

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address P.O. Box 399
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Falls City State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78113-0399

County Texas

Telephone (830) 254-3551 Fax 830254

Web site/URL
<https://fcisd.net/District/Department/8-Elementary-School> E-mail lunaj@fcisd.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.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Todd Pawelek E-mail pawelekt@fcisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Falls City Independent School District Tel. (830) 254-3551

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Barbara Braune
(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.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The 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 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) 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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not 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, 2022 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 Students
PreK	15
K	31
1	33
2	37
3	43
4	32
5	36
6	28
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	255

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 11 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 80 % White
 - 9 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: ≤1%

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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	284
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 20 %

Total number students who qualify: 50

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 11 %
Total number of students served 27

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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>5</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>1</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 0 %
Total number of students served: 0

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 3

11. 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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
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.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
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%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2015

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Falls City ISD will educate all students to their highest potential in a safe, small school setting with highly qualified staff providing infinite instructional opportunities.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.fcisd.net/files/user/119/file/Student%20Handbook%202022-2023%20Final.docx>

18. **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

Falls City Elementary (FCE) is part of a small, unique school district in South Texas. It serves students of a close-knit, rural community, where many of the students' parents drive into San Antonio or other nearby towns to work. Many parents work in the oilfield as well as run family businesses in town or surrounding areas. Falls City does have transfer students; some travel up to an hour one way to attend school in this small community. The neatest thing about FCE is the tradition that it is built around. Many, many families have roots that are tied to the area. Students that have graduated from Falls City High School, left, attended college, and started working, have made the decision to come home and have their children attend the same school district they attended. That is definitely one of the most unique traits of this school. This is where the tradition continues. With the upbringing of students that have long roots to the school district, parents have instilled respect, academic excellence, teamwork, and the like to ensure that this close-knit culture thrives year after year. From the outside looking in, this is definitely a very unique and special place.

The school district's philosophy of hard work culminating in success is tied directly to the elementary. The district strives to educate all students to their highest potential in a safe, small school setting with highly qualified staff providing infinite instructional opportunities. They do this in an exemplary educational environment that fosters excellence in all areas and focuses on putting academic achievement at the forefront.

FCE is able to put forth this philosophy and make it part of their everyday plan in educating students by assuring learning opportunities reach all students regardless of learning style. The staff and parents hold all students to very high standards, and the students, in turn, work very hard to meet these expectations.

Another important and very prominent characteristic of the school is the role of extracurricular activities. Many students that attend FCE participate in sports such as baseball and football outside of school. Many students also raise show animals like pigs, cattle, and lambs for the local and major stock shows. Students at FCE are well-rounded when it comes to obligations and responsibilities. They engage in learning about life and lessons inside the classroom as well as outside of it. The parents play an integral role in this, but the one thing that always comes back to the forefront is academics. Teachers, parents, and students all have the same common goal: academics first; extracurricular activities will follow.

About four years ago, FCE began its own Elementary Student Council. Students in grades three through six get the opportunity to run for student council and are elected by their fellow classmates. Once elected, they get to make decisions as a governing body in an effort to improve the campus. One major component of the student council is the school store. The elementary students are given opportunities to earn tickets throughout a school day for such things as participating in class discussions, grades, being a friend, meeting classroom goals, lending a helping hand, using manners, cleaning up around the school, etc. The sky's the limit when it comes to earning tickets. The students can then use these tickets to "purchase" items in the school store. The student council members run the store, working behind the counter and "selling" the items to the other students. Other areas that the Elementary Student Council pride themselves on is their dedication to community service. Over the past few years, they have orchestrated food drives with donations to the area food banks. They have raised money and donated to various charities. The sponsors and school leaders believe that these opportunities are essential in students' well-rounded education, giving them ample opportunities to give back to their community and witness the benefits in doing so.

The close-knit community of Falls City goes above and beyond to support the elementary school. For example, when students participate in a charity fundraiser, the community and parents are always there to help the students in their efforts. When students compete in an extracurricular event, the community is there as well. If there is an event hosted by the school, parents will be there to offer support, especially when it comes to literacy events like the Book Fair, Donuts with Dads, and Muffins with Moms!

Falls City Elementary, also known locally as Luther Thomas Elementary, received the National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2015. By receiving this award, the elementary school and community have received recognition and an underlying notice of excellence in the area. Falls City Elementary staff and students are

always proud of the school, but receiving the award solidifies that hard work and dedication to the students of the small town does not go unnoticed.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Falls City Elementary, teachers place a high importance on student's reading ability. They understand that without a good reading foundation, the students will suffer throughout all other subjects of learning. In order to achieve this, each grade level teaches the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). In Pre-Kindergarten, the teacher is familiar with the TEKS of kindergarten as well and builds their reading foundation in preparation for kindergarten. The Pre-Kindergarten teacher helps address and close some of the educational gaps some students may have before attending kindergarten. Closing these gaps allows the students to enter kindergarten on an "even playing field" if possible. In grades kindergarten through second, the reading teachers have a very balanced literacy approach. Students engage in learning through shared reading experiences, shared writing opportunities, guided reading, as well as explicit phonics instruction. Students also learn through whole group lessons, small group reinforcement time, and one-on-one reteach time, when needed.

As the students enter grades third through sixth, they are allowed to explore their reading skills and develop their love of reading through novel studies, literature circles, and collaborative discussions. This allows them to develop their vocabulary as they read and think critically, respond to text, and make connections. The teacher helps close the gaps for students who may not have met grade level standards but at the same time, challenges the students who are working on or above grade level. Their teachers adjust the curriculum to make sure the needs of all their students are met, regardless of their instructional level.

The assessments to determine student progress vary depending on the grade level. Pre-Kindergarten through second grade use testing that focuses on progress in reading and math. The assessments are given at the beginning of the year, the middle of the year, and the end of the year. This provides the teachers with data that can be used to enhance their instruction to ensure all students' instructional needs are met. This also provides teachers an opportunity to chart growth progress for each child's learning. Teachers also use guided reading with students as a tool of assessment, as well as instruction. Guided reading entails running records, teacher observations, and formal benchmark level tests that include comprehension questions. In grades third through sixth, teachers use reading passages, unit assessments, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) data, and informal data gathered in their classroom. These assessments help guide instruction so that students can be successful.

All grades Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade take time throughout their day to focus on phonics skills to constantly build upon students' reading skills. Teachers use fun rhymes, songs, hand motions, and videos to help students as a whole and in small group settings. Students are awarded positive reinforcement for making gains with their reading ability concepts in phonics and other areas.

All the hard work that teachers put forth at Falls City Elementary help the students, teachers, and community be successful in the area of Reading.

1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

When developing and implementing the mathematics curriculum, Falls City Elementary teachers start with the basics: the TEKS. At every grade level, the teachers analyze each mathematics TEKS and strategically plan what, how, and when each concept will be taught throughout the school year. Units are organized by focus standard to provide engaging activities and interventions that support instruction, reinforcement, and reteaching. FCE math teachers work together across grade-levels to ensure alignment throughout lesson plans and educational goals.

In order to deliver successful mathematics instruction, FCE teachers keep the lesson cycle in mind. This includes stating the objective, modeling and explaining the thought process, guided practice, mastery

checks, and finally, independent practice. As a result of using the lesson cycle, the mathematics teachers can easily and efficiently see which students understand the concept being taught and which students may need extra support. For example, students who incorrectly answer the mastery check question on 2D shapes will be immediately pulled for one-on-one or small group re-teaching instruction. During the reteach process, the Falls City Elementary teachers use models, think-alouds, and other supports to explain and show the concept in a different way. Providing students with multiple problem solving strategies allows them to better grasp the concepts and select which one works best for them, individually.

Building a firm foundation and awareness of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts helps FCE students prepare for more difficult content as they grow. For example, in third grade, teachers use math games, such as ‘Multiplication Knockout,’ to help students learn their facts. Integrating fact games into the classroom has contributed to students’ abilities to solve more difficult problems quicker and more accurately. Falls City Elementary teachers also emphasize the importance of math vocabulary at every grade level. They provide in-depth explorations and hands-on activities within each mathematics unit, which increases students’ understanding of vocabulary concepts. In the upper elementary grade levels, teachers continue the use of manipulatives. Using manipulatives helps students to construct physical models of abstract mathematical concepts.

Both summative and formative assessments are used during FCE mathematics instruction. The use of formative assessments occurs daily to solve any misconceptions, struggles, and learning gaps in the lesson. These formative assessments include in-class discussions, mastery checks, polls, short quizzes, homework, and check-in techniques such as thumbs up and thumbs down. For instance, in the fifth grade, students answer a one question mastery check over adding and subtracting positive rational numbers. Based on the answers, the teacher easily assesses who understood the concept and who needs assistance. This simple formative assessment encourages positive teacher-student dialogue and allows for student reflection. The campus mathematics summative assessments include teacher created exams, unit projects or presentations, and standardized tests provided by the State of Texas, including interim and STAAR tests.

Overall, Falls City Elementary teachers intentionally organize the mathematics curriculum, instruction, and assessments throughout the school year so that students are set up for success, both academically and in the real-world.

1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Falls City Elementary’s staff play a key role in promoting their students’ understanding of science knowledge. Students are well-rounded individuals. The teachers use rigorous materials and hold high standards for students. When developing and implementing the science curriculum, the teachers start with the basics: the TEKS. Students at the elementary school participate in weekly science labs that build understanding through engaging, hands-on learning. Many experiments, observations, inquiry discovery, and understanding occur through kinesthetic learning. The opportunity to use the science lab and all its resources helps build scientific concepts with all students as it instills a curiosity for discovery.

Science affords many opportunities for project-based learning activities. Students love to showcase what they have learned to their peers and others outside of their learning community. These types of opportunities help build students’ research, as well as public speaking skills. The elementary encourages the third thru fifth graders to participate in a science field trip every year. Students love seeing concepts come to life first hand in a real-world setting. These experiences help reinforce skills students have learned in the classroom and build upon their existing knowledge, as well as foster curiosity for further learning.

Another way teachers like to build knowledge is incorporating classroom “read-alouds” that support the concept being taught. Videos are another great reinforcement of concept ideas. Students can also be challenged or supported through computer-based learning activities that are incorporated into their unit lessons.

The use of informative assessments occurs daily. These observations aid in correcting any misconceptions students may have about new concepts. These assessments can include in-class discussions, short quizzes,

exit tickets, as well as simple quick checks such as thumbs up and thumbs down.

By implementing the science curriculum, instruction, and assessments throughout the school year, students will be successful in real-world applications.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Falls City Elementary teachers strive to provide meaningful and engaging lessons and curriculum to fully develop the understanding of the TEKS within the social studies curriculum to all students.

Falls City's social studies curriculum is based around fun, engaging activities that allow students to experience the world around them. The teachers break down the concepts by building foundational skills, such as maps, graphs and charts. To make sure each student's needs are met, students are provided with an online account of the curriculum so that they can utilize computer tools to enhance understanding and support oral reading of passages for those students with such accommodations.

Students are also assigned writing activities which relate to the focus of instruction, thereby supporting cross curricular connections. Students engage in both reading and maps and timelines and create their own versions using their community and the environmental resources around them.

Laying a foundation for our country's democracy is an important piece of becoming a productive citizen. Students are able to take part in the voting system at Falls City Elementary when they participate in student council elections at the beginning of the year in grades three through six. The steps for an election process, including campaigning, the understanding of how to conduct an election as well as how to make peaceful changes in government when needed are important components of learning about our democracy in action.

Teachers implement focused instruction on vocabulary as it is such an essential part of deepening a student's understanding of the world around them. Teachers provide reference videos to build understanding of such lessons, as well as seek additional engagement and instructional pieces to incorporate into their lessons; these instructional pieces include gallery walk activities, interactive quizzes, and even make-shift museum historical figures. These provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences for students.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

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

At Falls City Elementary School, the Pre-Kindergarten instruction is guided using curriculum aligned with the Texas Pre-Kindergarten guidelines. The curriculum supports the development of the academic concepts of Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health, concept/theme vocabulary, and technology skills. Pre-Kindergarten students actively use technology with individually paced math and ELAR programs daily. Hands-on learning in the curriculum is incorporated with the use of the science lab weekly, in daily learning centers, in daily physical education class time, and with the integration of the High School Child Guidance classes. Other instructional focus areas include Social and Emotional Development, Language and Communication, Fine Arts, and Physical Development. Pre-Kindergarten students daily focus on eight different learning centers that reflect the core curriculum guidelines in the unit of study. Every learning center is differentiated, connected by the unit of study, and is engaging for learning and individual success. Students in the child guidance classroom daily interact in the learning centers, in core curriculum lessons, and in planned large group learning projects directly affecting each child's success in school readiness. The Falls City Pre-Kindergarten program uses the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines that directly align with the kindergarten through 3rd grade TEKS. Indicators of the impact of early education on school readiness is the ability of Falls City Pre-Kindergarten students entering Kindergarten knowing the procedures of the school and in meeting the baseline goals established through beginning of the year assessments. Incoming Kindergarten students from the Pre-Kindergarten classroom demonstrate understanding of terms used in the instructional language of the classroom and are able to

navigate the classroom and routines established easily. The greatest impact of success is that the Pre-Kindergarten students are able to participate in group learning, small group, and other academic learning routines easily with the social and emotional skills needed to be successful.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

At FCE, students have a variety of opportunities each week to participate and display their artistic abilities while satisfying the Art TEKS. In each grade level from Pre-Kindergarten through the sixth grade, students create art projects to display in the hall for other students and visitors to see. These projects include coloring pages from weekly lessons, dioramas from a book they have read, and sometimes even an art project that will be on display at a school wide art show. Some projects are large and some are small, but they all help to reinforce a lesson or create new learning opportunities. The students also get several chances to participate in musical endeavors. Every year, students put on a Holiday Program. Each grade level practices two songs to perform. The performances include choreography and props to help create memorable performances for the community while differentiating the TEKS from other areas. In fifth grade, students begin band and satisfying the Music TEKS. They learn how to play musical instruments and read music. Learning at this age affords them time to grow, develop, and continue in the band program throughout their high school years. In doing so, they develop their talents that may not necessarily be part of the regular classroom repertoire.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

The Falls City Elementary Physical Education Department follows the TEKS as they focus on the physical and mental health of all students four times a week. The physical education department utilizes this document as the scope and sequence for elementary physical education to ensure that all standards are met. Standards covered include physical fitness principles, movement patterns and skills, as well as performance strategies. As a result, students are provided the opportunity to develop lifelong knowledge and motor skills that promote overall physical fitness. It is imperative that students are taught appropriate strategies in order to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle not only in their adolescent years, but continuing throughout adulthood.

In addition to the standards set forth in the TEKS, the elementary physical education program also provides a curriculum that covers four key areas of health: physical, social, emotional, and mental. Students can acquire functional health knowledge, and strengthen attitudes, beliefs, and practice skills needed to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors throughout their lives. Health standards such as relationships, nutrition, hygiene, as well as other essential health concerns which may arise are covered in order to prepare students with the ability to be healthy and physically active for a lifetime.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

At FCE, foreign language such as Spanish is implemented within the third grade elective period as an extension to student learning one week a month to encourage and promote cultural diversity, cultural awareness, and a hands-on experience for students. While actively participating in their learning, students have the opportunity to create Día de los Muertos murals. In learning a foreign language's cultural traditions, students are allowed to share their masterpieces and cultural experience with those at home. Students are encouraged to use items that define and signify family culture to help remember loved ones that are no longer in this world. Students are introduced to simple everyday Spanish phrases that are used in the classroom to help practice communicating with members in the community if the occasion arises. Implementing foreign language in electives, such as art, encourages students to learn foundational skills that will also be used when students study foreign language at the secondary level with hopes to ultimately be used in everyday life. Students that are exposed to foreign language at an early age are more likely to further

their knowledge and spread it to others, as culture and language are important to a student's development as our country continues to grow in diversity.

2d. Technology/library/media

At Falls City Elementary, staff uses a variety of ways to help students become successful in the classroom. One of these ways is with the use of technology. Beginning in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, students use iPads and in grades first through sixth, the school has a one to one ratio of students to Chromebooks.

Students are able to access their Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies curriculum using their Chromebooks. The teachers assign individual lessons, activities, and extra practice to meet the individual needs of each student. Third through sixth grade students participate in designing and building programming miniature robots. The robots teach coding and STEAM in all subject areas. During Response to Intervention (RTI) classes, teachers use programs that are geared to fill in the gaps with their tier 2 and 3 students. In lower grade levels, the programs that are in use help develop basic phonological awareness skills in reading and basic problem solving skills in math. In the upper grade levels, teachers use a reading program to improve reading fluency and comprehension skills.

FCE teachers work hard to ensure the needs of all students are met. They collaborate with each other and explore new technology to make sure all students are successful in their education.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

At Falls City Elementary, each class from grades Pre-Kindergarten to sixth, uses an innovative curriculum program that is built into their weekly schedule called "Character Education Wednesday." The teachers strive to build the social and emotional development of their students. Each Wednesday, teachers discuss appropriate age topics. Through these lessons, the teachers inspire and empower elementary students. The goal of Falls City teachers is to grow skills that focus on developing a mindset, problem solving and belief-in-self. Faculty and staff hope to teach students to manage fear, to take safe risks, show resilience and self-management, social awareness, positive thinking and adjusting actions, gratitude, and kindness in given situations. Group discussions are the main focus to help build these skills. Group discussions come from given quotes that relate to students' everyday life and the topic of focus. Other discussions come from inspirational videos or book readings.

Additionally, the teachers incorporate engaging team building activities, such as dances, races, and buddy reading with high school students. This character building allows the teacher to get to know their students on an "in-depth" personal level, and students feel comfortable sharing their feelings and experiences with their classmates in a safe environment. "Character Education Wednesday" has been an asset to FCE.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Falls City Elementary prides itself on closing the gaps. Students who fall below grade level are classified as Tier III students. Intervention plans are devised from day one of the school year, at each grade level, to determine the best educational approach for getting the student back on grade level. Teachers dedicate time for RTI, with Tier 1, 2 and 3 students each week in a one-on-one setting and meet with school administration to set goals and devise strategies for these struggling learners. Student progress and notes are documented in Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum (DMAC).

Falls City has a reading specialist on campus who supports classroom instruction and targets areas of specific concerns for student success. Students are pulled several times a week and collaboration regarding progress is communicated not only with school personnel but also with parents. They also have a staff member dedicated to math assistance. She supports the classroom teachers by pulling students to close the gaps which the teacher has determined. Accelerated instruction is also provided to their Tier III students. Thirty hours of additional instruction is given to any of their students who have failed the previous year's

STAAR test. This instruction is provided by their on-campus specialists and the classroom teacher.

Falls City Elementary is proud to also provide a homework lab for all learners. This is an additional resource for students who fall below grade level. This support helps not only the below grade level students, but all students be successful.

FCE meets the students where they are on their learning journey. While they may be students performing below grade level, they can be successful at their level and make gains to close the achievement gaps. This process is a group effort. Teamwork is key.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students performing above grade level have many benefits at Falls City Elementary. One of those benefits is the Gifted and Talented (GT) program. Students are screened in kindergarten, and if they score high enough (and with parent approval) they are tested to see if they qualify. When they qualify, they meet once a week and work on enrichment activities. Each child is responsible for their part of the activity and at the end of the year they present their projects to their peers. Last year the GT program presented the Living Museum, and this year they are writing books to be published. Every year, the Gifted and Talented teachers culminate ideas with each gifted learner in mind and decide on a school-wide project. Each student is then given the opportunity to take the topic and make it their own.

FCE also offers Tier 1 instruction for students that are performing above grade level. This is where most of the students get their needs met through differentiated instruction. Teachers use formal and informal assessments to adjust their instruction plan to support student needs. They use their data to drive instruction to help those students. Teachers provide guided reading groups or book clubs where the student is able to read text on their level and have discussions with peers who are working at the same level. This allows them to dig deeper into meaning and understanding of the text. Teachers also provide differentiated math groups for those that are performing above grade level, where they use project-based options with rubrics for grading.

Those students who are performing above grade level also get to try robotics which give students the opportunity to discover explanations of how everyday objects and processes work. Robotics removes traditional boundaries between disciplines giving these students much needed free reign to explore only limited by their imagination.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At Falls City Elementary, teachers strive to meet the needs of all of our students. Starting in the lower grade levels, teachers identify the students in their classroom that need interventions in order to meet these needs. The campus has intervention teachers on campus that see the students to assist the homeroom teachers in filling in the gaps. The teachers also use small group settings in the classroom to reteach skills their students are missing.

The campus principal holds RTI meetings with the teachers to assess Tier 3 students' progress. Together they create goals that hone in on specific skills that the students are lacking. The goals are based on each individual, academic needs of the student. When it is determined that intervention and small groups are not successful, the teachers meet with the parents of the students to determine if Special Education testing is needed.

The special education teachers work with the parents, teachers, and testing personnel to come up with an appropriate education plan to ensure the student is able to access grade level curriculum. Some students require accommodations and inclusion support. Falls City Elementary works hard to assure all diverse learners are in their least restricted environment. When this is not possible, the students are serviced in the resource or life skills setting. In these settings the special education teachers focus on the TEKS the students are missing in order for them to reach grade level curriculum. Accommodations and modifications set in the students' Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) are used to ensure they are understanding the TEKS that are

being taught.

Falls City Elementary meets the needs of all its diverse learners, by implementing skills for lifelong learners. They work together as a team to assure every student achieves success in school and becomes productive citizens when they leave.

3d. English Language Learners:

English Language Learners (ELL) are supported by highly qualified English as Second Language (ESL) certified teachers. ELL students receive full academic and language support within all classes. When developing and implementing the curriculum, the teachers use the TEKS for explicit instruction. Teachers offer a variety of accommodations and strategies to make classroom instruction appropriate for all learners. Supports implemented by teachers include differentiated instruction, oral administration, graphic organizers, and small group instruction. Academic support is provided throughout the year, and materials are sent home in May so students can continue their skill growth.

Teachers work proactively with students and parents targeting skills and monitoring progress regularly to determine intervention success. The district's Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC), as well as a strong and supportive parent-teacher relationship is key to student success. The LPAC is composed of ELL certified teachers, an administrator, an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) representative, and a parent. They meet multiple times a year to discuss ELL student progress, discuss classroom accommodations, and provide testing accommodations for the STAAR and Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). They monitor students who have been exited from the program and work together to ensure all students in the ESL program are receiving instruction that is geared toward language skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The LPAC participates in school-community involvement events throughout the year, and parents are provided explanations of program services and benefits.

The success of ELLs at Falls City Elementary can be attributed to immersion into general education classrooms and differentiated instruction. Teachers engage all students with whole group lessons, small group instruction and peer collaborations. This allows for conversational practice, academic vocabulary development, and social skills development. Most importantly, it provides students a relaxed atmosphere to build their language skills.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

FCE provides instruction that targets the whole child. Teachers know that every student learns differently and that to reach their full potential, differentiation is essential. Another important area incorporated daily is social and emotional learning. Teachers in all grade levels provide the highest quality instruction that engages in multiple ways focusing on each student.

In primary grades, teachers utilize songs, tactile, and kinesthetic activities. For example, play-doh and sensory bins are provided for Pre-Kindergarten students to develop fine motor skills. This simple, yet effective, activity engages students through play and enhances their learning of the themed unit. In addition, songs are taught to memorize the days of the week, spelling of colors, and months of the year, which provide fun opportunities for the kindergarten students.

In upper elementary classrooms, teachers continue to provide engaging instruction by differentiating content area material. Games, songs, hands on experiences, and acronyms are used. For fifth and sixth grade students, complex topics like coordinate grids and integer operations have catchy songs the students often sing by heart by the end of the unit. Also, the PEMDAS (parenthesis, exponents, multiply, divide, add, subtract) on banners hung as a visual in the classroom is a constant reminder for students and are referred to daily. In science, hands-on activities in the lab keep students engaged. Students are eager to get their hands dirty and enjoy their experiences provided by the teacher. KWL (Know-Wonder-Learn) charts are used to activate prior knowledge, along with debriefing after labs. This strategy provides students with opportunities to engage through speaking and language development. Furthermore, math and language arts teachers have students work collaboratively to problem solve and discuss topics as ways to deepen understanding on rigorous material. For example, think-pair-share and turn and talk strategies are used to give students the chance to verbalize their thoughts before reporting to the whole group.

Teachers understand that learning must take place outside of the "normal" subject areas. Activities which challenge students to think about a college and career choice are encouraged through research-based inquiries and school wide events such as "Think College Thursday." By providing these opportunities, students are exposed to a variety of higher educational platforms as well as degree choices for their future!

FCE keeps the whole child in mind to provide engaging activities for their students. Differentiation strategies and social emotional learning continue to propel students to their highest potential.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of the key components that make FCE so successful is its strong ties and relationships to community and families. Falls City Elementary strives to keep their families involved in each child's educational journey. They make it a point to have at least one event each month that invites parents and families to come to the school. Students are eager to show off their school to their Grandparents in September for Grandparent's Day and to flaunt their talents during the school-wide Christmas program in December. Families also enjoy coming to class parties and to field day in May, which is sponsored by local businesses and run by our high school students. Teachers and students use these opportunities to exhibit some of the writing and projects that they have been working on in class. The opportunities for families to come to school motivates students to achieve and be proud of their school and accomplishments.

FCE is an integral part of the Falls City community. Students can often be found participating in or volunteering for various community events. Falls City Elementary also invites local businesses and other community members to present at an annual Career Day. There students learn about jobs in and around their community and the people who work there. They also learn about the steps they need to take to be successful at various careers. Elementary students also take a walking field trip around their small community. Students get the privilege of visiting the local mill, post office, meat processing plant, and other local businesses. Students acquire a rich knowledge about what happens "behind the scenes" of these

businesses that they have been visiting their whole lives. They see friendly faces and make connections to the people they see around town. These connections help build relationships between community members and students.

Falls City Elementary teachers also find ways to integrate the community into their lessons. For example, the first graders had the opportunity to meet with Falls City's mayor and ask him questions when they were learning about authority figures. One of the things that makes Falls City unique is that Pre-K through twelfth grade are all housed in the same building. This allows for the elementary students and their families to get to know the older kids and be involved and support many events. Falls City Elementary students can be seen supporting older kids at band contests, sporting events, and even pep rallies!

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Falls City Elementary School goes above and beyond in creating a professional culture for all of its staff, whether it be the paraprofessionals, the faculty, or the other people who keep the school running.

The administration actively seeks to find training opportunities for staff to attend that would be beneficial to both teachers and students. The principal has sent out several emails over the course of the school year to different teachers about various trainings that would be helpful to that teacher in that subject matter. The principal listens to the teachers' needs and goes out of the way to support the staff with anything that they feel they need. The administrator listens to concerns and comes up with plans and strategies to help with those concerns. All administrative office doors are always open and welcoming to any and all staff with ears that are ready to listen and offer help or support in any way possible.

As the campus staff is very close, the teachers are provided common planning periods. This allows them time to plan together or just visit with one another. In most subject areas and grade levels, there are only two teachers with either the same grade level assignment or subject areas. The administrator understands that having the built-in scheduled time to communicate and plan with one another is only going to add to the continued success of the campus.

The school also has committees dedicated to the staff, such as the Hospitality committee and the Sunshine committee. The Hospitality committee provides semester breakfasts to get everyone together and mingling. It is a wonderful time to get to sit and enjoy the company of all of the staff that one might not get to talk with during their regular day to day. Each month, there are volunteers that provide treats to the staff as a thank you and encouragement for a job well done. The Sunshine committee offers support and congratulations to staff albeit of a personal or professional manner. These committees serve as a reminder that Falls City Elementary School is always there to support and uplift their faculty and staff during good times as well as times of challenge.

Falls City Elementary School truly goes above and beyond to create a culture for the staff where all feel welcome, important and essential to keeping the school running at such a high and achieving level.

4. School Leadership:

Falls City Elementary is small in size and is led by the district superintendent and campus school principal. The philosophy of the school is to "make every second count" and "follow your arrow." Each year the elementary campus changes the philosophy slogan to portray the new focus for the upcoming school year. At the campus level, the school principal loves to instill values and inspiration to the students and staff every day. The principal uses a special time every day during the morning announcements to reach every student. Being that every day is busy, the administrator finds time to share a quote, motivational message, or lesson for the students to reflect on throughout their day. Positive reinforcement and looking for the "good things" and "little things" is ranked very high on the principal's focus list. Therefore, the principal picks a weekly "Feature Teacher" and "Super Student." The principal makes the decision based on anything positive the teacher or student has done the past week. That teacher and student then get a reward from the campus principal with their picture displayed by the principal's office.

Being such a small campus, the principal has the luxury of being involved in almost every event that takes place throughout the day. The relationship between the staff and the principal, and the involved role the principal plays leads to the success of FCE. The principal is involved in every student's special education plan, 504 plan, student support plan, or Response to Intervention plan. The principal is in charge of scheduling and managing the meetings and plans outside of special education and 504. This allows the principal to know every student, including their strengths and weaknesses, needs and accommodations. The principal manages every program that is purchased and put into place in all grade levels. Staff is then required to use the program as well as report progress of each one. With the open door of communication and the relationship built between the principal and staff, decisions of the programs are made together. The decisions are made based on the students at the campus. The campus has seen success over the years, and the principal loves to view it as a team effort. The campus administrator owes all the success to the staff, students, parents, and community. The staff has the students' best interests at the center of each decision that is made. Falls City would not be what it is today without their leadership.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Falls City Elementary is known for using students' customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools to help build classroom instruction. Faculty and staff view themselves as a very close community. Because of this strong support, not only within their school, but the whole community is able to feel themselves as belonging to the school, which makes learning more meaningful. The elementary hosts a Meet the Teacher Night for families to get to know their child's teachers. During this event, the school also has informational booths for community involvement. It provides informational packets, tangible items for at home support, and a staff member that can provide additional information. Several events are hosted throughout the school year to provide continual opportunities to families. Such events include: Meet the Teacher, Fall Carnival, PTO meetings, Open House, and the Art Showcase. Their school also includes a student council, which gives opportunities for students to support their school and community through various activities, such as collecting food for the Food Bank and Planting plants around the school. Falls City Art Showcase is a great way to display each child's unique style, capabilities, and who they are as learners through their art pieces. This is a great opportunity for students to affirm and appreciate their culture while also developing an understanding of their classmate's culture. Students are also provided with opportunities for leadership building through various school events. Their Fall Carnival would not run as functional as it does without their sixth-grade class. The students gather and collect the materials needed for the event, help set up, work, and clean up. One important event that Falls City provides to all students every year is the career fair. Career presentations are adjusted for the different levels of students that will be listening to the presentation. All students throughout the district are allowed to choose which presentations to watch. Being able to have local community members, with many various jobs, be able to offer advice and insight to careers not thought possible is a great advantage to their students. For example, this past year they had a local community member speak to the students about working for Disney as a lighting artist for the movie Encanto. Through these examples, it is clear to see that Falls City Elementary students use their customs, character experiences, and perspectives to further not only their education, but also to enhance the community around them.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

The singular practice that has been most instrumental to Falls City Elementary's success is small group instruction. It is the one method every teacher uses, no matter the years of experience, grade, or subject taught. From Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade, small group instruction is implemented in every single classroom. It is an expectation of every teacher on the campus. Over years of success, the teachers have grown to see how that practice has led to their success.

At Falls City Elementary, observers will witness teachers working with children who are well above level, making them stronger in their academic success. Likewise, the instructors pull the children who struggle with a certain skill, strategy, or subject to reinforce it in a smaller setting. The teachers organize the students in similarly leveled groups to meet them where they are on their academic journey. This practice sets Falls City apart because all populations and skill levels are being addressed on a daily basis.

Due to competing interests, lack of time in the school day, and varying levels of student abilities, a lot of schools only work with their children who need extra help in a particular area. However, Falls City Elementary has made it a priority to challenge students that are above level, as well, so they can excel at an even faster rate. A notable byproduct of this approach is that students remain engaged and excited to learn each and every day.

Teachers will be the first to say that preparing and pulling students for small group instruction is time consuming, tedious, and requires great amounts of organizational skills. Some of the teachers are self-contained and are required to pull small groups for multiple subject matters. It takes time. The single-subject teachers also have to put in equal amounts of prep work as they are pulling many groups from two grade levels. All of the teachers have to come up with a system that works for them. It is hard work. On the flip side, they know that it works, so they are all willing to put in the work to make this part of everyday happen.

Every child's journey matters! Small group instruction is a fundamental and successful way to achieve that principle. Falls City has made it a priority, and that decision and implementation is the single most instrumental action that has led to the elementary school's success as a whole...meeting students where they are and advancing them accordingly.