

U.S. Department of Education
2017 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 Ms. Danielle LaPorte

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

Official School Name P.S. 115Q The James J. Ambrose School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 80-51 261st Street

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

City Floral Park State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 11004-1560

County Queens County

Telephone (718) 831-4010 Fax (718) 831-4014

Web site/URL

http://www.ps115jamesjambrose.org E-mail dlaporte2@schools.nyc.gov

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. Danielle Giunta E-mail DGiunta4@schools.nyc.gov
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name New York City Community District #26 Tel. (718) 631-6943

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 Mr. Alan Ong
(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, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2011 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 916 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 285 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 532 High schools
 - 65 K-12 schools

1798 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 - Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
- Number of students as of October 1, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	31	23	54
K	56	52	108
1	62	50	112
2	64	57	121
3	63	49	112
4	61	69	130
5	39	44	83
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	376	344	720

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 68 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 13 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 8 % White
 - 3 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 4%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	24
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	26
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	699
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.037
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 39 %
Total number students who qualify: 279
8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
60 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 2 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 12 Other Health Impaired
- 32 Specific Learning Disability
- 10 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
Student support personnel e.g., guidance 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., 22:1 241:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	95%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2016.

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.

The James J. Ambrose School fosters a community of life-long learners by creating a nurturing learning environment where all students' needs are addressed to ensure that all students are equipped with the

appropriate tools to be college and career ready, which will afford them with the opportunity to achieve the highest standards of educational success.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

The James J. Ambrose School, also known as P.S. 115 was renamed after one of the beloved and former Principal's in June 2016. The school is located in Floral Park, Queens and serves a population of about 720 students in prekindergarten to grade 5. The James J. Ambrose School is in the heart of a close-knit community where everyone feels like family, including the neighbors who no longer have children at the school.

The families of the students at the James J. Ambrose School are committed to ensuring high quality education for their children and are active members in the school community. Families love coming into the building and being involved in their children's education on all different levels. The family environment we have created is greatly appreciated by the community and allows families to feel safe and comfortable in sending their precious children to a warm and nurturing environment where their children are our top priority.

Teachers and parents work closely together and establish relationships that promote and foster strong communication, which in turn strengthens the development of each individual child. Teachers send home monthly newsletters and consistently set up meetings with parents to discuss student progress. To support our families with curriculum and to bridge the home-school connection, teachers offer parent workshops during the year based on topics selected by the parents. Parents are informed of the units of study in all content areas and are provided with strategies to use at home to support the work in school.

The school community has been very supportive and families have even donated items to the school such as tables and chairs, as well as the sign in our garden. Parents feel like a part of the family and appreciate all that the school has done for them and their children.

A true testament to the work that is taking place at our school is demonstrated by the increase in student enrollment which has been steadily increasing each year. We have increased the number of Gifted & Talented classes on each grade to two and currently have four classes on each grade.

The James J. Ambrose School serves students of all different abilities, including Gifted & Talented students. Our school's mission is to ensure that we create a nurturing learning environment where all students are encouraged to be risk takers and are challenged so that each individual child is working to his/her full potential academically, emotionally, socially, physically, and culturally.

Our school implements several strategies and programs aligned to our mission and vision that support student growth. Student data is used consistently to identify individual students' areas of strength and areas for growth. Teachers support student abilities and needs by teaching lessons utilizing differentiation and small group instruction. Reflecting on lessons is a pedagogical skill that is practiced on a consistent basis to improve daily instruction and to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the diverse learners in our school.

The Arts are extremely important to the staff and families at the James J. Ambrose School. We strongly believe in providing students with many avenues to showcase their special talents and to tap into the different interests of our students. To that end, students receive instruction in music, dance, visual arts, and technology. Parents are invited to all culminating performances and concerts that showcase the hard work of the students.

To promote a nurturing learning environment, we have implemented a Virtue of the Month program where students are educated on important virtues that are necessary in becoming good citizens in the world, as well as college and career ready. These virtues are evident around the school building, book of the month selections are tied to the virtue of the month, students have opportunities to work with "buddy" classes, and students are honored and celebrated at special assemblies. Feedback from families around this new initiative is very positive and parents have also shared examples of how they follow the virtues with their children at home.

Leadership opportunities have also led to the success of the James J. Ambrose School. Teachers and students are afforded many opportunities to take on leadership roles in the school community. Teachers lead professional learning for their colleagues, open up their classrooms to share best practices, facilitate team meetings, and run committees. Students are active members on the Student Council Team and take the lead on school-wide service projects which give back to the community, write the letter for families about the book of the month, and meet with administration to share their ideas for school improvement.

The James J. Ambrose School creates a home away from home for our students. Staff, students, and their families love coming into our building and feel welcomed. Creating a nurturing environment, supporting our diverse learners, providing high quality instruction, collaborating with one another, providing leadership and enrichment opportunities, and strengthening the home-school connection are all key factors in what we attribute to ensuring academic success at the James J. Ambrose School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

At the James J. Ambrose School we work hard as a school community to align our instruction and curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), the Instructional Shifts, and the elements of the Framework for Great Schools. Our instructional focus that all students will have access to high level rigorous tasks that are aligned to the CCLS and foster critical thinking skills with differentiation to support all students; including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English Language Learners (ELLs) also plays a major role in designing our school's core curriculum. Through this alignment, our hope is that our students are well prepared for college and careers by being proficient readers, thoughtful writers, critical thinkers, and educated speakers.

Literacy is the core and the foundation of learning in all curriculum areas. At the James J. Ambrose School we believe in a balanced literacy approach to support our students in becoming proficient and life-long readers. The balanced literacy approach includes important components such as daily reading and writing workshop, read-alouds, guided reading, shared reading and writing, interactive writing, and word study. All elements of literacy take place in classrooms on a daily basis and include opportunities for students to engage in collaborative group work and discussions, which focus on students using text-based evidence to support their opinions and ideas.

To support reading instruction, teachers implement the Ready Gen program which is fully aligned to the CCLS. Through this program, students have the opportunity to engage with complex texts, respond to high level questions, engage in deep conversations with their peers through "Team Talk" activities, and build their vocabulary knowledge. Students also have the opportunity to build their reading comprehension and fluency through independent reading opportunities each day, which allows them to read books on their independent reading level in fiction and non-fiction texts.

Through a "100-Schools" initiative, the James J. Ambrose School was selected to work with Teachers College to support our writing curriculum. Students are immersed in units of study focused on a variety of genres where students are able to write about topics of their choice/expertise and use the writing process to further develop their strengths in writing.

In order to expose our students to complex math concepts, as well as the eight Mathematical Practices, teachers use the Go Math! Program. To engage students in developing a deep understanding of the content and concepts, teachers use an inquiry-style approach when teaching mathematics. Students are provided with opportunities to solve challenging problems connected to real-world application in small groups to make meaning and take ownership of their own learning. Teachers incorporate the use of technology, hands-on manipulatives, and mathematical tools to support students in their conceptual understanding. Discourse and collaboration also allow the students to problem solve and deepen their understanding by learning from each other.

The NYC Scope and Sequence for Science, which incorporates the CCLS, Next Generation Science Standards, and New York State Learning Standards for Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) guide our science program. Students engage in scientific inquiries through lab experiments that ask students to make predictions, test hypotheses, collect data and analyze results to draw conclusions. STEM has also been incorporated into our curriculum which allows students to think critically and apply scientific skills and knowledge to construct, design, and apply mathematical skills and technology to make sense of information and solve complex problems and tasks.

At the James J. Ambrose School our Social Studies curriculum is guided by the NYC K-8 Social Studies Scope and Sequence along with the CCLS. Students are immersed in the Social Studies curriculum through trade books, primary and secondary sources, online resources, and collaborative group work activities that engage students in project-based learning. Field trips are also planned to support the Social Studies content and concepts. We are also fortunate to have a media center teacher who aligns her program to Social

Studies content for each of the grades. Students conduct research on Social Studies topics and present their projects using a variety of formats.

Instruction in our three prekindergarten classes includes literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts. Teachers follow the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC) which are the early expectations linked to the K-12 standards to guide their daily instruction to ensure Pre-K students become successful learners. This NYS PKFCC supports teachers in designing a high quality curriculum where they plan for instruction activities that allow students to meet the standards. The Pre-K unit modules on the Engage NY website support teachers in planning units of study that meet the Pre-K Standards in all content areas. To support the alignment in the school, Pre-K teachers participate in Professional Development opportunities that connect to the CCLS to see how their work prepares students to be successful in grades K-3.

Early education has had a tremendous positive impact on school readiness and success in the primary grades. Students who attend prekindergarten are prepared with the early learning skills necessary to begin kindergarten. Based on the PKFCC Standards, children learn how to socialize with other children, important language acquisition skills, how to interact with a variety of materials as well as with their peers, and foundational literacy skills. These skills give Pre-K students an advantage when they begin kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The James J. Ambrose School's belief is that education should not only be about academics, but should also include opportunities for students to grow their abilities in other curriculum areas such as the arts-performing and visual, physical education, and technology. Providing students with other avenues to excel is critical as it allows students to showcase their talents in many different ways.

Students in kindergarten to grade 5 receive music education one period a week with our certified music teacher. Students in the lower grades (K-2) learn essential foundational skills to build up to upper grade skills of reading music notes. Students in grade 3 learn to play the recorder, students in grade 4 play the recorder and ukuleles, while students in grade 5 learn to play the guitar. The music teacher also directs the grade 3,4,5 chorus which meets after-school once a week. Students in grades 3-5 also participate in our winter and spring concerts.

To further enhance our music program and to provide students with more opportunities, we have partnered with St. Francis Prep School to provide grade 3-5 students who demonstrate a high interest in music with band/string instrument instruction. Parents pay for the instrument and students receive their music lessons at our school once a week. This culminates in a concert at The James J. Ambrose School as well as a concert at the St. Francis Prep School with their band and string high school members.

Our certified arts teacher provides art instruction to students in grades K-5 one period a week. Students learn about various artists by studying their work and learning how to incorporate the artist's styles and techniques into different art projects. These techniques and skills build from years prior and become more sophisticated as students move up to fifth grade. Student artwork is displayed during our Art Showcase which takes place at the end of May.

The dance program at the James J. Ambrose School has been a big part of the school community. Our dance teacher works with different grade levels once a week and teaches important dance skills and movement. Our fifth grade students participate in Dancing Classrooms, which is supported by our PTA. Dancing Classrooms teaches students about the importance of team work and respect while learning dances such as the tango, fox trot, rumba, waltz, and swing. Students in all grades showcase their dance talent at culminating performances.

Technology is very important as it teaches our students 21st century skills they will need to be ready for college and careers. A majority of classes receive technology instruction one period a week. During these instructional periods, students are also learning computer coding as part of their computer science

curriculum. Students engage in coding activities using code.org curriculum.

Our media center program is designed to engage students in research-based projects that align to the Social Studies curriculum to enhance content knowledge. Students conduct research on Social Studies topics using laptops and are provided with opportunities to state an opinion and defend it using text evidence while engaging in debates or creating power-point presentations to demonstrate their learning.

All students at the James J. Ambrose School participate in a physical education program that promotes exercise, health, and good sportsmanship. Students engage in a variety of sports activities as well as organized games to improve their physical fitness and knowledge of different sports. Students in grades 3-5 also work to prepare for their NYC Fitness Gram assessment which measures and supports students in aerobic capacity, muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Students set goals for themselves each time they work on a specific fitness assessment.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The James J. Ambrose School values the use of a variety of assessment data to guide instruction, plan for differentiated supports including small group instruction, and identify individual student strengths and areas in need of support. All teachers administer baseline assessments in all content areas and use this information to plan their lessons to meet the needs of the diverse learners in their class. All students are provided with the opportunity to engage in high level rigorous tasks and teachers differentiate their lessons using technology, visual supports, differentiation of the process or product, as well as create scaffolds so that all students can access the curriculum.

Our instructional methods include a combination of explicit instruction, small group instruction, cooperative group work, and inquiry-based learning, while including hands-on lessons and the use of technology to enrich student understanding and knowledge.

Through benchmark and on-going assessments, students who are not meeting the standards in ELA are identified for Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Using the Response to Intervention (RTI) Model, identified students receive Tier 2 intervention services in a small group for a 10-week cycle using the Foundations Program, guided reading, or SPIRE. At the end of the 10-week cycle students are reassessed to measure progress and growth and a decision is made collaboratively with school leaders, the teacher, and IEP teacher to determine whether the student made enough progress to go back to Tier 1 (Core classroom instruction), needs to remain for another cycle, or move to Tier 3 which is a one-on-one targeted intervention.

With the support of our PTA, we purchased RAZ-Kids, an online reading program, which enables students in grades K-5 to listen to as well as read a number of books on their independent reading level with an opportunity to answer comprehension questions before moving up to the next level. This online program can be accessed at home as well as in the classroom and classes are also scheduled to use RAZ Kids in the technology lab on a weekly basis.

At the start of the school year, we come together as a school community to share, review, and analyze the NYS ELA & Math data to identify trends across each grade level, the school, and the various subgroups in order to identify our areas where we did well, as well as the school's focus for improvement. We use this data to craft our instructional focus and Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals. Teachers also use this data to plan for their instruction. Once the item analysis report is released, we spend time engaging in a deep analysis of how our students performed in relation to mastery of each Common Core Learning Standard assessed. Teachers meet on grade level teams to discuss the results and use it to plan for instruction and next steps.

We are currently using the Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessment to measure fluency, accuracy, decoding, and comprehension levels in both fiction and non-fiction texts. Teachers use this data to identify each student's independent reading level, to form small groups of targeted interventions, and to form individual student goals. This school-wide assessment is administered four times a year beginning in September and is

monitored throughout the year to measure student progress and overall growth.

This reading assessment data is also used to measure the impact of reading lessons, informs school leaders as to the effectiveness of our reading curriculum, and it enables our school community to develop school-wide goals to ensure that the majority of our students are reading at levels on or above grade level benchmarks and standards.

At the launch of each writing unit of study, students complete an on-demand writing assessment which teachers use to identify trends in areas of strength and areas in need of support as a whole class as well as for individual students. This data analysis helps to inform and guide instruction on a daily basis. Students also engage in self and peer assessments using rubrics and checklists to monitor and create a sense of ownership of their progress towards mastery of the standards and/or their individual goals.

In September, teachers administer a baseline assessment from our Go Math! Curriculum to identify the specific skills that students have already mastered and skills that need intense instruction. This baseline provides teachers with important information to ensure that all students' individual needs are being met by either challenging students with enrichment activities or providing scaffolded support for students who struggle by creating appropriate tools.

To close the achievement gap between our subgroups, we are working to support teachers in providing differentiated instruction while still holding high expectations for all students. Teachers are planning their lessons and thinking strategically about the support tools some students would need in order to be able to access the task successfully, while building student independence and autonomy.

To maintain high levels of student achievement, we continuously challenge and push individual student abilities to maximize every child's potential. In writing, students are provided with rubrics containing the expectations/standards for the next grade level so that they can work towards higher standards. Students in our Gifted & Talented classes are also invited to our Early Morning Test Prep Program to ensure that we are enriching their minds to maintain the high levels of student achievement they are already receiving.

At the James J. Ambrose School we share a belief that assessment practices are a critical part of teaching and learning. It is through thorough and constant analysis of assessment data that we reflect, discuss, and refine our teaching practices to ensure that we maintain high levels of student achievement for all students.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The school maintains a supportive and nurturing learning environment that conveys high expectations for staff, students, and families through continuous feedback and clear communication with all constituents.

The entire school community is committed to providing a respectful and nurturing learning environment where all students feel safe, valued, supported, and love coming to school each day. The culture of the James J. Ambrose School is one of which every member of the school community including teachers, staff, students, and parents support the social and emotional well-being of every student in the building so that each student can strive academically because their social-emotional needs are being met.

At the James J. Ambrose School, we have been very successful in providing a positive environment that supports students in their academic, social and emotional growth through various programs.

Our Virtue of the Month Program educates students about one core value each month through morning announcements, assemblies, book of the month, and inter-class visits where upper grade students discuss the virtue with their buddy class in a lower grade. Students learn the meaning and importance of the virtue, as well as ways to demonstrate the virtue both at school and at home. Students who demonstrate the virtue are given a “Virtue Voucher” and they are honored and celebrated with their peers and families at a Virtue of the Month Assembly. During this Assembly we also highlight the talents of our chorus members and cheerleaders who perform songs/dances about the virtue. This Program has recently expanded where students asked to be able to give "Virtue Vouchers" to teachers.

Our Student of the Month Program motivates the students to strive for excellence in academics and responsibility. Each month every teacher selects two students who demonstrate high performance and excellence in completing all classwork and homework, demonstrate effort, and demonstrate good citizenship. Our cluster teachers also select two students who have demonstrated high excellence in the arts. All Student of the Month award recipients are honored at our monthly PTA meetings where they receive their special certificate and prize.

The creation of Glass Walls has created an environment where all teachers are valued and celebrated for their achievements in the classroom. Teachers open up their classrooms to their colleagues to share and learn best practices from one another. Teachers’ hard work and successes are celebrated as well as improvements and growth through ongoing feedback conversations from school leaders as well as their colleagues.

The James J. Ambrose School fosters an environment where everyone feels at home, and all staff and students are valued, cared for, and encouraged to be the very best they can be each and everyday.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The home-school connection is of paramount importance as families play an integral part of the school community and an essential role in their children’s academic success. To strengthen family community ties, we involve all parents in all aspects of their children’s learning experiences and ensure that parents are fully informed of the expectations for learning at each grade level as well as the expectations to be college and career ready.

School leaders engage in open communication with families through a variety of ways. Parents receive a monthly letter home with information about our Virtue of the Month including how parents can support the virtue at home as well as a summary of our Book of the Month. School leaders also have an open door policy which provides parents with an opportunity to share/discuss ideas, questions, or concerns at any time. Once a month parents are invited to “Coffee with the Principal” where the agenda is open to the parents. During this time parents get to meet other parents in the school community, share what they love

about the school, their ideas on school improvement, and ask questions. Immediately following this meeting parents are invited to their child's classrooms to engage in lessons/activities, and learn alongside their child. They are encouraged to participate in the planned activities and support their children in the classroom. This strengthens the home-school connection as parents can utilize the different strategies observed in the classroom at home with their children.

Teachers communicate expectations for learning for each unit of study in all content areas through monthly newsletters where they share information with parents about the upcoming units as well as suggestions on how parents can support the work at home. During Tuesday Parent Engagement time teachers facilitate parent workshops based on ideas/topics from parents and they also use this time to meet with parents to discuss individual students' academic achievements or challenges.

At the James J. Ambrose School it is also important for us to create a strong connection with parents through our arts programs. Parents are invited to a number of dance performances, winter and spring music concerts, and an Art Show to showcase the amazing and different talents of their children.

During the Spring months, students are selected to plant vegetables in our vegetable garden. Under the direction of our Dance teacher, students take care of the garden by watering it everyday. During the summer months, families in the community are offered the opportunity to collect the harvest and enjoy it with their families.

3. Professional Development:

At the James J. Ambrose School, our vision is to foster a community of life-long learners not only for students, but for teachers as well.

One of the key factors in educational success is the power of collaboration in the school community. At the James J. Ambrose School, a culture of collaboration is deeply embedded in the professional learning community through the inquiry team approach focused on improved pedagogical practices in order to promote student achievement.

Teachers collaborate in grade level teams to analyze student data and work, plan differentiated lessons, share ideas, reflect on their learning, and analyze student work for student achievement based on teacher impact. It is through this professional development opportunity that teachers strengthen their own teaching practices by learning from each other and sharing best practices in the name of student achievement.

School leaders believe in the importance of tailoring professional development to meet the needs of the individual teachers based on areas in need of improvement as well as areas of personal interest. School leaders facilitate professional development based on teacher feedback for areas of growth and distribute leadership by supporting teachers in leading professional development opportunities for their colleagues.

Teachers are also encouraged and actively participate in the numerous professional development opportunities offered by the city, borough field support center, and the district on a variety of topics including curriculum development, STEM, literacy, math, technology, and the arts. Through these workshops teachers grow and expand upon their craft and content knowledge and strengthen their leadership capabilities by sharing with their colleagues in grade level teams as well as vertical teams. This structure has led to an increase in STEM lessons being implemented across all classrooms in the school community where STEM was unfamiliar to the school community in years prior. This collaboration has also supported a strong culture based upon trust as well as a passion for continuous learning in the school community.

School leaders regularly meet with individual teachers to provide support tailored to their needs based on observations and teacher reflections. At the James J. Ambrose School we are committed to continuous professional growth in order to support students in their academic success.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of the James J. Ambrose School is that all members of the school community are leaders and are capable of leading change. School leaders lead by example and provide endless support to all staff members in making sure they feel that their voice is important and that their expertise is valued and acknowledged. To ensure that this vision comes to fruition, teachers are provided with many opportunities to take on leadership roles and are supported by school leaders in leading professional learning opportunities for their colleagues. Teachers support one another by modeling lessons, inviting their colleagues into their classrooms, facilitating professional development, and are also participating in our Glass Walls initiative where they visit each others' classrooms to learn and share best practices to improve student achievement.

Established structures are embedded to provide opportunities for teachers to engage in professional collaboration on grade level teams as well as inquiry teams four to five times a week and during Monday's professional learning time. Teachers take the lead to plan meeting agendas and facilitate team meetings focused on building coherence in grade level planning of the curriculum, school-wide goals, and the school's instructional focus. These opportunities promote and foster a culture of shared leadership where teachers play a critical role in leading the work in moving our school forward in order to increase student achievement.

At the James J. Ambrose School it is important for our students to be afforded opportunities to take on leadership roles as well. We currently have a student council team comprised of students in grades 3-5 who work to support school improvement, are the voice of the student body, and take the lead on school service projects such as the Ronald McDonald House Coin Collection, Food Pantry, and Valentine's For Vets. Student council members also select the book of the month books aligned to our school-wide virtue of the month program. Recently, they have also taken on the responsibility of writing the book of the month letter which summarizes and explains its connection to our virtue of the month.

Transparent and strong communication with all constituents is key in effective school leadership. It is important to set clear and high expectations for staff and students and make sure that these are consistently communicated to all members in the school community so that everyone is on the same page. Some of the forms of communication are through daily email announcements to staff, monthly calendars to staff and families, Coffee and Conversation with the Principal, Family Day Events, School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings, PTA meetings, and staff meetings. Student achievement is what drives each of these forms of communication and team meetings.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The James J. Ambrose School is a learning community that strongly believes in collaboration for student success. Collaboration among school leaders, teachers, as well as among students fosters a learning environment where we all learn from each other and value the ideas and opinions of others which promotes a high level of respect in the school community.

At the James J. Ambrose School, we instill a love of learning in our students by providing them with many different opportunities to excel, showcase their special talents, and take on leadership roles in the school community. It is important for us to provide students with a well-rounded education that not only challenges students academically, but also includes the arts such as dance, music, and art. Students also engage in 21st Century technology skills, participate in classroom debates, and STEM lessons to push their critical thinking abilities. Students in our grade 4 and 5 classes are also given the opportunity to participate on our Basketball or Cheerleading team to support the Physical Education Program, teamwork, and promote sportsmanship. Our Student Council members work with the student body to improve school-wide improvement efforts and work to sponsor a number of charitable service events. This enables our students to develop their leadership skills as well as grow into model citizens.

Students are our driving force and at the James J. Ambrose School we strive to meet the needs of every single student. As a school community we hold a shared belief that every child is capable of learning and achieving high levels of academic success and it is our job as school leaders and teachers to make sure that we are doing everything we can to ensure that our students are skillful and creative thinkers, and prepared to become the future leaders in our global world.