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

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Cory C. Pak

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

Official School Name  Palm Crest Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5025 Palm Drive

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City La Cañada                      State CA                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 91011-1518

County Los Angeles County

Telephone (818) 952-8360                      Fax  (818) 952-8365

Web site/URL https://www.pcrpanthers.net                      E-mail cpak@lcusd.net

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

_____Date_____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*_ Mrs. Wendy Sinnette                                         E-mail_wsinnette@lcusd.net_____

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

District Name La Cañada Unified School District                 Tel. (818) 952-8300

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

_____Date_____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Ms. Kaitzer Puglia

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

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

_____Date_____

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

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

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

# PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.

3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.

6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.

7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

# PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district     3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):            0 Middle/Junior high schools
                                          1 High schools
                                          0 K-12 schools

                                          4 TOTAL

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

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

    [ ] Urban (city or town)
    [X] Suburban
    [  ] Rural

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

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| PreK | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| K | 36 | 36 | 72 |
| 1 | 46 | 36 | 82 |
| 2 | 36 | 53 | 89 |
| 3 | 46 | 38 | 84 |
| 4 | 47 | 46 | 93 |
| 5 | 58 | 56 | 114 |
| 6 | 50 | 40 | 90 |
| 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 12 or higher | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Students | 319 | 305 | 624 |

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of         0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
   the school (if unknown, estimate):   32.8 % Asian
                                        0.5 % Black or African American
                                        10.9 % Hispanic or Latino
                                        1.8 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                        39.3 % White
                                        14.7 % Two or more races
                                        **100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 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 *to* the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 4 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 4 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 8 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019 | 675 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.01 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 1 |

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

   Korean, Thai, Cantonese, Hindi, Mandarin (Putonghua), Armenian, French, Arabic, Kurdish (Kurdi, Kurmanji), Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Vietnamese, Polish, Telugu, Turkish, Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog), Rumanian, Farsi (Persian), Hebrew, Taiwanese, Tamil

   English Language Learners (ELL) in the school:     5 %

                                                      32 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals:     4 %

   Total number students who qualify:     26

8. Students receiving special education services:    10 %

    61 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

| | |
|---|---|
| 18 Autism | 0 Multiple Disabilities |
| 0 Deafness | 1 Orthopedic Impairment |
| 0 Deaf-Blindness | 7 Other Health Impaired |
| 0 Developmental Delay | 14 Specific Learning Disability |
| 1 Emotional Disturbance | 18 Speech or Language Impairment |
| 1 Hearing Impairment | 0 Traumatic Brain Injury |
| 1 Intellectual Disability | 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

| | Number of Staff |
|---|---|
| Administrators | 1 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 27 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 3 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 16 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 2 |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1      23:1

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

| Required Information | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily student attendance | 98% | 96% | 97% | 97% | 97% |
| High school graduation rate | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

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

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

| 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% |

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

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

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

We are a learning community committed to personal growth and academic excellence.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Palm Crest has operated the 2020-21 school year in two models: a hybrid model and a distance learning model based on parental preferences. Both models followed AM/PM schedule. When school began in August of 2020, both hybrid and distance learning models began virtually following the Los Angeles County Department of Health (LADPH) restriction. In October, the school started in-person instruction for special education classes following the LADPH's learning pod guideline.

When the LADPH guideline allowed for a waiver for a K-2 in-person instruction in mid-October, Palm Crest submitted the waiver application. After the application was approved, the school began in-person hybrid instruction for students in grades K-2 in November. As LADPH's guideline changed, the school opened the campus for additional hybrid students. We welcomed 3rd grade hybrid students in February, and on the first week of March, students in the 4th through 6th grade hybrid model returned to campus for in-person learning. About 70% of Palm Crest students currently attend the in-person hybrid learning model, and 30% of students are engaged in the distance learning model.

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

Palm Crest is not a magnet, charter, or choice school and is opened to all students who reside within the district boundaries.

# PART III - SUMMARY

Palm Crest Panthers Roar in Pride and Excellence!  We dedicate to developing confident, lifelong learners who possess the knowledge, skills, and character to succeed.  We recognize and appreciate each student's uniqueness as well as the commonalities shared by all.  We strive to cultivate responsibility, integrity, and a positive self-image to develop the whole child. Our vision resonates throughout the entire Palm Crest community as we work collaboratively to provide a stimulating, interactive learning environment.  Committed, effective teachers, administrators, and staff; passionate, dedicated parents; and motivated, enthusiastic students create a positive learning synergy.  Embracing this vision is a continuous process involving all stakeholders of our school community.

At Palm Crest, diversity and appreciation of individual differences are an integral part of our school culture.  Students come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and 22 different languages are spoken in our homes.  All students, their families, and neighborhood residents embrace the Palm Crest campus as if it were the home and grounds of a good friend.  Dogs are walked before and after school, and league baseball games take place most weekends.  Parent involvement is high, with thousands of volunteer hours logged each year in classrooms, during after-school and evening enrichment programs, and as part of our school's decision-making committees.

We have been innovative with the uses of time, space, staffing, organizational structure, and modern technology.  Time is utilized effectively in the following ways: Primetime (an interruption-free morning) education and a high percentage of time-on-task where students are actively involved in learning.  Our library, resource area, computer lab, office spaces, multi-purpose room, and outdoor benches are used throughout the day for small group discussions, assessments, assemblies, peer/cross-age tutoring, staff meetings, and parent conferences/meetings/workshops.  Leadership responsibilities are common practices shared by staff, students, and parents.

The staff takes seriously the La Canada Unified School District's (LCUSD) Mission Statement, "professional learning community dedicated to personal growth and academic excellence."  We are determined to ensure character development and instructional practices work in tandem, so every student reaches his/her full potential.

Teacher collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and targeted use of technology contribute to high student achievement.  Lessons are designed based on California State Common Core Standards and formative data disaggregated and analyzed using technology.  Strengths among colleagues are honored, ideas are shared, and fresh ways are sought to build student character and self-esteem. The end result is seen on two fronts: first, providing a high-quality instructional program for all students; second, promoting students' social and emotional health, wellness, and interpersonal connectedness.

Palm Crest has dedicated much time, effort, and resources to developing a model program in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).  All Palm Crest students visit the STEM lab each week to participate in a technology-infused curriculum aligned to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards.  Over 40 different curricula, including coding, Lego Robotics, 3 D-Design, are taught at all grade levels throughout the school year.  Lessons and activities vary in rigor, depth, and complexity based on grade levels.  Since the school's implementation of the STEM program, close to 90% of Palm Crest Students have consistently achieved "Met/Exceed" standards on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Math Assessment.

In addition to a challenging and meaningful academic and STEM curriculum, students benefit from regular classes in art, music, drama, library media, and daily physical education.  Enrichment opportunities abound, including Spanish for students in grades three through six and various after-school programs, including but not limited to chess club and the school's choir program.

Parents, teachers, and students are also committed to keeping the tradition alive at Palm Crest.  Famous

among these traditions are various art and musical performances, book fairs, Red Ribbon Week, intramural sports, Reflection programs, overnight camps for fifth and sixth graders, Multicultural Night, Variety Show, Math Night, Science Week, Science Fair, Innovation Convention, after school enrichment classes, Family Fun Nights, Nutrition Week, on-going community service projects, and celebrating various cultures and special month-long observances, including but not limited to African American History Month, Women in History Month, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, National Hispanic Heritage Month, and Native American Heritage Month.  School pride and spirit resonate all around the school on regularly scheduled Spirit Days spearheaded by the Student Council and at regularly scheduled awards assemblies.  Parents and family members are invited to share in celebrations and acknowledgment of excellence in citizenship and academic achievement at the awards assemblies.

As our daily pledge states, as Palm Crest Panthers, we strive to be the best that we can be.  We succeed in making our vision a reality through carefully planned instruction, collaborative parental and community participation, and empowered learning.  As a school community, the Palm Crest Panthers truly roar in pride and excellence.

# PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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

Palm Crest Elementary School's (PCR) curriculum includes intense study of core content areas (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies) as well as visual and performing arts, technology, and physical education. An optional Spanish language program is integrated into the instructional day for grades 3-6. Instruction in all content areas is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and teachers use common pacing guides to ensure quality and consistency of instruction in all classrooms.

English-Language Arts encompasses reading, writing, and language conventions. Reading foundation is laid in Kindergarten, where small group instruction occurs both in person and in break out rooms due to distance learning. Kindergarten students use the Reach for Reading program by Cengage Learning which supports beginning level reading skills. First through fifth graders participate in guided reading instruction, using Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys materials. Sixth graders use Collections by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, which helps them prepare for the rigor of middle school. Students also participate in core literature units that delve into character development topics and help make connections to other subject areas.

PCR usually uses an Early Bird/ Late Bird schedule in grades 1-3, which has not been implemented due to distance learning. We use Fountas and Pinnell to assess student reading levels. Targeted reading intervention instruction is provided to students in grade K-3 using the Sonday Reading System.

PCR uses McGraw Hill's Everyday Mathematics 4 program for students in grades K-5 and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Math in Focus in grade 6. A variety of modalities enhance learning through manipulatives, math centers, math games, and cross-curricular connections to develop "real-life" problem solvers. With its spiraling approach, students review previously taught material and build upon those concepts to understand new ones. Beginning in Kindergarten, students practice basic foundational skills by integrating them during routine activities. Music and games are used to teach counting, pattern building, and problem-solving. Reviewing and reteaching are emphasized as a means to ensure student comprehension and achievement. In grades 4-6, the Red Bird Math program is used to support advanced learners. PCR utilizes several digital math programs to support instruction (IXL Math, Dreambox, Prodigy, Brainpop, etc.). Project-based learning allows for differentiation of instruction.

PCR uses Cengage Learning's National Geographic: Exploring Science for grades K and one and STEMscopes by Accelerate Learning for grades 2-6. Due to distance learning, teachers are using only the digital component of the science program this year. Through simulations, students watch science concepts come alive and use the hands-on kits to complete lab assignments. Field trips have been put on hold due to Covid -19 safety concerns.

In Social Studies, PCR uses Reflections by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in all grade levels and will soon begin piloting new materials for adoption. Students experience curriculum beginning with the recognition of our small community in the primary grades. In upper grades, students focus on state history in fourth, U.S. history in fifth, and ancient civilizations in sixth.

Although the school's current operating schedule has changed to accommodate safety protocols during distance learning, teachers continue to teach the essential standards to prevent significant learning loss and promote students to the next grade level. Some of the assessments have been adjusted to accommodate the digital format, and teachers utilize online platforms - Illuminate and Go Guardian - to monitor student progress.

Our highly trained teachers creatively integrate standards into their daily classroom instruction through consistent use of best practices: questioning strategies, critical thinking, discussion, modeling, visual support, checks for understanding, project-based learning, hands-on experiences, and continuous feedback. To ensure high-quality rigorous instruction during distance learning, PCR teachers have received intense ongoing technology training and support from the technology department.

PCR teachers consistently utilize assessment data to drive instruction. The school year begins with analyzing the previous school year's state and diagnostic assessment results. This year we utilized diagnostic assessments only in the absence of state test results. Students not meeting grade level standards are identified using multiple measures, and differentiated instruction is planned for all learners.

Assessing student learning is accomplished through formative and summative assessments administered each trimester. Examples of formative assessments include exit tickets, projects, independent classwork, and Interim Assessment Blocks.  Summative assessments include chapter and unit tests, common assessments, and cumulative projects. Based on assessment results, instruction is realigned to meet the needs of students. Teachers engage in collaborative dialogue to evaluate student performance on common assessments. Common assessments administered each trimester are submitted to the principal for monitoring school-wide, grade level, and individual student performance. In addition, the common assessment results are uploaded to the district-wide assessment online tool, Illuminate, for district-wide results analysis.

District's fall and spring common assessments measure individual student growth and mastery in reading, writing, and math. Additional assessments include Fountas and Pinnell (K-3), Sonday Reading System (K-3), and the STAR Reading diagnostic assessment (grades 1-6), which are used to measure both diagnostic and progress monitoring.  Teachers consistently communicate assessment results with parents.

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

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

**2.  Other Curriculum Areas**:

Students in all grade levels engage in Art and Music instruction once per week for 30-45 minutes. In grades K-6, lessons are aligned with the core curriculum and are used to enhance students' understanding of the academic content being taught. Every grade level showcases a content-specific performance for families; for example, first graders present a show that reflects one of their science units, while fifth graders perform a short musical tying into their American History standards. To accommodate the school's current operating schedule under COVID-19, Art and Music specialists have been providing asynchronous virtual lessons once per week with the opportunity for students to participate in two additional lessons from the specialists at the other two elementary sites. Our Art and Music programs allow students to build confidence and to experience success beyond academics.

Students in all grade levels receive daily 30-minute Physical Education lessons. To accommodate the school's current operating schedule, Physical Education (PE) teachers provide lessons virtually, using both the synchronous and asynchronous models. PE teachers require that students keep a daily log to document their physical activity and assign simple assignments to build students' knowledge in various sports and games.

PCR offers a 45-minute weekly enrichment program for GATE students. During synchronous lessons, students are given opportunities for authentic, real-life problem solving, service learning, communication skills both oral and written, higher order/analytical thinking skills, and collaboration with peers. GATE students are given priority enrollment in Math Olympiad--an after-school math competition team. This program challenges students who love math and allows them to compete with students across the nation.  Math Olympiad is offered online weekly for one hour. Additionally, students are invited to participate in monthly GATE Gatherings, during which they listen to guest speakers and participate in project-based and service-based learning.

Optional Spanish language instruction is offered at PCR in grades 3-6. Typically, Spanish class is provided

in-person once or twice per week during the instructional day. This year, students receive synchronous, virtual instruction for 30-45 minutes once or twice per week, depending on the grade level. Lessons are also recorded for those who are unable to join the class. Sixth grade students who wish to take Spanish 2 in 7th grade receive an additional hour of instruction once per week, preparing them for Spanish 2 upon entering 7th grade.

PCR's instructional program also incorporates technology. Students visit the STEM lab once a week for 30 minutes. Due to distance learning, this instruction is provided asynchronously. Our 1:1 chrome book program in upper grades is very successful. In lower grades, teachers utilize Chromebook carts to support teaching and learning. Teachers use various technology platforms and tools to enhance and remediate learning, especially for English Learners, students with special needs, and Gifted and Talented students.

Character building is a vital component of the counseling program at PCR. Monthly character traits are identified from the 40 Developmental Assets and are introduced and discussed during principal-and-counselor-lead guidance lessons. At the end of each month, teachers nominate students who demonstrate the identified monthly character traits, and the recipients are recognized.

3.  **Academic Supports**:

In support of student achievement, academic interventions are put into place for students performing below grade level through our Student Study Team (SST) process. Once a student is referred, a team of teachers, Special Education professionals, administrators, and support staff meet with the parents to recommend resources and strategies to move their child towards independent learning and success. When students qualify for support through an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), our resource specialists provide instruction that meets their academic, behavioral and social emotional needs.

According to the 2018-2019 CAASPP results, 62.17% of students with disabilities met or exceeded ELA standards, compared to their general education peers who met and exceeded the standards at 89.59%. This shows a 27.42 percentage point gap between them and their general education peers. To close this gap, teachers ensure that students with disabilities have the same access to general education curriculum and materials, maintain an appropriate pace with the curriculum as their typical peers, and participate in the Resource Specialist Program (RSP) as determined by each student's IEP team. Teachers use the Sonday Reading System to assist students who demonstrate significant difficulty in the area of reading. In Special Day Classes (SDC), teachers use the Unique Learning System (ULS) to assist students who demonstrate significant learning challenges.

In math, 62.16% of PCR's special education students met or exceeded standards compared to 88.47% of general education students. There was a 26.31 percentage point gap between their performance and that of their general education peers. To close the gap, RSP teachers, in collaboration with general education teachers, provide students with disabilities with targeted individual or small group instruction determined by the students' IEP Teams. Students also have access to Dreambox and iXL online programs.

The 2018-2019 CAASPP results at PCR indicate that 44.45% of the English Learners (ELs) have met and exceeded the ELA standards compared to 89.59% of their peers. In math, 60% of ELs have met or exceeded the standards, compared to 88.47% of their peers. To close the gap, ELs receive Designated English Language Development (ELD) support through individual and/or small group instruction before or after an EL's synchronous instructional day.

During the distance learning model, ELD teachers and paraprofessionals use a schedule for virtual, synchronous learning. Students are grouped according to their English language needs by grade level, which is generally one-on-one or in groups of two to three students. ELD teachers also

provide individual and small group weekly activities to promote social emotional wellness. Student Study Team (SST) meetings are initiated if an English Learner requires additional social emotional and/or academic supports. Resources and strategies to support English Learners are discussed during monthly ELD meetings, and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are created and put in place to support ELs.

ELD teachers communicate and regularly collaborate with classroom teachers to ensure ELs receive the support they need in developing English language skills and abilities required to be successful during their regular class instruction. SEP

Currently, there are no foster, migrant, or homeless students at PCR; however, we have a comprehensive plan in place to support foster, migrant, and homeless students.

# PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. **Engaging Students:**

In July of 2020, when a decision was made to continue distance learning in the new school year, we wrestled with questions on how to provide an effective and engaging education for our students.  In the spring of 2020, our teachers had already established relationships with our students when we went into the rapid deployment of distance learning; however, moving into the new school year, both students and teachers needed to develop new relationships in their new classrooms.

As a school, we decided to devote our attention to building robust teacher-student relationships, developing explicit norms and expectations, and focusing on student engagement and teacher/student feedback. Developing healthy, productive teacher-student relationships was a key to helping our students feel safe in their virtual learning environment.  Our teachers put greater emphasis on effective communication.  Teachers fostered increased communication with their students through various platforms (i.e., Zoom conferences, Google Classroom, Seesaw, Padlet, etc.).  From the first day of school, teachers greeted each student by their names, learned their interests, and provided feedback to build positive teacher-student relationships. Even though students learned at a distance from each other, they developed a sense of belonging and closeness to their teachers and classmates.

In addition to an on-going focus on positive teacher-student relationships, we developed explicit norms and fair learning expectations.  Keeping in mind that many families had several children at home participating in distance learning, we streamlined synchronous learning via Zoom and asynchronous learning through a dedicated website, where students and parents could access all special programs (art, music, technology, library, and physical education) in one location.  Additionally, we provided schedules far in advance so our families could plan accordingly.

Finally, we focused on student participation and feedback. Strong relationships with students gave teachers ample opportunities to provide feedback to improve students' learning.  Over time, our classroom practices transformed from mostly teachers talking to students to students engaging with teachers and with each other in small group breakout sessions.  Additionally, both teachers and students also used chat rooms in Zoom to give and receive individual feedback.  Students who usually did not raise their hands to ask or answer questions in the physical classroom setting participated actively in a virtual learning environment.

We realized the challenges of distance learning but did not let those challenges get in the way of our commitment to provide rigorous instruction in a safe and nurturing environment.  We focused on effective practices, relied on teacher efficacy, and optimized this unique opportunity to engage our students to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

2. **Engaging Families and Community**:

Palm Crest Elementary School is a vital part of our community.  Actively engaging in every aspect of our school is a priority for our community, and they take pride in contributing to its growth and success. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we needed to find an innovative approach to parent engagement.  Prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year, parents were invited to participate in a district-wide Reopening Committee. These meetings were a chance for leadership, parents, and staff members to listen to one another and understand each other's unique concerns about getting our students back to in-person learning. Parents were also invited to attend regular Parent Outreach Listening Sessions throughout the school year, where they had opportunities to discuss distance learning.

Meetings have been held via Zoom since the Spring of 2020, and parent and teacher attendance has increased at Palm Crest PTA meetings as a result.  While our PTA was unable to host its annual fundraising events and other activities due to the restrictions on group gatherings, they found creative ways to raise funds while supporting local businesses. Since the school closures in March of 2020, Palm Crest offered regular weekly Panther broadcasts to promote school spirit and campus pride.  Additionally, the school

provided biweekly, digital newsletters to communicate school updates. We shifted to Peachjar, a digital flyer management system to share information. Our teachers communicated with families by sharing their academic plans via weekly emails. They also encouraged parents to join their Google or SeeSaw Classrooms to stay connected with what students were learning.

Palm Crest has been able to successfully maintain mutually beneficial community partnerships. We continued to work with Stanford's Challenge Success program and offered parent outreach on topics ranging from navigating remote learning to social emotional support at home. Prior to the opening of the campus in October of 2020, our Eagle Scouts and Girl Scouts added value to our campus through their service projects. The scouts worked collaboratively with Palm Crest's Dads' Club to paint over 300 pawprints to mark 6-feet of social distance in classroom and playground line up areas as well as the arrival and dismissal areas. Additionally, our scouts designed, created, and posted more than 50 student-friendly posters to remind students to wear masks and wash their hands frequently to stay healthy. Palm Crest has also worked closely with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to ensure all safety measures are in place for each phase of our reopening.

### 3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Palm Crest, decisions are made in collaboration with our teachers to ensure teacher buy-in and effective implementation. At the start of this school year, all teachers were asked to state their preferences in providing virtual or hybrid instruction and have been accommodated based on their desire to instruct from their classrooms or their homes. They were also surveyed on their needs for personal protective equipment (PPE) usage and supplied with the necessary resources to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing. Teacher morale is key to student success; therefore, we make sure our teachers feel valued and respected and their voices and perspectives are heard and considered when making decisions that impact them.

To ensure teacher and student success during virtual instruction, the Educational Services department registered all PCR staff to take courses, webinars, and workshops with the International Society for Technology Education (ISTE). PCR teachers and staff were also trained to use SLACK in order to communicate with the technology support staff. Individual training sessions have been provided to those who preferred private time with the instructional technology specialist to lower teachers' anxiety and increase their confidence. Clear communication has been provided throughout the year by the site and district administration to inform and involve all teachers in the changes happening at the local and state levels. Requests for teachers and staff input and feedback have been made to include them in the decision-making process.

The district recognizes the importance of professional development (PD) for our teachers; therefore, a carefully designed PD plan is implemented for each school year. Teacher participation is essential. During the past few years, our PD plan has focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and Instructional Technology. This year's teacher survey results indicated that teachers wanted additional support in providing virtual instruction. Along with the Educational Services Department, the district's Technology Department designed and implemented a PD plan to support our teachers in providing the most rigorous Distance Learning experience for our students. Due to Covid-19 safety protocols, all trainings took place virtually, during teachers' work hours, at staff meetings, or by individual appointments with the instructional technology specialist. Our principal attended webinars and workshops on Distance Learning and worked with the principals at the other two elementary sites to share effective practices at staff meetings. Teachers were also invited to share their best instructional strategies to build capacity in their colleagues.

### 4. School Leadership:

Leading a school during a pandemic is no easy task, yet some leaders rise to the challenge by not only surviving but thriving. Palm Crest has only one administrator, the principal, who oversees the school's day-to-day operations and sets the short- and long-term goals for student and staff achievement and growth. The principal has only been at PCR for two years yet has quickly acclimated to and embraced the culture of the school and the community. Coming from a Korean-American background, he serves as a role model to the

Asian American students, parents, and staff at his site and brings a unique perspective to the district's leadership team. He works closely with the other two principals at the elementary schools and is both learning from them as well as sharing his knowledge and experience to benefit the students and staff of La Canada Unified School District.

The principal uses a collaborative approach with his staff and colleagues and leads with passion and humility. He leads by listening to the needs and concerns of his students, families, and staff and responds to them in a caring fashion. He meets regularly with the grade-level teacher leaders at the site and makes decisions after carefully considering everyone's input. In collaboration with the Safety Compliance Team, the principal has successfully established and communicated safety protocols to all staff and families to ensure the health and safety of the school community. He builds relationships with students and their families by being visible on campus and promptly responding to phone calls and emails from them. He advocates for his students and staff at Leadership Team meetings and puts students' needs first.

Although resources are limited, the principal has allocated them with an equity lens. This year, he advocated for more resources for his reading intervention program to support students who have been struggling with distance learning. When LADPH permitted educational pods, the principal immediately established a plan to bring special needs students back to campus. He has worked patiently with families who have requested classroom placement changes (i.e., virtual to hybrid and vice versa) to ensure student achievement and success. The principal has been communicating with his staff and families frequently to inform and involve them in the changes that have come up weekly with regard to COVID-19 protocols at the state and local levels.

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

Palm Crest embraces a diverse student community and background as 22 different languages are spoken in our homes. Our students bring with them unique cultural backgrounds and perspectives that enrich our school culture. Our staff welcomes all students and provides opportunities for them to share their cultural experiences with the school community (i.e., Multicultural Night, parent guest speakers, etc.). The 2020 Panorama survey indicates 85% of families feel PCR is a good fit given their child's cultural background. Acknowledging and valuing each student starts with pronouncing their names correctly and including them in all classroom and school activities and experiences. The Panorama survey reveals 87% of students feeling a strong sense of belonging at PCR.

Getting to know students through different activities (i.e., teacher surveys, family-based projects, etc.) and understanding what is important in their lives affords close connections and makes teaching and learning more impactful. Providing extra resources and services when needed and communicating with families regularly regarding students' needs ensures equity and guides students toward success. Students see themselves as part of the class and feel safe to contribute. Our teachers present reading selections that represent students from various backgrounds so that students can see themselves in the stories and feel valued and respected. 84% of students feel teachers are respectful to them, according to survey data.

43% of PCR's staff come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and contribute generously to the effort in making the school a safe and inclusive place for all students. The staff has been trained in culturally responsive and sustainable education and will continue to benefit from the DEI initiative implementation over the next three years. The principal uses staff meeting time to discuss DEI topics and invites staff to participate in book clubs and podcasts to increase their knowledge and implement best practices. He provides resources and materials for classroom use and encourages teachers to attend webinars and training. The school's library has invested in diverse literature pieces, which are read aloud by the librarian as well as checked out by students.

Teachers bring current events into their classrooms to inform their students and develop a strong sense of civic responsibility.  Teachers discuss these events in an age-appropriate language, raising student awareness of local and global issues and becoming more empathetic and responsible citizens.

# PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In March of 2020, Palm Crest closed its campus to begin virtual learning due to COVID-19. Immediately after the closure, our school focused on providing extensive professional development to staff in Google Classroom, Seesaw, Screencastify, and Zoom conferencing. We developed an optimal distance learning plan that included both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for students. We communicated our plan to all students and families and provided the necessary devices to adapt to this new learning platform. About 93% of our students transitioned successfully to distance learning.

As we focused on developing and sustaining a solid daily distance learning experience, we identified students struggling with distance learning. We realized that these students had one common characteristic - a lack of motivation and engagement. These students often had their cameras off and did not interact with the rest of the class. While our teachers made a concerted effort to connect with the students, it was challenging to meet individual needs in a virtual classroom setting. Our goal was to get our struggling learners motivated and engaged.

We knew the key to success for these students was developing a support system with a staff member in a small breakout session. We trained, empowered, and repurposed our campus supervisors and behavior support aides to provide much-needed intervention and social interaction opportunities. The students received direct service from the staff and were able to complete classroom assignments while building positive social connections with staff. Altogether, ten staff members connected with 45 students, roughly about 7% of the school's population, on a regular basis. Some students connected with a staff member daily, while others checked in with them 1-2 times per week based on their needs. Students received this support favorably and made a remarkable improvement in their work completion and attendance.

These intervention strategies also resulted in unintended positive outcomes when our hybrid learners began to return to school in November of 2020. Prior to the school closure, students often viewed campus supervisors and behavior support aides as the adults who talked to them when they made mistakes; however, during distance learning, students began to see these staff members as their support providers and an ally.

Our goal has always been to ensure that every child experiences success. By redesigning our staff's purpose and skills, we effectively motivated our students and positively impacted their academic and social emotional growth during the pandemic.