talks require students to explain their answers and examine their problem-solving strategies both in written and verbal expression. When explaining their answers, students are required to use academic vocabulary. Following whole group instruction, teachers practice guided instruction as teacher and students collaborate to solve math problems. Finally, students work independently to solve problems. During this time, teachers differentiate instruction and work with small groups of students who may need additional support.

Our district math curricula are as follows: K-1st use Bridges; 2nd – 5th use Envision. These curricula provide daily checks for understanding and weekly unit assessments. Grade level and vertical data analysis is essential, as math concepts progress throughout the year. Teachers utilize these assessments for planning. Assessment results align to standards, which allows teachers to specifically identify areas of challenge for students as well as concepts that have been mastered. Using these results, teachers scaffold instruction to fill learning gaps and provide opportunities for small group remediation and tutoring. They also provide more rigorous concepts for students who show mastery.

### **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Florence Drake ES was awarded funds through a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant between the years of 2013–2018. Embedded in this grant were funds to hire a Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) coach with a budget to purchase STEM resources. Our coach modelled and co-taught STEM lessons and provided professional development on STEM education. The resources and lessons from this grant continue to be utilized within our classrooms and allow for exploration and hands-on activities specific to STEM curriculum.

Teachers plan 240 minutes of weekly science instruction using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Science instruction is integrated into other disciplines and informally assessed through teacher observation and science research journals. Our ELA curriculum, Benchmark Advance, provides interdisciplinary units with literacy and science. In addition, we purchased Picture Perfect Science for primary grades, which are picture books aligned to science and literacy standards. Another science literacy resource we use is Science A to Z. Teachers use these leveled readers during small group literacy instruction, which also address science content.

Another strategy we implement for science instruction is project-based learning. For example, a fifth grade interdisciplinary PBL unit integrated STEM standards requiring students to research and engineer a crossbow and explore tension and its impact on distance. Students tested their crossbow models and measured the distance shot. Students documented distance in their research notes and graphed results. Students then modified their design using three different angles. Students hypothesized which model would shoot at the greatest distance. They then tested their new crossbow and recorded data while eliminating outliers. Students reported on their results verbally and in writing.

Science instruction warrants hands-on activities and field experience. To enrich this experience, we purchased two 3D computers with 3D programs aligned to science standards. Students can immerse

themselves into a 3D experience while exploring science concepts. For example, one 3D experience is the life cycle of a butterfly. Using 3D glasses, the 3D computer, and a pointer, students observe the life cycle of a butterfly and can explore further using the 3D pointer. These 3D experiences increase meaning and comprehension of science standards.

### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Social studies curriculum is integrated and embedded into our Benchmark Advance curriculum and taught in thematic units approximately 200 minutes weekly. For example, community and government is the first thematic unit within the Benchmark Advance curriculum. Grades K-5 are aligned in pacing and theme. Students learn about community and government through text, and assessments measure comprehension of content. In addition, teachers incorporate writing instruction with social studies content. Scholastic News is another resource for teachers, which provides additional content and current events.

Nevada history is included in our 4th grade social studies standards. Teachers use Project Tahoe for resources and curriculum specific to our state and local history. Pyramid Lake, just 30 miles from our school, is included in local history. The lake is on an Indian reservation, and students learn about the local tribes and legends that contribute to our history.

Teachers also plan field trips that align to social studies content, allowing students opportunities for experiences outside of the classroom. As part of Nevada history, a fourth-grade class visited the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City, Nevada, to learn more about railroads and the Comstock.

### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Our Nevada Pre-K standards address pre-academic skills, including language, gross and fine motor skills, and social-emotional skills. Teachers use the NV Pre-K standards and assessment data to plan instruction. Students in Pre-K are assessed by the Brigance pre- and post-screener to determine instructional need and monitor growth. This assessment measures academic skills, language fluency, and social-emotional behavior, including self-help skills and school readiness. In addition, teachers monitor student progress using the Brigance Inventory in winter and spring to determine academic readiness for kindergarten.

Our Pre-K classrooms are highly structured with clear routines and procedures in place. Students receive whole group instruction in ELA and math and participate in small group activities for social studies and science. Learning activities are play-based and hands-on, based on students' individual needs. Social-emotional skills and learning behaviors are taught daily, and students are reminded of behavior expectations prior to every activity. Learning behaviors and schedules are picture supported, and students vocalize and demonstrate expectations.

Florence Drake ES is an implementation site for the NV Pyramid Model Partnership, which is a program to prevent challenging behaviors and teach appropriate behaviors. The goal of the NV Pyramid Model is to promote school readiness with a strong focus on social-emotional learning. Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are the foundations for this model. The NV Pyramid Model outlines culturally and developmentally appropriate social-emotional skills for learners.

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

Students at Florence Drake ES attend classes outside of the core curriculum, which include music, computers, physical education, and library.

Music instruction is twice weekly for 30 minutes, and content is based on the Nevada Academic Content Standards for Fine Arts. Music instruction includes note-reading, rhythm, pitch, form, and expressive

qualities. Students also learn musical instruments. For example, fourth-grade students learn the recorder, fifth-grade students learn the violin, and primary students learn percussion. Our students prepare for two performances yearly at the end of each semester. Our music teacher aligns music instruction to academic content. She includes songs that teach vocabulary, Nevada history, and geography. Our second-grade students performed a biome musical aligned to NGSS science standards. In addition, our music instruction includes cultural education and movement. Through song and movement, students learn about different cultural celebrations such as Kwanza and Hanukkah.

Library is once weekly for 30 minutes, and instruction focuses on library literacy skills such as locating books, book care, and the elements of a book. Also, students learn how to find books using our computer locating system. We have hard copy books and digital books on iPads. In addition, our library provides teachers with resources. We have book sets at different levels for teachers to use during literacy instruction or for student book studies.

Physical Education is once weekly for 30 minutes with a focus on teamwork. Students learn and participate in team sports with an emphasis on sportsmanship. Students also participate in the Presidential Fitness Challenge, which includes a one-mile timed run. Students set individual fitness goals and monitor progress throughout the year. Nutrition is a component of physical well-being. Our primary grades participate in a nutrition education program sponsored by the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Students from UNR teach our students about nutrition and the “My Plate” healthy eating plan by the US Department of Agriculture.

Computer class is twice weekly for 30 minutes for grades K-2 and once weekly for one hour for grades 3 through 5. Computer instruction is planned around Nevada Academic Content Standards for Computer Science and Integrated Technology. Computer instruction consists of typing, navigation of computers (hardware and software), and the use of computer applications for academics. Students learn how to use Microsoft Word, Excel, and Power Point. Students in grades 3 through 5 are assigned individual computers while primary grades have computer stations and iPads within the classroom. Computer instruction includes digital citizenship and internet safety.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Our school has an established Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process to help identify students who may need additional support. Our MTSS team consists of our intervention teacher, special education teacher, English Language Learner teacher, and general education teachers. Grade levels are assigned a monthly meeting date to review student data/progress and academic plans with the MTSS team. Data is analyzed for students performing below grade level in Tiers 2 and 3. Data is gathered from the following assessments: Developmental Reading Assessment, Quantitative Spelling Inventory, AIMSweb probes in math and ELA, ELA Benchmark Advance assessments, MAP ELA (grades K-3), district assessments in reading and math, and running records. The MTSS team uses the data to evaluate student progress and write individualized academic plans. Students demonstrating progress either continue with additional support (4 to 6 students) or exit MTSS. Students who are not demonstrating progress move to the next tier of support. The team revises the academic plan and reduces the size of the intervention group to 2 or 3 students. Teachers who provide small group support utilize intervention resources such as Phonics First, Leveled Literacy Intervention by Fountas and Pinnell Literacy, and Envisions math intervention program.

Other components of the MTSS process are data tracking, documentation, and parent collaboration. Our intervention teacher maintains records and documentation for all students in MTSS. She meets with teachers and parents to collaborate on student academic plans and review progress.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Our gifted and talented students participate in the Elementary School Gifted Education Model of Support (GEMS). Seventy percent of our teachers, including the principal, have a Gifted and Talented (GT)

endorsement. At least one teacher in each grade level is GT endorsed. Gifted students are placed in a classroom with a GT endorsed teacher. GT teachers collaborate with gifted students and parents to set goals and determine interests.

Our gifted students are grouped with high achieving students within the classroom. Teachers plan projects, books studies, and enrichment activities aligned to grade-level standards for our high achieving students, which address higher-order thinking skills. In addition, some grade levels have created a “makerspace” in their classroom to allow students hands-on opportunities to create and explore.

### **3c. Special education:**

At Florence Drake ES we have two resource teachers for Pre-K through 5th and one Speech and Language Pathologist. Our service model for special education varies depending on a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and their academic goals. Our resource teachers co-teach, push into the classroom, and/or pull out students for small group instruction. All students in special education receive grade-level instruction within their classroom, and our special education teachers provide remediation and support. Our special education service model and tier one instruction prepares our students for their state assessments. During the 2021 school year, 40% of our students on an IEP were proficient in ELA compared to the district average of 17% (4th highest of all WCSD elementary schools), and 45% of our students on an IEP were proficient in math compared to the district average of 14% (2nd highest of all WCSD elementary schools).

Like the MTSS process, we measure student progress towards IEP goals. Students are assessed weekly through teacher-created assessments in ELA and math, and monthly with AIMSweb probes in reading. Quarterly academic reports measure progress towards students’ goals using quantitative assessment data. The IEP team utilizes this information to revise goals and determine specialized instruction.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Approximately 27% of our students are English Language Learners (ELL). Our school has an ELL coach who is at Drake three days a week. Our coach provides small group instruction and push-in support for our ELL students. Our coach also provides professional development for teachers focused on tier one instructional strategies for second language learners such as visual support, vocabulary building, and resources. Our teachers integrate the WIDA standards into instruction, which include social instructional language and academic language within ELA, math, social studies, and science.

Students must demonstrate proficiency on the state’s ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State) test to exit ELL services. The ACCESS areas of proficiency are oral language (speaking and listening), literacy (writing and reading), comprehension (listening and reading) and overall. Our 2021 ACCESS results report that 43% of our ELL students are on trajectory for proficiency, compared to the district total of 34%. Drake's exit rates for ELL students are in the top 10 highest for the entire district.

### **3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:**

Florence Drake Elementary School has two special education specialized programs. One program is a Social Intervention Program (SIP) for students with intellectual disabilities or autism. Our other program, called Social Resource, is for high-functioning students with autism. Students in these programs are bussed from various schools around the district.

Students in SIP receive adapted curriculum including functional and behavioral skills. Instruction is individualized and aligned to each student’s IEP. The primary focus for instruction in SIP is to teach and reinforce accepted behavior: calm body, nice words, follow directions and on task. Students receive increased incentives and privileges as they demonstrate appropriate behaviors with the goal of transitioning students back to their zoned school. SIP is a self-contained program, meaning students attend most of their day in the SIP classroom and attend lunch, recess, and specials (music, library, PE, and computers) with general education peers.

Students in Social Resource are high functioning students with autism who demonstrate academic abilities at or above grade level. Students in this program attend much of their day in the general education classroom and 30 minutes daily with a special education teacher for social skills instruction. Students in Social Resource struggle with social interactions. These deficits are addressed using the Social Thinking curriculum. The Social Thinking curriculum provides social skills lessons and activities. Lessons address expected and unexpected behaviors, discussion of feelings, appropriate ways to deal with situations, problem solving, and role-playing.

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

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

At Florence Drake ES we start every day with a reminder to students to “be the best they can be in academics, with their behavior and in their community.” Our school established Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) ten years ago. In addition to daily reminders of behavior expectations, we start each day with “words of wisdom” from Project Wisdom. These “words of wisdom” address character traits such as gratitude, perseverance, positive attitude, and respect.

Our PBS plan is focused on core behaviors: Safe, Outstanding Learner, Always Respectful and Responsible (SOAR). Students who demonstrate these behaviors earn individual or class “falcon feathers.” Students work towards a menu of incentives. For example, individuals can earn “principal for the day,” and classes can earn extra recess. We also recognize two students monthly from each classroom who model SOAR behaviors. In addition, we highlight a monthly SOAR behavior and teach a character lesson focused on that behavior.

Student engagement is evident in every classroom at Florence Drake ES. Based on the 2021-22 Climate Survey, students at Drake report the 8th highest rate of student engagement, meaning students feel what they learn is relevant, interesting, and engaging. Students are taught strategies for engaging in discussion and academics. Accountable talk is a strategy teachers use during discussions. Students listen to classmates’ responses and give a thumbs up or down if they agree or disagree, then explain their thinking. Academic strategies include UNRAAVEL (reading strategy) TIPPS (listening strategy our school created), math multiplication songs, and manipulatives. The UNRAAVEL strategy consists of the following steps: (U) Underline the title, (N) Now predict the passage, (R) Run through and number the paragraphs, (A) Are you reading the questions, (A) Are the important words circled, (V) Venture through the passage, (E) Eliminate any obviously wrong answers, and (L) Let the questions be answered. Our school created the TIPPS listening strategy to help guide our students through listening passages. TIPPS for listening comprehension include: (T) Topic of text, (I) Identify questions, (P) Play and listen, (P) Pause and take notes and (S) Second glance and replay.

Although our school is no longer an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) school because of district funding cuts, we still use AVID strategies with our students. One AVID strategy is college and career readiness. Every year our students describe and illustrate their career goals. These goals are displayed by grade level in the cafeteria. Parents and the community can observe our students’ goals.

Staff also take pride in displaying their college banners and degrees in their classroom. This practice promotes goal setting and college and career readiness. We also celebrate “college and career Wednesdays.” Staff and students are encouraged to wear college and career shirts to foster a college readiness belief in our students. Our culminating event is a 5th grade field trip to the local community college and university.

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

At Florence Drake ES we encourage and support families to engage in their child’s education. Opportunities for family engagement include Literacy Night, STEM Night, Book Fair, parent conferences (twice yearly), musical performances, and parent meetings. Our goal for family engagement is to establish an academic home connection in partnership with parents. Events such as Literacy Night and STEM Night provide parents with at-home resources. Resources and activities are planned by each grade level to support learning. During these evening events, teachers instruct parents on how to use activities and games to support learning at home.

Learning at home begins with communication. Communication is essential for building relationships and connecting with families. Our teachers use ClassDojo to communicate with families daily regarding class and school activities. When our school moved to distance learning, ClassDojo was our main form of

communication with students and families. Our school also publishes a monthly newsletter, and teachers send this newsletter through ClassDojo.

Personal communication with families is equally as important. During the first month of school we host back-to-school mornings. This year we had a 93% participation rate. Back-to-school mornings provide parents an opportunity to meet their child's teacher and learn about classroom procedures and expectations. Parents meet with teachers regarding student progress during our conference weeks. We have two conference weeks, fall and winter, with a 97% participation rate. We encourage parents to meet with teachers and staff anytime issues arise and try to provide multiple opportunities for meeting and communication, including virtual options.

Our school decided to participate in the district's elementary soccer league five years ago. With the creation of Drake soccer and cheer, our family engagement and participation has increased. Families come to watch and cheer on our soccer team. Our local community has also stepped in to support our team by providing donations to our school for busses and uniforms.

Community members are also invited to participate in our "principal for the day" program. This program is district sponsored, and our school participates yearly. School principals are partnered with community members who shadow the principal for the day. The goal of this program is to form partnerships and inform the community about the positive events at our schools.

Our school has established partnerships with local organizations that support our students and provide resources. The Food Bank of Nevada and Sparks Christian Fellowship give food to our families in need. During the holidays our students can attend Shop with a Sherriff. The event is hosted at Walmart, and the counselor invites families to the event where they shop with a Sherriff for Christmas gifts. Mountain View Montessori School and the United Methodist Church in Reno, Nevada, adopts our school during the holidays. They provide Christmas gifts for our families in need. These organizations have graciously partnered with our school and have provided our families with much-needed resources.

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

Creating a culture where teachers feel valued and supported is the foundational belief of leadership. The most valuable resource for teachers is time. Our district has implemented early release Wednesdays where students are dismissed early, and teachers have an additional hour for planning and collaboration. Leadership recognizes this time as sacred. During early release Wednesdays, teachers meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with grade-level colleagues and/or their vertical team. Teachers' work in PLCs includes instructional planning, common assessments, and data analysis. Grade levels establish quarterly SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) goals aligned to essential standards to measure student growth. The PDSA model guides our teachers as they Plan, Do (teach), Study (analyze results) and Act (remediate or enrich). Our teachers also develop yearly Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). SLOs are factored into teachers' evaluations. Teachers work with grade-level colleagues to select essential standards and content and determine instructional strategies. Pre- and post-tests are created and aligned to standards to measure mastery of content and effectiveness of instruction.

Our school has two instructional coaches who plan and present professional development while supporting teachers. Professional development is focused on academic vocabulary and listening comprehension across all grade levels. Our coaches support teachers in the classroom by co-teaching, modeling, and working with students.

Our professional development (PD) also targets teacher wellness and balance. Besides instruction, teachers take on many roles and responsibilities such as coaching, counseling, record keeping, data entry, and professional learning. Our teachers are challenged to find balance and wellness opportunities. They often expend all their energy on our students. Wellness PD provides teachers an opportunity to slow down, find balance, and participate in healthy activities. Drake's recent Wellness Event focused on establishing balance and wellness through mind, body, and soul activities. Activities included soul activities (reflection,

reading, meditation), body activities (hiking, yoga, barre), and mind activities (art, creativity). Drake's Wellness Event was well received, and teachers expressed feeling supported and energized.

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

"Expending energy trying to motivate people is largely a waste of time... if you have the right people on the bus, they will be self-motivated" (Good to Great, by Jim Collins).

The role of leadership is to ensure that "the right people are on the bus." A leader's responsibility is to build a team of people who share the same beliefs. At Florence Drake ES, our beliefs are that all students can learn, and all staff are responsible for student learning.

Collective efficacy begins with hiring people who share our beliefs. Our school has developed a process for hiring the best candidate. Hiring committees consist of the principal or dean, counselor, teachers, and support staff. Applicants are screened by an interview committee. Selected applicants are then invited to interview. The interview consists of an individual written portion followed by a group interview. All applicants are interviewed at one time. Our interview committee asks the group questions, observes interactions, and records responses. Questions include, "Why do you want to join the Drake team?" and "How will you build relationships with our school community?" As a result of this hiring process, 94% of staff agree, "There is a sense of teamwork among all school staff," and 100% of staff report, "I feel school leadership is clear about what my job is at this school," according to the fall 2021 Florence Drake ES Staff Climate and Safety Survey.

In addition to hiring the right people, staff remain at Florence Drake ES because of our school's positive climate and culture. From our recent climate survey, 94% of staff report that they look forward to and are proud to come to work. Leadership takes pride in creating a positive school climate with the belief that "When we are happy—our mindset and mood are positive—we are smarter, more motivated, and thus more successful" (The Happiness Advantage, by Shawn Achor). To foster happiness, employees need positive affirmation and recognition. At Drake we recognize staff efforts with a recognition board where staff leave positive notes, and a "staff member of the month" is nominated by colleagues. Leadership also writes staff positive postcards twice yearly, specifically and genuinely addressing individual strengths and contributions towards student success.

Leadership promotes shared decision making and solicits staff feedback. Because we are a small school, all staff are invited to participate in decision making. In fact, 100% of staff agree from the 2021 Climate Survey that "The school leadership makes sure that staff are involved in making plans and decisions that affect this school." Shared decision making includes school budgets, resource allocation, and instructional practices.

Most importantly, leaders lead by example. When our staff decided to implement a schoolwide "walk to learn" instructional block, the principal and dean were also assigned to teach students. Leadership assumed the role of teachers and worked in collaboration with colleagues. The role of leadership actively teaching students added to our school's collective efficacy and collaborative efforts. As stated by Lao Tzu, sometimes the best way to lead people is to "walk behind them."

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

Our school provides students with social emotional support by integrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into daily classroom activities. We use the The MindUP Curriculum: Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning—and Living, by the Hawn Foundation. SEL content and lessons address relationship skills, decision making, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. Classroom activities include mindful awareness through the senses, brain research, brain breaks, chime time (to relax), self-management, and personal goal setting. The core of SEL is our continued belief in students and instilling that belief in themselves. Classroom teachers send an individualized positive postcard to students' parents celebrating their child's strengths.

Our district's ELA curriculum provides culturally rich literature from diverse backgrounds. For example, the theme of one Benchmark unit was moral lessons. This unit provided stories from different cultures such as Chinese, Native American, Indian, and Eastern European. Students read the various stories and discussed different perspectives from the varying cultures.

Another instructional approach to teach culturally diverse backgrounds is through book studies. We created a book study club for our intermediate grades and studied the following books: Code Talker, by Joseph Bruchac; Esperanza Rising, by Pam Munoz Ryan; 1000 Paper Cranes, by Eleanor Coer; Out of My Mind, by Shannon Draper; and Echo, by Pam Munoz Ryan. During our book studies, we researched the culture from the book, discussed different perspectives, and reflected on how the book influenced our thinking.

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

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Our team at Florence Drake ES is like a flock of geese. Why use this analogy? The lessons of the geese teach us that “geese fly further together, geese support each other when times are tough, geese take turns leading, geese cheer progress, and geese are loyal to their purpose.” (Bill Gosling, [billgosling.com/blog](http://billgosling.com/blog))

Geese fly further together and are loyal to their purpose:

Florence Drake has established a collective belief that all staff teach all children, and we are loyal to this purpose. Five years ago we established a “walk to learn” learning block of time where students are grouped based on ability and a common curriculum focus. We created a schedule where all staff are responsible for the teaching and learning of students. The notion of one classroom teacher responsible for the learning of their students is not the mindset at Drake. We believe all staff (teachers, principal, dean and support staff) teach students and are responsible for student progress.

Geese support each other when times are tough and take turns leading:

Based on strengths, staff members are assigned to instructional groups to highlight those strengths. For example, “walk to learn” second semester focused on intermediate SBAC preparation in ELA, math, and science. Primary teachers with degrees in literacy were assigned to intermediate ELA instruction. In addition, leadership moved primary teachers to intermediate assignments so those teachers could better comprehend the requirements of state testing and instruction.

As a team we created instructional books in English language arts, math, and science for our intermediate grades with a focus on SBAC readiness skills. Our SBAC student booklets are a resource for instruction and contain practice assessment questions and academic vocabulary in all subjects. We believe that daily practice specific to SBAC readiness and content has increased proficiency. In addition, our students demonstrate confidence and stamina when taking the state assessment.

Geese cheer progress and fly further together:

As a result of all staff teaching all students, our school’s state proficiency rate is a collective effort from Pre-K through 5th. When our SBAC results were released, as a vertical team we analyzed our data and determined our areas of success (what we did well) and areas of challenge (what we needed to work on). Our results last year demonstrated that our students struggled with listening comprehension. Our staff, grades Pre-K through 5th, committed to work on listening passages and strategies with students. This commitment includes both principal and dean, who also teach during “walk to learn.” As a result of our collective efforts, our students and staff at Florence Drake ES fly further together.