

## **CSP Fernwaters Executive Summary**

The Fernwaters program proposes to offer 144 kindergarten through eighth grade students in and around Salmon, Idaho, Lemhi County a high-quality school of choice. FPCS follows a high expectations, high supports learning model that maintains a low student teacher ratio. Capping enrollment at 16 per grade ensures focused, individualized instruction. The FPCS core values of kindness, respect, hard work, and responsibility guide the school culture. By providing rural students a rigorous and diverse educational program combined with individualized learning and behavioral supports, FPCS gives students strong foundational skills in reading, writing, and math, a concern for others, and a sense of community.

The Fernwaters team believes that trusting, supportive, and nurturing teacher-student rapport forms the foundation for all learning. Recognizing the power of excellent teaching on student learning, FPCS places an emphasis on teacher development to improve engagement, classroom management, and academic outcomes. Excellent teaching, combined with data-informed and evidence-based best practices, leads to excellent learning outcomes.

FPCS guides student behavior according to a system of positive behavioral supports and the logic of choices and consequences. In addition to an Idaho Core Standards-aligned academic curricula, FPCS incorporates music, art, and STEM into its daily program for all students and expands learning opportunities through community partnerships, Friday music and welding, and after school programs.

In these ways, *FPCS helps small town kids launch BIG life dreams.*

# **Fernwaters K-8**

CSP Grant Application

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## **A.) Project Goals**

*Goal 1: To add four grades (K-3) and 64 students to existing programs in order to create the Salmon area's only K-8 school of choice.* The Fernwaters mission is to help small town kids launch big life dreams by giving them a personalized educational experience in a high expectations, high support learning environment. Since 2019, Fernwaters has served students in grades 4-8. The opportunity now exists to add grades K-3 and build curricular continuity into our program. We will now be able to extend this educational benefit to more students and we will have a greater impact on their educational outcomes. Our model caps enrollment at 16 per grade, 144 students at full enrollment. Current Fall 2024 numbers already meet overall targets. (We are over-enrolled by one student in grades 2 & 4, which we did to keep siblings together.) Thirty-five students are on a waiting list. However, our 3rd grade has 2 open seats. To achieve enrollment goals, FPCS needs to add 2 additional students by Fall 2025, retain existing students, and fill vacancies with students on a waiting list. If we can continue to enroll kindergarten cohorts of 16 students each year, we will meet this grant project goal.

*Goal 2: To implement community engagement, marketing strategies, and school programs that are inclusive of economically disadvantaged, Title I, EL, other at-risk, gifted and talented, and exceptional children populations.* We strive to achieve enrollment statistics within 5 percentage points of the local district for each subgroup. This goal meets the CSP grant rubric item A1.

Fernwaters already implements targeted Title I and special education programs in grades 4-8 so that we can help each child achieve his or her potential. A benchmark is that 100% of newly enrolled K-3 students will be screened for speech, reading, and math during the 2024-2025 school year. FPCS has employed a school psychologist who will also assume some teaching

responsibility at the K-3. Gifted students will be served by STEM, music, and art programs that challenge learners with hands-on problem solving tasks and opportunities for self-expression. These programs will be implemented at the K-3 beginning in Fall 2024. While Salmon does not currently have a significant EL (or other at-risk populations), FPCS aspires to create bilingual marketing and family communication materials by Fall 2026 since population demographics are beginning to change. A feature of the FPCS program is effective family communication that provides individuals with a sense of school community and keeps parents engaged in their children's learning. A benchmark includes the following: During each grant period school year, 100% of FCPS parents will access and/or participate in school-parent information in one or more of these formats: a) Facebook and Instagram; b) A parent night in the fall; c) Monthly paper newsletters; d) The Remind App; e) Text messaging, emails, phone calls, surveys, and private conferences; f) Community engagement activities, including musical/theater performances, art shows, and student activities. For a trackable measure, FPCS identifies Facebook users and keeps a sign-in/attendance sheet for conferences, parent nights, and school activities.

*Goal 3: To implement a cohesive K-8 educational program aligned to state standards that leads to literacy and ISAT proficiency and growth rates exceeding the higher of local or state averages by 5 or more percentage points.* This goal also addresses the CSP grant rubric item A1. Over the past 2 years, students have entered the FPCS program increasingly unprepared for grade-level content. Therefore, our goals for 4th grade are not immediately ambitious. Our goal is over 60% proficiency and growth on the ISAT Math and ELA. Based on previous year's data, we expect the 2025 and 2026 cohorts of 8th grade students to achieve over 55% proficiency and growth in

math and ELA. The expansion to a K-8 provides the opportunity to offer continuity of ELA and Math curricula. By Fall 2029, we will teach 4th grade students who have had 5 years in our program. By then we expect 3-8 ISAT proficiency rates to reach 75% or higher. Growth rates can sometimes flatline as students are achieving or exceeding proficiency. Therefore, the long term goal is to achieve consistent 4-8 ISAT growth rates of 60% or higher. Our goal for K-3 literacy is to achieve a minimum of 70% proficiency rates on the assessment selected by the Idaho SDE.

*Goal 4: To expand learning opportunities for rural students beyond the traditional classroom by enlarging their world with hands-on experiences, enrichment, engagement with community organizations, and exposure to and participation in the expressive arts.*

Benchmarks include these:

1. Develop after-school (8th period) classes in Spanish, visual art, and instrumental music.

Although FPCS operates on a 4-day week, the FPCS school day ends at 3 p.m. because K-8 students are not required to meet the same 990 hour requirement as 9-12 grade students. District 291 students are released at 4:15 pm. FPCS, in partnership with The Salmon Arts Council, proposes to offer after-school art, music, and Spanish language classes that will run from 3:15-4:15 beginning in Fall 2024. The art and Spanish classes will serve students in grades K-8 and will be offered to k-5 students and 6-8 students on alternate days Monday-Thursday. The instrumental music will be targeted to students in grades 5-6 ,so that they can learn the fundamentals and prepare to enter highschool band at District 291. In year one, we would expect to see at least 10% (15) of FPCS students in K-8 participating in one or more of these programs. In year two, we would expect to see the number of participating students increase by at least 5% to 22 students.

2. Expand a STEM curriculum that gives students hands-on problem-solving tasks into grades K-3 by Fall 2024. A measure of success includes 60 minutes per week of dedicated STEM instruction for all students in grades K-3.

3. Expand expressive and visual arts programs into the grades K-3 by Fall 2024. Measures of success include 3 hours per week of dedicated music/theater/art instruction in grades K-3, plus at least 3 public performances and 2 demonstrations of finished works of art by students in K-8 per year.

4. Collaborate with civic and community organizations to give students learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. Measures of success include one or more of the following over the grant period: K-3 educational field trips or completion of projects designed and executed in collaboration with a non-profit partner organization.

## **B.) Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum**

FPCS follows a high expectations, high support learning model in a mixed grade setting that maintains a low student teacher ratio. Research supporting high expectations dates back to 1968 and has enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in communities serving a high number of families in poverty. Lowered expectations for students in poverty and students who struggle is common due to social perceptions or personally held preconceived notions about individuals or groups (Marzano, 2010). The Pygmalion Effect, as it was first described by Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) explains how expectations create self-fulfilling prophecies. Students will respond positively to positive expectations. Research has continued to support their conclusion. Holding students to high standards of personal conduct and academic performance and treating students

as though they are important and capable has proven successful in boosting student achievement, especially among disadvantaged groups.

Students in kindergarten through 3rd grade are building academic and developmental foundations for future educational success. According to educational research compiled in the article “Approaches to Learning” (New Jersey Government), students in these grades are primarily developing three core competencies.

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|------------------------------|--|
| Engagement                   | Demonstrates effort, persistent engagement in learning activities                              |
| Planning and Problem-Solving | Demonstrates the use of planning and problem-solving strategies to achieve goals.              |
| Initiative and Creativity    | Demonstrates initiative, independence, and creativity in new, challenging learning situations. |

To implement these core competencies, teachers and Title One and SPED staff work closely to design and deliver meaningful instruction and learning measures where students master foundational skills. FPCS teachers provide a multitude of engaging experiences through Intro to Coding, Canva applications, Creative Story-Telling, ELA games, and Readers Theatre.

The FPCS K-3 program places heavy emphasis on literacy, math, and writing/grammar. Focused fluency instruction in early grades is the foundation of future reading comprehension skills. Research has shown a two-way relationship between reading fluency and comprehension: when children read more fluently they understand what they read better, and when children understand what they are reading they read more fluently (Klauda & Guthrie, 2008; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). FPCS has already adopted HMH (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s) *Into Reading* for grades 4-8. This curriculum is built upon *The Science of Reading*, a foundation of research proven to raise student achievement. This body of research identifies these essential

elements of reading instruction: oral language skills, alphabet knowledge, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary (Foorman, et al.). In order to provide students a cohesive, evidence-based ELA curriculum, we will use this same HMH comprehensive ELA curriculum at the K-3, supplemented by ELA reading and writing intervention curricula as needed to address specific learning concerns, including dyslexia.

The K-3 math program is also guided by research. This research cites five action-oriented steps for teaching math: 1) Teach number and operations, using a developmental progression; 2) Teach geometry, measurement, patterns, and data analysis, using a developmental progression that builds strong foundations in number sense, base 10, and math facts; 3) Use progress monitoring to make sure that math knowledge builds on what each child knows; 4) Teach children to view and describe their world mathematically; 5) Dedicate time each day to teaching math and integrate math instruction throughout the day (“Evidence-Based Recommendations for Teaching Math”). HMH’s *Into Math*, an Idaho Core Standards-aligned comprehensive curriculum, incorporates these attributes. This curriculum is based on the research which shows that growth is maximized when instruction, assessment, and professional learning are coordinated and tightly aligned. FPCS math ISAT scores went up over 10% after this curriculum was adopted and implemented effectively. Therefore, we plan to use the same curriculum in the lower grades in order to achieve math curriculum continuity across grades K-8. Current evidence-based methods for math interventions involve a focus on pre-teaching grade-level content while filling in gaps. We are implementing this intervention model in grades 6-8 with good results. Therefore, we plan to use the same approach in grades K-5 beginning in Fall 2024. ELA and Math instruction occur in 90-minute blocks of time in the morning at the



FPCS K-5. The instruction is chunked into sessions and activities blending direct instruction, collaboration, and independent practice. The afternoons are reserved for science, social studies, STEM, music, and art.

We are not using a specific curriculum for science and social studies instruction at the K-3. Instead, we are using a range of workbooks, hands-on activities, and field trips to address the Idaho Core Standards at those grade levels. The grade 4-5 science curriculum is FOSS, which is built around firsthand exploration of phenomena, using classroom-proven theories and practices to engage students through labs. Savvas Science is used in grades 6,7, and 8 to teach physical science, life science, and earth science respectively. The Savvas Science materials, instruction and assessments engage students in real-world, natural phenomena. Students build scientific knowledge by applying Disciplinary Core Ideas, Science and Engineering Practices, and Cross-Cutting Concepts through inquiry-based learning. Social studies curricula for 4-5 is one year of *United States History* (Houghton Mifflin) and *Idaho Adventures*: (Gibbs Smith Education) the following year. These programs provide engaging experiences connecting students to real world events, people and places. Reader's Theatre, problem-based projects using Google Applications, escape rooms, field trips and museum visits help students relate to the past and our ever changing world. The National Council for Social Studies states, "The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world."

For grades 6-8 we implement HMH Social Studies: an inquiry-based curriculum focusing on World Geography, World History, and US History/Civics. Digital programs within this platform allow students to witness ancient civilizations through virtual field trips while

cultivating critical thinking skills in relation to their own world. Students dig into the past while examining primary sources and develop claims using evidence. FPCS learners are informed on current events digitally and through guest speakers while being exposed to multiple texts and publications highlighting different perspectives on topics both globally and locally. According to the NCSS [C3 Framework](#), social studies should: a) Prepare the nation's young people for college, careers, and civic life; b) Place emphasis on inquiry; c) Involve interdisciplinary applications; d) Highlight social studies' deep and enduring understandings, concepts, and skills from the disciplines; and e) Prepare students for democratic decision making.

FPCS implements Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) to teach students constructive behaviors that align with the FPCS core values. PBS offers an approach to develop an understanding of why the child engages in problem behavior and strategies to prevent the occurrence of problem behavior while teaching the child new skills. Positive behavior support offers a holistic approach that considers all factors that have an impact on a child and the child's behavior ("Behavior Intervention and Positive Behavior Support," 2024). Physiologically, the bodies of children between the ages of 10<sup>1/2</sup> and 13 undergo significant hormonal changes that affect the developing brain. Essentially, these changes result in an overactive limbic (emotional) system and an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex (impulse control). Therefore, our student conduct policy is rooted in the concepts presented in Love and Logic (Fay and Fay). Students are taught that choices produce consequences, and students are guided to accept logical (not punitive) consequences and redirected to make more constructive choices.

The K-3 program is modeled after successful components of the existing middle school program, including a focus on Core Curriculum-aligned, Idaho Core Standards-based

curriculum, evidence-based teaching methods, art and music instruction, hands-on activities for science and STEM, daily physical education in the outdoors, and developmentally appropriate and engaging learning activities, which are explained below. The educational programs are consistent with the following research-based best practices (Lorain, 2017).

*1. Present limited amounts of new information to accommodate the short-term memory.* Our academic programs focus on quality and depth, preferring mastery of a few knowledge and skill sets over exposure to numerous skills.

*2. Provide opportunities for students to process and reinforce the new information and to connect the new information with previous learning.* Our selected curricula contains recursive content review, allowing students repeated exposure to foundational skills. For example, HMH contains tabletop mini lessons designed to accelerate tier 1 and 2 students, and HMH provides growth report data to analyze skills that need reteaching.

*3. Provide lessons that are varied, with lots of involvement and experiential activities.* Instruction periods do not exceed 45 minutes, and lesson activities within instruction periods are planned to accommodate short attention spans. Activities are varied, multimodal, and often hands-on or cooperative. The science program is lab-based, affording frequent experiential learning activities that reinforce and apply text and lecture-based learning.

*4. Provide lessons and activities that require problem solving and critical thinking.* The FPCS educational programs require students to write about and discuss topics requiring higher order thinking skills, such as synthesis and application. Students are asked to reflect, assess, evaluate, predict, hypothesize, and infer. Literature studies, in particular, require in-depth analysis. In all

content areas, lessons are structured to give students the information and procedures they need to approach critical thinking tasks.

The Fernwaters Public Charter School program reflects research-based practices regarding how best to meet the cognitive and developmental needs of both early elementary and middle grade students, which are succinctly summarized from *The Best Schools* (Armstrong, 2006). They are the following: 1.) Safe school climate; 2.) Small learning communities; 3.) Personal adult relationships; 4.) Engaged learning; 5.) Positive role models; 6.) Metacognitive strategies integrated into all courses; 7.) Expressive arts activities for all students; 8.) Health and wellness focus; 9.) Emotionally meaningful curriculum; 10.) Student roles in decision-making; 11.) Honoring and respecting student voices; and 12.) Facilitating social and emotional growth. The school program and structure at Fernwaters Public School meets these needs.

Technology provides a critical learning avenue for FPCS students. ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, STEM and music curricula all have digital features as part of the basic platform, as well as reinforcement and enrichment components. For example, *Waggle* is a digital component of the HMH Math and ELA curriculum. Students participating in Idaho's Advanced Opportunities benefit from IDLA courses delivered over personal computing devices. FPCS uses *G-Suite for Education* as an online learning and communication platform for students, teachers, and parents that can be accessed from school and home. FPCS students use technology to complete research, writing, and presentation projects. FPCS aims to teach students responsible digital citizenship and empowers them with the tools needed to learn and work in a digital environment. FPCS also uses technology for screening, growth, and summative assessments.

The Fernwaters program recognizes that expressive arts help students channel their impulsive energies and foster social and emotional health. One component of the expressive arts program is a 2-year sequence of hands-on art projects in the K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 grades. Grade 6-8 students receive a 3-yr sequence of art instruction. FPCS K-8 students receive art instruction at least 2 times per week. During the first nine weeks of school, students build ceramic pieces. Twice a year, student artwork is featured for the community to enjoy. Through art, students can experience, express, expand, and apply knowledge in the three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor. Students in K-8 also participate in choral singing and rhythmic movement daily. Elements of dance and theater are incorporated for students in K-5, and 6-8 students focus on elevating their performance with three-part harmony. All K-3 students receive direct daily piano instruction. The benefits of piano instruction on early elementary students have been well-documented. The benefits include improved spatial reasoning, increased IQ and executive functioning, and enhanced language skills (“The Science Behind the Benefits of Childhood Piano Lessons,” 2021). The music program is enhanced by an optional Friday group music lessons.

The Fernwaters program values physical activity and time outdoors in every season as contributing to overall mental and physical well-being. Students participate daily in physical outdoor activities in all but the most inclement weather.

The Fernwaters educational team partners with community organizations to expand learning experiences. FPCS partners with the Idaho Stem Project for engineering and design-build projects and with The Lemhi County Historical Society to engage students in a local history research writing project. FPCS is also the only public school in the area that offers

Friday programs. We offer group music and welding programs, both of which are offered in off-campus locations owned by partners.

To address the CSP rubric item B5, FCPS has taken advantage of the Idaho Charter Specific Teacher certification process. FPCS has successfully onboarded 2 teachers through this process, and it intends to add a third with the expansion project. These individuals possess the skills, attitudes, and aptitudes to successfully implement the FPCS educational program, but they lacked traditional teacher certifications. The flexibility created by this provision has helped FPCS execute its mission.

### **C.) Teaching and Learning**

FPCS deploys a wide variety of teaching strategies adjusted to meet the needs of students and appropriate to the concepts taught. Teachers establish clear learning objectives and set high expectations. Direct instruction and scaffolded instruction are used to present new information or teach new skills. Students learn how to take notes and how to summarize text using evidence. Guided practice and reinforcement activities occur both within the classroom under the supervision and guidance of a teacher and independently at school or at home. Teachers use rubrics and clearly define measures of success. FPCS teachers provide clear, effective, and timely feedback on assignments suggesting areas where each child can improve. Assessments are designed to evaluate what students have learned in individual units and lessons, and they are used to help students gain greater metacognitive awareness of their learning, to improve teaching, and to encourage better organizational skills and study habits. Students are given opportunities and encouraged to redo poor quality work, and they are praised and rewarded for efforts that meet or exceed expectations. Classroom discussions tackle interesting topics

centered around higher level questions and age appropriate wait times. Science students practice generating and testing hypotheses through hands-on weekly science labs. Literature circles, reading groups, and team projects comprise aspects of the language arts program. FPCS teachers design lessons and activities to reach students with various learning styles, including kinesthetic, auditory, and visual. At FPCS, we believe our excellence is key to student success. Instruction is driven by student data and formative assessments. FPCS creates a school-wide academic spreadsheet listing test proficiency, interventions and academic growth over the years. Beginning, mid-year, and end of year growth assessments guide or help teachers differentiate classroom instruction. We use ISAT scores and Fall MAPS data to group students into learning tiers at the beginning of each school year. As a staff we meet weekly to analyze student performance on classroom and standardized assessments, looking for areas where we can improve instruction, be it through a specific training or grade level collaboration. Using the RTI process and data measures, title intervention groups are then created within each grade level. This data drives our delivery for small group support in reading, math, fluency and writing. Tier 2 and 3 students participate in monthly Amplify growth measures to track improvement in reading fluency and comprehension skills. In the upper grades 6-8, classroom data and growth measures are used to group students into a Skillbuilder Class which meet individual learning needs in math. Struggling students receive targeted interventions, which include small group or one-on-one sessions where concepts are pre-taught, re-taught, explained more slowly, in greater depth, or one at a time. Students below reading benchmarks are placed in title one reading groups to target specific skills. Students achieving or exceeding benchmarks are placed in enrichment classes.

## **D.) Student Academic Achievement Standards**

Fernwaters Public Charter School effectively and consistently “provides a balanced picture of [its students’] strengths and weaknesses” by using both summative and formative assessments (Garrison and Ehringhaus, 2013, p. 1). FPCS staff understand the importance of using data to support a growth mindset focused on student mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high quality work. The FPCS Technology and Data Administrator records and analyzes aggregate and disaggregated student data, including attendance, behavior records, academic performance, and test scores to identify systemic or individual areas of strength and weaknesses. The data administrator meets bimonthly with staff and administration to communicate results and discuss options for improvement. Students participate in summative assessments such as the ISAT test in April. ISAT results are recorded to assess individual year-to-year growth. By tracking band data for cohorts of students in math and ELA, we can identify weaknesses in specific grades or subjects. FPCS staff selectively utilize Smarter Balance’s interim assessments to measure progress toward performance objectives and offer test taking practice. Teachers also utilize culminating events including end-of-unit tests, presentations, and projects to serve as summative accountability measures.

Just as important, Fernwaters educators employ various forms of formative assessments to evaluate student progress and inform teacher practices. Written and oral quizzes, questioning, observations, self-assessments, peer assessments, and formal and informal check-ins comprise informal formative assessments. FPCS includes MAP testing two times per year to determine skills mastery and year to year growth. Additional screening assessments help identify students who should receive targeted interventions. Amplify is used as a reading screener, and



the HMH benchmark tests are used in the Fall to screen students for math and reading achievement.

ISAT, MAP, Amplify, and HMH data are used to identify students who would benefit from targeted Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions in our Title I reading and math programs. Test data is also shared with students and parents to establish learning goals. Parents, teachers and support staff work together to discuss and analyze best practices that would foster student success. FPCS uses data to evaluate progress toward benchmarks by identifying struggling students, weaknesses in curriculum, and ineffective teaching methods so that strategies for improvement can be implemented. Teacher evaluation data is another important tool that helps us identify where we can support our educators in achieving excellent student outcomes.

#### **E.) Student Demand and Community/Local Support**

The intended service area for FPCS is Salmon, Idaho, the county seat and population center of Lemhi County, one of the most isolated, rural counties in Idaho. Lemhi County on average falls well below the state percentage of students going on to post-secondary education. Demand for the FPCS program has grown since we opened in 2019. In October 2023, Upper Carmen Charter School announced that it would be closing in May 2024. Parents of students served by UC's K-3 formed a Facebook group to discuss educational options for their children. This group of parents wrote a letter to the Fernwaters governing board asking if FPCS could find a way to expand its program to include K-3. The FPCS administrator met with the parents in person on multiple occasions to listen to their concerns, wants, and needs. In a December 2024 Salmon 291 board meeting, FPCS was granted a charter amendment allowing for the expansion

to a K-3. This meeting was well-attended by the grassroots parent group. FPCS had a clear community mandate for its proposed K-8 program.

The opening of FPCS in 2019 was also a grassroots, parent-driven initiative. Therefore, FPCS has enjoyed wide community support since its inception. Parents have helped paint the interior of the school buildings, installed sod, moved furniture, and pulled nails. Parents also have attended school board and municipal meetings to show their support for the FPCS projects. The city of Salmon has shared infrastructure construction costs. R&M steel donated \$58,200 in steel to construct the K-3 building. Our work is also supported by our authorizer and our many local, non-profit partners.

Recruitment efforts center around leveraging local media and social media outlets. Beginning in January of each year, FPCS publishes radio advertisements on the local radio station *KSRA* and newspaper ads in the local newspaper *The Recorder Herald*. These ads highlight the educational features of our program, announce the lottery date, and direct people to the FPCS website, where they can apply on a web form from any personal computing device. All of the ads contain the FPCS vision statement: *We help small town kids launch BIG life dreams*. Recruiting new kindergarten cohorts of 16 students will be critical to reaching enrollment goals. Therefore, outreach efforts will include leaving informational literature and applications at local preschools, daycares, and the child development center. Salmon has a few low-income residential units. Informational brochures and applications are placed in the common areas of those apartment units, as well as in the public library. FPCS budgets \$2,000 per year for marketing and recruitment. In reality, though, the best form of recruitment in a small

town is word-of-mouth. Most of our new applicants are people who have heard good things about the school from friends and family.

We won't have reported demographic statistics inclusive of the K-3 expansion students until Fall 2024. To date, however, within the existing 4-8 program, our recruitment efforts have yielded just under 30% Title I and almost 6.5% Special Education students. The local district, Salmon School 291 serves 691 students. Their Title 1 program serves only 7.67%, but their special education population is reported at 15.58%. Once we identify the special education students at the K-3, we expect that demographic to reach about 10%, which will put us within a 5% range of their population.. The racial demographic in Salmon is predominantly white. Of the 78 students now served by FPCS, 98.72% are white. Some of these are mixed race students, who identify as white. FPCS barely exceeds 5% of Salmon's 93.04% white students. The expansion students are likely to also be predominantly white.

FPCS cares about the opinions of parents and students. We routinely survey parents and students to generate feedback about our program. Their feedback guides our decisions about how we can improve or serve families best. For example, in response to parent feedback, we are adding a homeroom period to our 6-8, so that we can change the way we communicate students' homework responsibilities to parents. We also gather student feedback by keeping a comment box in a common area of the school. Students drop suggestions and comments that help us serve them better. As described in Goal 3, FPCS communicates with parents through social media, email, phone, text, paper newsletters, homework folders, student planners, the Remind App, and in-person during conferences, a parent night hosted in the Fall, and family engagement activities that include an ice skating party and ski trip in the winter months and a picnic in the spring.

## **F.) Effectively Serving All Students**

We focus on providing the most applicable and individualized support to every student. Targeted tutoring has been identified by *The Brookings Institute* (Ander, Guryan, & Ludwig, 2016) as an effective method for closing the achievement gap among economically disadvantaged populations. FPCS teaching staff is available for tutoring from 7:15 until school starts at 8:00, as well as after school, from 3:00-4:00. FPCS also provides small group interventions and one-on-one assistance from instructional staff throughout most of the school day. Our student to staff ratio is 10 to 1. Beginning in Fall 2024, FPCS will have two Idaho certified SPED teachers, one of whom also holds an Idaho School Psychologist license, to implement a comprehensive SPED program in compliance with federal and state requirements relating to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. FPCS has an MOU with Steele Memorial Hospital to contract for therapy services, including speech, physical, and occupational therapies. Students requiring extra assistance are identified through screening assessments and other performance measures, and a system of multi-tiered interventions in reading, writing, and math are provided proactively through our Targeted Title I program. Students receiving interventions are progress monitored. Students who are not showing growth consistent with peers receiving similar interventions are recommended for special education eligibility assessments. Class sizes and access to technology allow for a high level of individualized support and differentiated curriculum for children identified for exceptional child services.

FPCS also works to eliminate barriers to enrollment and attendance for special populations. Due to the large geographic service area, FPCS cannot sustain a conventional

bussing program, but a comprehensive in-lieu of compensation plan guarantees access to enrollment and attendance. Parents living more than 1.5 miles from the facility are notified of the transportation plan and the reimbursement rate established by the state. Funds are budgeted to provide Lemhi Ride bussing services above and beyond the FPCS in-lieu of transportation plan for those whom access to transportation is a barrier. FPCS students participate in the Salmon School District extracurricular activities. FPCS contracts with the South Lemhi School District for field trip transportation. Though an insignificant homeless population is anticipated, a Homeless Liaison identifies and ensures service to homeless students in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act. FPCS has identified a Spanish language translator in the event that Salmon's small EL population increases. FPCS has a signed memorandum of understanding with Lemhi Valley Social services. They provide individual and family counseling services. FPCS also connects families to other support organizations and resources, including The Mahoney House (a non-profit that supports victims of domestic abuse), food banks, and churches to complement its service to special populations. While FPCS does not participate in the federal school nutrition program, it does budget for lunch items, which are stocked in pantries at each school and available for all students.

Strong parent communication procedures help ensure high academic expectations. FPCS teachers are expected to communicate with parents to share successes and make improvement plans. Teachers, school administrators, and parents work together to create academic or attendance improvement plans. FPCS implements an attendance policy that requires parents to appear in front of the school board to address excessive absenteeism. This policy has proven to improve attendance.

School programs and structures must allow students to develop in a healthy environment, and they must interrupt and correct any potentially damaging peer interactions (Caskey & Infara, 2014). Fernwaters Public Charter School teaches students positive behaviors. The United States Department of Education's recommendation for the use of positive behavioral interventions/supports as a model for instruction that proactively identifies the behavioral competencies of all students and addresses these competencies through a multi-tiered approach (Posny, 2010). These interventions paired with individualized, escalating consequences focusing on choices and fairness address any maladaptive behavior, ensuring a safe and constructive environment conducive to learning. Interventions and consequences may be systematically applied to the whole school, a small group such as a class, or an individual as determined by the educational team, including, when appropriate, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student. As a whole, this process works to clearly communicate expectations to students, teach and reward a student's demonstration of skills that are necessary to learn and thrive in a learning environment while decreasing behaviors that may be incompatible with learning. The FPCS staff have all been appropriately trained in effective behavior intervention strategies.

### **G.) Staffing and Professional Development Plan**

Research has confirmed that teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling. In fact, it is estimated that a teacher has two to three times the impact on student achievement on math and reading test performance than any other factor, including facilities and leadership (Rand Corporation, 2017). FPCS actively recruits teachers from within our community and through targeted outreach using the Department of Labor and online job posting sites. FPCS has adopted a thorough mentoring/training program for potential teachers

seeking alternate routes to certification and an onboarding process for certified teachers new to the FPCS program. Our selection procedure requires that interested candidates demonstrate knowledge of our educational philosophy and the ability to effectively assimilate into our school and community. To recruit top talent and to retain high-performing teachers, FPCS offers competitive compensation and benefits packages, fosters a positive work culture, encourages innovation, and offers professional growth and leadership opportunities to teachers at any stage of their careers.

After the expansion, FPCS will serve 144 students on two campuses. The school is currently staffed for the expansion with 18 employees, including 9.07 teacher FTE's, 0.86 Administrative FTE's, 0.48 pupil service FTE's, and 7.04 Classified FTE's, including instructional support staff, a business manager, secretary, and maintenance person. Teacher leaders help fulfill administrative roles in federal programs, technology, instructional coaching, data collection/analysis, and a student-custodian program that reduces the need for professional custodial services. A small school needs to be creative and resourceful to meet student needs within the current state funding structure. Professional Development is a critical component of the FPCS program. FPCS has already hosted 2 onboarding meetings with the newly hired staff. Each year, all of the instructional staff participate in a professional book study for the purpose of improving student engagement, instructional methods, and classroom management. The FPCS professional development plan recognizes and shares the knowledge and skills of our existing staff members through ongoing dialog in the form of weekly staff meetings, quarterly professional development days, and structured collaboration periods during the regular work day. New teachers are assigned a mentor, and they follow a structured training plan that is

aligned with the Danielson Framework. Fernwaters provides opportunities for our teachers to observe and learn from other teachers in the district. FPCS recognizes the value of informal and formal evaluations for continuous improvement. FPCS teachers receive training in the approved teacher evaluation requirements specified in IDAPA 08.02.02.120 and Idaho Code 33-1001(12), and evaluations are conducted in accordance with statute. Evaluation is used as a vehicle for providing ongoing discourse about curricula, methods, and classroom management practices that optimize learning outcomes. Evaluation observations, school assessment and performance data, patron feedback, and teacher input inform staff Individual Personalized Learning Plans (IPLPs). Each certified teacher is required to annually update his or her IPLP, and FPCS supports staff in taking classes, participating in state-wide initiatives, and reading professional literature to achieve IPLP goals. The FPCS Instructional Coach maintains a spreadsheet of all staff and their professional development goals and efforts toward accomplishing those goals. This information is shared with and reviewed by the administrator 3 times per year.

## **H.) Financial Management and Monitoring Plan**

FPCS operates on a split campus. The Lower Campus is a leased property. This 4,006 sf facility located at 103 Van Dreff Street in Salmon, Idaho was newly remodeled in 2018. It serves students in grades 6-8 and is leased for \$1,200/month, which is \$0.30/sf. The lower campus also leases a music room from the Lemhi County Historical Society for \$1,926/year. The Upper Campus is a school-owned, 3 acre property. A 2-classroom modular remodeled and updated in 2021 serves grades 4-5. A 3,500 sf steel building is currently under construction (and ahead of schedule) on this school-owned site. It will be finished into five classrooms and will house students in grades K-3 for 2 years until the permanent facility is constructed. Excluding the



R&M steel donation and the city's \$9,700 contribution for the sewer line, FPCS is funding this project out of capital reserves. Combined direct facility costs including lease and utilities for both the lower and upper campuses are budgeted at \$47,000/year, 3% of the total budget.

While FPCS had planned a phased K-3 expansion to begin in 2026 as part of a larger permanent facility plan financed by USDA Rural Communities Loan funds, it was able to quickly pivot in order to meet the needs of the parents. The 3-yr budget, which was created for lenders and is an evolving document, will indicate that FPCS was well-positioned financially to fund the construction portion of this expansion.

### **I.) Board Capacity and Governance Structure**

The Governing Board of Fernwaters Public School (the Board) is organized and managed under the Non-Profit Corporation Act. The Board are deemed public agents to control the Articles and By-Laws of the Non-Profit Corporation known as Fernwaters Public Charter School, Inc. The Board has all the power and duties afforded to a Board of Trustees. FPCS board adheres to the regulations set forth for open meeting laws, maintains an archive of accurate minutes, and makes said minutes available to the public. The number of Directors constituting the Board shall be not less than five (5) or more than seven (7) Directors. The primary duties of the Board will be policy-making, advising and evaluating. The Board shall also oversee the financial means by which the educational program is conducted. They shall ensure that the community be informed of the needs, purpose, values and status of FPCS. The initial Governing Board of Directors shall serve staggered terms for which not more than two (2) such terms shall expire in any given year. FPCS segregates governing board and administrative managerial duties according to the table presented by the SDE at the Charter Boot Camp. Each year the governing

board and administrator will review and formalize these articulated segregation of duties.

FPCS's Board of Directors represent a diverse and capable sector of our community. Three of the of 5 founding board members have rotated out. New board members will be actively and continuously recruited from within and without the charter school community based on the skill sets and diversity required throughout all phases of the charter school's development, as identified by the existing school board members. As FCPS expands and continues to rotate out its remaining 2 founding members, it will continue to seek board members with specific knowledge in the following areas: 1.) Education, 2.) Finance, 3.) Communication, 4.) Fundraising, 5.) Facilities/Safety, and 6.) Law. Bylaws specify the process for replacing board members.

Specifically our recruitment plan will follow the steps prescribed by the document *Creating Effective Governing Boards*. All new board members receive training materials that include a minimum of the following materials: 1.) School Charter and Mission Statement; 2.) Brief History of the School; 3.) Calendars; 4.) Board and Committee Meetings; 5.) Reporting Deadlines; 6.) Budget/Audit; 7.) Literature on best practices for school board members; 8.) By-laws; 9.) Minutes (from the last year); 10.) Idaho Open Meeting Law Manual and Idaho Open Records Law; 11.) Board policies; and 12.) Student Handbook. The board participates in the creation of the Continuous Improvement Plan and receives monthly administrative financial, operational, and academic reports. Board members annually review and update essential documents, revise, amend, and/or approve bylaws and policies, update Conflict of Interest forms, and complete self-assessments to reflect on areas for continuous improvement. The board encourages and actively funds professional development for board members, including costs of training and travel.

## **J.) School Leadership and Management**

Fernwaters Public Charter School recognizes that leading a charter school requires both educational and operational leadership. The current FPCS school leaders have led the school through its development and growth over the last five years. After four years, the school had accrued a fund balance of over \$750k, acquired real estate for a permanent facility, developed strong community partners, produced above average academic results, and experienced annual increases in enrollment. The K-8 leadership team consists of a superintendent, business manager, two part-time building administrators, and an instructional coach. The superintendent works closely with a business manager to manage the school's finances. The governing board monitors and evaluates the superintendent's performance in accordance with IDAPA 08.08.02.12. The superintendent, building administrators, instructional coach, business manager, and governing board work together to provide key aspects of student-centered school leadership, business and financial management, and organizational governance.