

U.S. Department of Education
2023 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 Cindy Anderson
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 600 Romona Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Wilmette State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60091-2125

County Cook

Telephone (847) 512-6400 Fax (847) 251-4153

Web site/URL <https://romona.wilmette39.org> E-mail andersoc@wilmette39.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Kari Cremascoli E-mail cremasck@wilmette39.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Wilmette SD 39 Tel. (847) 512-6000

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

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

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

☐ Urban (city or town)
☒ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	64
1	93
2	83
3	106
4	111
5	0
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	457

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- | |
|--|
| <u>0</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native |
| <u>17</u> % Asian |
| <u>1</u> % Black or African American |
| <u>10</u> % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>0</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| <u>55</u> % White |
| <u>17</u> % Two or more races |
| 100 % Total |

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 5%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	24
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	457
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Albanian/Gheg (Kosovo/Macedon), Albanian/Tosk (Albania), Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian (Syriac/Aramaic), Bengali, Bulgarian, Cantonese (Chinese), Czech, Farsi (Persian), French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Latvian, Mandarin (Chinese), Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 13 %
58 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 32

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 16 %
Total number of students served 72

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

<u>4</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>14</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>29</u> Developmental Delay	<u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>1</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 6 %
Total number of students served: 26

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 8

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
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.	7

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

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	97%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2017

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

The Romona School community will provide a safe, nurturing environment in which students will be motivated to become life-long learners and develop a positive self-image while accepting and appreciating the differences in others.

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

https://www.wilmette39.org/board_of_education/board_policy/section_5_-_personnel/5_10_-_equal_employment_opportunity_and_minority_r

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Romona Elementary School opened its doors as a neighborhood public school in 1958. We serve a population of kindergarten through fourth grade students in the west Wilmette and east Glenview area of New Trier Township. We also house the District early childhood program. Romona is one of six schools in Wilmette District 39, which has four elementary schools, a middle school, and a junior high school. Wilmette is a suburb on Chicago's North Shore, approximately fourteen miles north of downtown Chicago.

District 39 has a reputation for high academic standards and achievement. Romona is highly regarded within the District for excellence in meeting the needs of all of our diverse learners and for our diversity, as we are known as one of the most diverse schools on Chicago's North Shore. Romona is a leader in inclusion, flexible service delivery, and differentiation. Our team prides itself on providing a safe and inclusive environment for all students, including our multilingual students who speak over 30 different languages at home.

Romona prides itself on helping our students develop strong characters through our school motto: Romona R.O.C.K.S., which stands for Respect, Originality, Courage, Kindness, and Sincerity. This motto was created by our community (staff, students, alumni, and families) so that we could have a shared focus on these character traits. We celebrate each characteristic throughout the year through school-wide assemblies, daily morning announcements led by our third and fourth graders, classroom activities, and our Romona R.O.C.K.S. song. We use Romona R.O.C.K.S. to promote positive social interactions, inclusion, and acceptance throughout the year.

Our students begin every day at Romona with a morning meeting as a part of our Social Emotional Learning curriculum. They greet each other, have time to share, engage in an activity that connects them, and begin their day with a morning message from their teacher. Throughout the day, we support our students with their social-emotional needs through classroom meetings, restorative practices, and weekly lessons with our social workers. Romona R.O.C.K.S. characteristics are encouraged throughout the day and are the fabric of our community.

Romona students are challenged and motivated to reach their full potential. Our dedicated and enthusiastic teachers, staff, related services professionals, and administrators are student-centered and driven to help each and every student succeed. Students engage in a rigorous curriculum that includes reading, writing, math, social studies, science, and Spanish. In addition to the core academics, the children participate in music, art, technology, physical education, and library skills. Our school has 1:1 technology for our students, providing them all with an iPad to use whenever it supports learning. This was especially beneficial during the pandemic when learning from home was a necessary option. Each classroom has an interactive screen and a document camera and our teachers have access to additional technology resources such as 3D printers and various coding robots. Students are encouraged to engage in leadership opportunities through the Student Advisory Council, the Green Team, and buddy classes.

The Romona Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is an integral part of our community. Through school fundraisers and the efforts of dedicated, hard-working volunteers, the PTA provides meaningful support that greatly enhances the quality of the learning experience. Field trips, guest speakers, lunch clubs and hands-on activities are among the many programs provided by the PTA. The annual Multicultural Week and Festival, sponsored by the PTA, helps the school community celebrate the many diverse cultures represented at Romona. Our strong home-school partnership is a big part of what makes Romona School so wonderful.

In partnership with the PTA, we aim to provide our students with opportunities to learn about sustainability and nature in a hands-on manner. We do this through our outdoor classroom, composting at lunch, our newly installed solar panels, and activities led by our Green Team. Our PTA sponsors activities such as bike to school day, a Garden Open House, plastic bag recycling, and other green activities.

Romona was honored to receive the National Blue Ribbon School award in 2006 and 2017. It is one of the many reasons that our community and district is proud to have Romona as their neighborhood school. Since

that time, Romona has continued to strive for excellence every year by setting new goals for improvement. This year, our Romona team has three main areas of focus: improving our MTSS (Multi Tiered System of Supports) process, cultivating a supportive and inclusive environment for staff and students, and strengthening our connections with Romona families. As a District, we review our curricular resources on a regular rotation, constantly striving to meet our students' needs. We provide regular professional development for our staff with regards to new curriculum, instructional strategies, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and many other areas of best practice.

Our District recently took part in developing a new five-year strategic plan and as part of that work, developed a new District wide mission to "Engage, Empower, Inspire." Romona school embodies this mission. Our team of educators is child-centered, collaborative, and focused on student growth.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Our goal with literacy instruction is to teach our students to respect multiple perspectives and learn how to communicate effectively to a variety of audiences. Instruction is differentiated according to student diversity, background, readiness, ability, and interest. We strive to honor and promote varied backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.

By providing strong foundational reading skills, including explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics, in kindergarten and first grade, we set our students up for reading success in future grades. As students become fluent readers, we continue to provide developmentally appropriate text that encourage rich and collaborative discussion. This allows students to engage in development of reading skills, as well as listening and speaking skills. Through the gradual release of responsibility model, small groups instruction, and workshop model, students are provided with differentiated and targeted instruction based on diversity, background, readiness, ability, and interest.

Ongoing, balanced assessment practices inform instructional decision-making, goal setting, and reflection about progress, at an individual and group level. Romona utilizes benchmark screeners in reading [including AimsWebPlus probes, NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), and the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)] for students three times per year, as well as formative and summative assessments within the classroom. The school and grade-levels use this information to identify positive core instructional strategies and guide modifications as needed.

Within the past two years, this data has led our school to increase our focus on phonological awareness, phonics, and encoding at our kindergarten and first grade levels. This year, we have ensured that all students experience systematic and targeted phonological awareness and phonics instruction with research-based programs and strategies, in addition to their previous core reading instruction. We have already identified gains in student skills when comparing fall to winter growth from last year to this year. As a District, we are continuing our focus on improving instruction of word recognition, investigating different curricular approaches to phonics instruction and instruction on phonemic awareness.

To support effective communication skills, we create opportunities for responsive discourse within the classrooms. We also focus on effective and creative written communication across content areas. Students are encouraged to use self-assessments and teacher feedback through rubrics to develop their written expression skills. Formal instruction includes opinion writing, narrative writing, and nonfiction writing that are evaluated with pre-assessments, midpoints, and post-assessments to determine appropriate next steps for instruction and demonstrate growth. Teachers then support the generalization of these skills across the students day to allow for students' demonstration of understanding and knowledge.

Ultimately, by being able to fully access a wide variety of texts, communicate effectively, and learn to respect multiple perspectives and audiences, students become critical consumers and creative producers of informational, media, and literary sources.

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

Our core beliefs about mathematical instruction center on rigor and differentiation. Our approach to mathematics is a focused, coherent, and rigorous study that encourages students to develop perseverance. Application of mathematical ideas emerges through the development of conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. Through evidence-based arguments and critiques, students engage in mathematical discourse and sense-making.

Students represent their ideas in multiple modalities and explore mathematical connections within the world

around them.

Our mathematics classrooms use a variety of instructional practices that differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the varied learners in the classroom. Teachers often use targeted small group instruction and co-teaching with a Learning Behavior Specialist or our Differentiation Support Teacher in order to meet the needs of students who need more support and those that need enrichment. Our goal is to engage all students in rigorous learning at an appropriately challenging level and to ensure that all students are making adequate progress towards their individualized goals.

Our curriculum maps provide a guide to teachers on how to address the Common Core State Standards throughout the year. They help teachers focus on the eight mathematical practices throughout all instruction. Our teachers ask probing questions which require students to justify their responses and accept divergent ideas, promoting the sharing of these ideas. These high level mathematical discussions are often part of a number talk that is used to launch the class period.

Mathematical instruction is taught at all grade levels using textbooks and supplemental materials. Teachers use hands-on manipulatives, engaging students in creative activities that require students to apply their mathematical knowledge. Real-world application, project-based learning, and complex problem solving are a part of every math classroom. Our students are challenged to be high level mathematicians who are flexible in their thinking and approach as they persevere through challenging problems.

We use a variety of assessments to measure student progress. We use benchmark assessments three times a year that include NWEA MAP and AimsWebPlus probes. Prior to each unit, teachers use pre-assessments to gather data on their students' understanding of the prerequisite skills and the content of that unit. They then use formative assessments such as entrance and exit tickets, daily observations, student self-assessments, and task cards to inform daily instructional decisions. In the classroom, teachers use these assessments to form groupings for instruction and to determine who needs reteaching or extension opportunities.

Each grade level team meets weekly to discuss math instruction and reviews student progress data once every six weeks. The team works with specialists including the Differentiation Support Teacher, Learning Behavior Specialist, and MTSS team members to analyze data and determine next steps for both the whole class and individual students. Our math instructional model is flexible, meeting the ever changing needs of our students.

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

We strive to provide a strong foundation of scientific understanding rooted in inquiry and discovery. In accordance with the Next Generation Science Standards, students act as scientists, explaining real-world phenomena and designing solutions to problems. Students learn to collect, evaluate, and analyze evidence from multiple sources to build their knowledge of science concepts. Hands-on classroom activities are designed to reflect the collaborative nature of science, with a focus on communication, teamwork, and the consideration of multiple perspectives.

Our science curriculum helps students engage in experiences that replicate the work of scientists. Students are presented with a phenomena to study and have an opportunity to investigate and ask questions, engage in hands-on lab activities to gather evidence, and draw conclusions using data. They then are able to apply their new understandings to new situations, synthesizing their ideas and demonstrating their understanding. Teachers are able to assess student understanding throughout the labs and activities and evaluate their conceptual understanding by their ability to apply their knowledge to new situations.

In each grade level, students study topics in life sciences, Earth and space science, and physical science. The topics build on each other throughout our students' time at Romona. For instance, our kindergarteners begin their exploration of life sciences by investigating the needs of living things and our second graders deepen their understanding of this topic by studying how habitats support living things. In Earth and space sciences, our kindergarten students study the sun and the following year, investigate weather and seasons as first

graders. Physical sciences follow the same progression as students begin studying pushes and pulls in kindergarten and by third grade are designing mini arcades as a part of their unit on force and motion.

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

As a district, we have adopted the definition and purpose for the Social Studies curriculum as provided by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS): "Social Studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world."

The social studies curriculum is rigorous and encourages analytical thinking. Our goal is to engage students through the inquiry approach as it fosters curiosity, desire to explore and investigate, and encourages students to raise questions to solve real-world problems. As a result of our social studies curriculum, students will develop improved ability to reason, to use creative thinking and innovation, and to take risks to uncover new possibilities which together will prepare them for jobs and careers for the 21st Century.

Our students engage in inquiry by utilizing five conceptual lenses: civics, economics, geography, history and cultural anthropology. Civic learning and engagement are addressed in each grade level. For example, in first grade, the students reflect on this inquiry question: How can I bring about positive change in my community? In third grade, students study immigration with a focus on the guiding question: What motivates humans to move from one location to another? Our fourth graders study innovations using primary and secondary sources.

Feedback and assessment is embedded into our social studies curriculum as a part of the investigation and learning. In second grade, for example, our students learn about how communities met their needs in the past. The summative assessment involves a comparison of three Native American groups and how they adapted to their environments.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Our goal in art class is to develop creative thinkers, who can make personal connections, respond effectively and are confident presenters, while cultivating collaboration, innovation and risk taking. Our first through fourth graders experience a wide range of art experiences in their weekly 60-minute art class such as drawing, mixed media, painting, printmaking and three-dimensional art. Our students learn that an artist is a person who practices any of the creative arts. They also have traits such as persistence, understanding with empathy, taking risks, and of course, creativity and imagination. Student artwork is proudly displayed throughout the hallways at Romona as well as being shared with the larger Wilmette community through annual displays at the Wilmette Public Library and in the district office. Our students also share their work with their families at our annual Open House and Art Fair.

At Romona, we believe that music education is an independent and integral part of the development of the whole child. Our students begin taking music in kindergarten once a week for 30 minutes and continue in first through fourth grade with music twice a week for a total of 60 minutes. Through music education, our students will become literate in the elements of music while developing performance skills and a lifelong

appreciation of music. Our students listen to a variety of music and composers, working on their active listening skills. When singing, they learn about melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, form and the expressive qualities of music. Our students play a variety of musical instruments beginning with percussion and eventually mastering melodies on the recorder by the end of fourth grade. They also study the creation of music, considering cultural and historical influences and how technology impacts the creation of music. Lastly, our students learn about the art of performance and one of the highlights of our students' year is the opportunity to perform for their families at each grade level's annual music show.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Physical Education (PE) develops, integrates, and promotes enjoyment through increased knowledge, positive attitudes, healthy behaviors, and lifelong skills, which meet the needs of all students. Our kindergartners have PE once a week for twenty minutes, and our first through fourth graders attend PE every day for 20 minutes. Through engagement in individual, small group and team activities, students build confidence, promote positive self-image, and work to achieve personal goals. Rather than focusing on specific games or sport goals, our curriculum emphasizes concepts and skills that apply to many activities, games, and sports. As in all areas of physical education, the sequence of concepts and skills is developed for age appropriate study. Personal and interpersonal skills are emphasized throughout our physical education classes, focusing on sportsmanship and cooperation throughout the year. Our PE teachers offer Open Gym nights in the winter, where they invite families to come in and engage in physical activity with them and share what they are learning.

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

The elementary Spanish program at Romona is a FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools) program. Students begin taking Spanish in kindergarten and have class twice a week for a total of 40 minutes. Instructional time increases for our first through fourth graders and they attend Spanish three times a week for a total of 90 minutes. Students learn vocabulary and concepts designed around the integration of curricular goals and objectives in content areas such as social studies or science. Our goal is for every child to engage in foreign language learning during the optimal years of acquisition and to be exposed to cultures different from their own. We hope to inspire students to continue language learning and to acquire language-learning strategies in addition to basic vocabulary and conversational skills. Our students enjoy the games, songs, and fun activities in our Spanish classes and love learning about different Spanish speaking countries around the world. One of the highlights of our program is in first grade, when the students create typical items that are sold in a market in Mexico, learn how to ask to buy and sell the items, and then engage in a Mexican Market with their peers.

2d. Technology/library/media

Our goal in library and technology is to provide equitable access to information and information technology to learn effectively and live productively in an increasingly global and digital society. We strive to empower students and teachers to become critical consumers and creative producers of information in our global society. We teach our students to become enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information by incorporating innovative technologies that promote learning through the 4Cs: collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. We also use these classes to teach students to be responsible digital citizens. All of our students attend library class once a week for 30 minutes and our first through fourth graders take technology class for 30 minutes as well.

All of our students also engage in special STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) activities in the Learning Commons throughout the year. We hold thematic STEAM days that connect to real life events such as the Olympics or our school's annual Multicultural Festival. On these special days, we set up stations for the students to engage in activities such as building a luge for a mini-figure for the Olympics, designing a path for a robot to travel to different places around the world, or most recently creating a Geoboard snowflake for our winter steam event. We also invite families in for an open Library and Technology night where they can engage in these types of activities with their children.

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

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Romona uses the MTSS (Multi Tiered System of Supports) approach to quickly and effectively support students who require academic support beyond what is available through the core curriculum. This process begins with universal screening three times a year in the areas of reading and math. Staff meetings are utilized to look for building and grade level trends, which guides general education instruction. Students' success within the core instruction is monitored through classroom summative and formative assessments, as well as these benchmark data points.

Grade level teams meet regularly to identify groups of students who may require more intense and targeted instruction. By triangulating all the available data, small groups are created with specific intervention focus. Specific goals and timelines are developed and students' response to intervention is closely monitored through progress monitoring measures directly aligned with the skills being taught.

If a student is not responsive to the tier two instruction, they are referred for a more tailored tier three support. To facilitate the development of these supports, teachers have the opportunity to discuss concerns, data, and observations with a group of general education staff who have different backgrounds and specialties. Together, this group discusses the needs of the whole child and creates highly individualized intervention plans. Again, special goals and times are developed and progress is closely monitored through progress monitoring measures. As needed, interventions are faded, changed, or intensified to meet the specific needs of each child while supporting their access to the general education curriculum. Oftentimes, our tier three instruction for reading is provided by our reading specialists. Next year, we will also be adding a math support teacher to our staff in order to better support tier three instruction in math.

Romona believes so strongly in specific and early intervention that we have established time within each grade's schedule that allows for differentiated instruction. The WIN (What I Need) block is a thirty-minute period each day that allows students to receive the targeted instruction that has been designed for them.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

At Romona, differentiation is at the heart of every lesson. Classroom teachers challenge students to think, work, and produce at a high level. In differentiating instruction, teachers address student learning differences by modifying content, process, product, and environment. If you walked into a room at Romona you would see a variety of ways teachers provide opportunities for advanced learning and enrichment for students. For example, teachers pulling small groups for targeted instruction, students working in centers with varied activities, or problem based learning stations designed to get students thinking about real life problem solving. These varied approaches and others are integrated into the day to help students who are ready for advanced learning and enrichment. We also use some technology platforms to provide students exposure to additional new concepts that they are ready to learn.

In order to determine which students need additional support and enrichment, our teams analyze the benchmarking data, looking at the standards and considering how to differentiate instruction for those students. At times, we have identified students who are performing significantly above grade level and are ready for an accelerated curriculum. For these students, our teachers collaborate on how to best accelerate the curriculum and provide small group instruction that will challenge these high achievers.

Our differentiation support teacher provides enriched instruction supporting higher level learning to all of our students who need enrichment. She works closely with the general education teachers to determine the most effective way to engage students who are performing above grade level. This can be co-teaching

lessons, pulling small groups in the classroom, and also pulling students from their class for enrichment activities during WIN (What I Need) time.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Romona has a strong focus on inclusion and differentiation. The belief that all students can be successful in our school is at the core of every decision that is made at Romona. When new families come to Romona, they often share that they have heard about our wonderful programming and came to Romona specifically because of these services.

We provide a variety of supports and services to students with disabilities who are eligible for special education. In addition to Learning Behavior Specialists, who are special education teachers and serve students, we have a variety of instructional and related services available for eligible students. These services are based on a comprehensive review of a child's individual needs and goals. Services include access to adaptive PE, assistive technology, behavior intervention specialists, Vision and Hearing Impaired teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, social workers, and speech/language pathologists. This group of professionals works hard to close the achievement gap that exists between our students with IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and other students. They have been engaging in additional professional development in research-based programs to ensure that students have access to the best possible instruction.

Our team is extremely dedicated to developing individualized plans to meet the needs of every learner, focusing on the least restrictive environment and including students in the general education classrooms as much as possible. Each plan looks different for our students and the service delivery model is different based on their needs. Some students receive comprehensive supports and this provides ongoing, target instruction for students who need that level of support. Other students receive support for their Behavior Intervention Plan that requires consistency of implementation and strategies to assist with self-management. Many of our students receive targeted support in essential academic areas in a small group setting in or out of the classroom using research-based programs or strategies. We also have a number of classes that are co-taught by a general education teacher and an LBS to meet the needs of students in this inclusive setting. Throughout the day, many students receive accommodations to support their access to the general education curriculum.

3d. English Language Learners:

Every year, we have a significant number of families move into the Romona community who speak more than one language at home. During the registration process, all families fill out information letting us know about the languages that are spoken at home so that we can screen all students. Kindergarten through first semester first grade students take the MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) screening assessment. Students in the second semester of first grade through fourth grade are given the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) screener. Both of these assessments provide a measure of students' English proficiency in the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The students' language proficiency determines the services each child will receive. This year, the 58 students who qualified for services speak 22 different languages.

Our two English language teachers lead our school in creating a highly inclusive environment. Based on student need, services are provided within small groups or within the classroom. Student progress is monitored by academic assessments, as well as continued WIDA and ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) testing. In addition to targeting instruction for our EL students, we work hard to create classrooms where they are welcomed and represented. This begins at the beginning of the year when students share pieces of their identity and is focused on throughout the year through representative books and learning about and celebrating various holidays. Over the years, our EL teachers have worked with students that have spoken over forty different languages.

Romona prides itself on welcoming students from a variety of different cultures and celebrates that our school has the largest EL population in District 39. Our PTA also embraces the variety of cultural

backgrounds of our families by celebrating with the Multicultural Week & Festival every year. During the week, the daily student announcements are done in different languages and all students have an opportunity to write their name in different languages during recess. The Multicultural Festival is a community event that celebrates Romona's diversity with a Parade of Nations, student performances, and a variety of food from around the world.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Our students begin every day in their homeroom where they have school and classroom routines that help connect them to each other, their teachers, and Romona School. They begin with a morning meeting that starts with a message on the board from their teacher. They then greet each other, engage in a sharing activity for connection, and they take part in an activity together. This time is a special time that helps to provide a positive environment for our students to start the day in their classroom community. It ends with school-wide announcements that are made daily by third and fourth grade students on the loudspeaker. These announcements share special information about upcoming holidays, birthdays, and information about the day to come such as weather and recess information.

We encourage student leadership at Romona through our Student Advisory Council and our Green Team. Our Student Advisory Council is made up of students from every third and fourth grade class. They participate in our school wide assemblies, plan and advertise spirit days, and help out at PTA activities on the nights and weekends. The Student Advisory Council runs a school store where they sell school supplies and donate the proceeds. This year, they voted to donate to a local animal shelter. Our Green Team is open to all interested students. When the weather is nice, they volunteer in the outdoor classroom during recess to lead activities and help maintain the garden. During the winter months, they organize collections for recycling of household items such as glasses and batteries. Our Green Team is also helping us plan Earth Week activities and a Solarbration event for the community to celebrate our new solar panels.

Our school culture is built around a foundation of our motto, Romona R.O.C.K.S. At every assembly, we begin by singing the Romona R.O.C.K.S. song:

R is for respect, the golden rule.

O-riginality, always be yourself.

C is for courage, try to be brave.

Kindness to everyone, care for each other.

Last but not least is sincerity,

Romona School is where we want to be.

This illustrates who we are and what we stand for at Romona. We use these characteristics to remind our children how to create a positive environment for learning and growing. We use our school wide assemblies to focus on the ROCKS characteristics. Through songs, books, presentations by student leaders and classes, and special guests, we aim to create a welcoming, comfortable culture for all students.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Romona is a neighborhood school that prides itself on building a strong home-school connection and maintaining a positive relationship with the community. The principal works closely with our active PTA, meeting monthly to discuss the school and parent involvement. The PTA begins the year with Rockin' Romona, a family style picnic that brings together the entire Romona community and welcomes new families to our community. The PTA provides enrichment opportunities for our students that enhance the curriculum, such as field trips to the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum to support science exploration in second grade and a school-wide assembly on environmental awareness for Earth Week. Our PTA is also extremely involved in our outdoor classroom, providing an authentic learning space for children to engage with nature.

Romona families continue to be involved in our school, even after their students graduate. We often have Eagle Scouts come back to do service projects for Romona and have students from the junior high school and high school come partner with classes, perform plays, and do service work in our garden.

Our community brings together our teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and School Board members in a group called the Community Review Committee (CRC). This group works together every year to choose and research a topic that leads to research-based recommendations. This year, one of our Learning Behavior Specialists and one of our Speech and Language Pathologists are on the CRC with Romona parents and numerous community members and they are researching neurodiversity. Past topics have included 21st century learning, diversity, empathy, and inclusion, and technology & learning environments and all of this important work has led to action plans for the District.

To encourage our families to be active members in our school, we use a multitude of communication methods including frequent newsletters, an informative website, and public Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages. We invite families into the school at annual events such as Curriculum Night and Open House and volunteering opportunities during the day such as mystery readers, party volunteers, serving lunch in the cafeteria, shelving books in the library, and helping students work in the garden. We are in frequent contact with families about student progress, calling and meeting with families whenever there is information to share. We conference with families twice a year and send home two progress reports, one at the end of each semester. Each year, we use benchmarking assessments to measure student growth and share this with parents and families. We also share the results of benchmarking and IAR (Illinois Assessment of Readiness) assessments with the Board of Education and the community at monthly School Board meetings. The Romona team believes that the home-school partnership is key to helping all students succeed and is thankful for our engaged community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

We understand the importance of professional development for our staff and have created a comprehensive plan to support them throughout the year. Before the school year begins, all new teachers participate in a week-long new teacher training where they are introduced to the District philosophy and curricula. Then all teachers, veteran and new, spend two days together in professional development as they prepare for the new year. This year, our Romona team focused on learning our new system for MTSS and supporting all students through the different tiers of support.

Throughout the year, we hold district-wide professional development days where speakers and trainers are brought in and staff is encouraged to choose learning strands that will best support them. We also provide staff members the opportunity to attend out-of-district workshops and trainings that will support their learning. This year, we have focused on a variety of topics including training on behavior, workshops about our phonics instruction, and learning walks to explore sense-making in mathematics.

We also provide our staff in-house opportunities for professional development through 'Academy 39' classes, where our teachers teach other teachers. This year, Romona teachers have taken part in classes that focus on equity and race, building mathematical thinking in the classroom, and tips and tricks for conferences. There are specific Academy 39 classes that are tailored for our new teachers to offer them support throughout the year. Additionally, all new teachers participate in monthly new teacher meetings and each new teacher has the opportunity to work with a mentor teacher for their first two years in District 39.

Our staff at Romona is extremely driven, student-centered, and goal-oriented. Therefore, this year at Romona staff meetings we have focused on providing our staff with their own staff WIN (What I Need) time. Staff members had the opportunity to determine what area they wanted to focus on for their own personal development and use staff meeting time to collaborate and learn about that topic. The topics ranged from the science of reading, to embedding technology in the classroom, to supporting behavior in the classroom.

Although they participate in institute days, our support staff does not attend staff meetings, so we use our Friday early release days to provide training to all of our paraprofessionals. This training focuses on best NBRS 2023

practices for inclusion, supporting behavior using nonviolent crisis intervention, and building independence for students. Throughout the year, we also provide training for our paraprofessionals including behavior modification techniques, effective data collection practices, and understanding student disabilities.

4. School Leadership:

Romona has two administrators: a principal and an assistant principal. Our administrators are the visionaries for the building, helping to create a safe environment for students to take risks and persevere in their learning. The most vital way that the administration impacts our students is by supporting the staff. It begins with our rigorous hiring practices and continues with coaching, professional development, and creating an environment that encourages retention of excellent staff. Our administration aims to empower our staff and provide them agency to do what is needed to support their students. The administration seeks feedback from a group of staff members called the Principal's Advisory Committee (PAC) where they are able to work with the staff in order to ensure that all school improvement decisions are child-centered and focused on student growth. Our administration focuses on creating a positive culture for the staff, believing that this will trickle down to the students in every classroom.

The administrators regularly spend time in the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, and playground in order to build relationships with the students. The administrators regularly greet the students by name at the front door in the morning and say goodbye to the students at the door at the end of the day. The administrators aim to create a positive environment for students to learn where all students and families feel welcome. The administrators believe that all students are capable and communicate this message to staff, families, and students consistently.

This year, one of the greatest priorities for our administrative team has been the restructuring of our MTSS process. As a building, we have a renewed focus on the tiered supports, analyzing data, and using our data database to better keep track of interventions. We have worked closely with our PAC leaders and our MTSS team to carefully use our staff meeting times to analyze data and to focus on student growth. We take time to celebrate the successes and to brainstorm ways in which we can improve instruction to better support achievement for all students.

As a part of our MTSS process, we are also engaging in professional development to better support behavior. In the past few years, we have noticed some changes in the behavioral needs of our students and we are working to design structures and programs to better support these needs. All of our classrooms use positive behavior systems to support student behavior. However, we have noticed that some of the unstructured areas, such as recess and the hallways, need more attention and as administrators, we are taking this on with the help of a leadership team. This is an exciting new opportunity for us as leaders to lead teams in supporting our new school-wide MTSS process for both academic and behavior needs.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Romona School is known for its diversity on Chicago's North Shore and it is a point of pride for our community. Our English Learner population is the biggest in Wilmette and many families share that they move to our neighborhood for the support of our community. It begins with our District's Statement of Inclusion:

By respecting each person's unique identity, perspective, and learning style, we create a stronger community. We honor differences including races and cultures, genders and sexualities, abilities and aspirations, identities and affiliations, socioeconomics and worldviews. Embracing diversity prepares our students to thrive in an increasingly complex global community.

Our Equity Team focuses on how to ensure that Romona creates this strong community where we embrace diversity. One area where we have focused over the last few years is in the books that we have in the library and classroom libraries. Our library has a well-balanced catalog of books, providing students with both windows into other people's stories and mirrors of their own life. Our library team highlights books throughout the year that connect to various holidays and monthly themes, providing weekly book bags to

classes to highlight and share in read alouds. When assessing our building, we noticed that our classroom libraries were more connected to curriculum needs and less diverse. We have thus allocated building budget money and the proceeds from our Book Fair to provide each classroom with books with diverse characters that better represent our diverse student population. Additionally, we adjusted some of the anchor texts that are used during ELA instruction to represent more diversity.

Our Equity Team began a new tradition last year initiating "One Book, One Romona." We bought a copy of the book, "Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You" by Sonia Sotomayor for every classroom and created a book walk in the garden with the book. Throughout the week, we had special announcements, spirit days, classroom activities during morning meeting, and conversation starters for families. This year, our committee is picking out the book with the goal being to spark conversations with all of our students and families about inclusion.

In addition to these special activities, our entire staff focuses on supporting all students and families. We participated in training from the Anti-Defamation League and embedded that work into our SEL instruction. Our Social Emotional Learning focuses on the five CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) Competencies, but we have added a sixth one in District 39: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In preparing for this work with our staff and our students, we share resources and encourage staff to engage in professional development to support their own learning on this topic.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

The heart of Romona is our community. When considering all of the strategies that Romona employs on a daily basis, fostering a sense of community among all of our stakeholders has been the most instrumental to our success. We believe that everything starts with the relationships that we build between students, staff, and our Romona families.

Romona's community is strong. We have extremely involved families who believe in a home-school partnership. This is evident in the strong participation in school events such as parent-teacher conferences, PTA events such as the Multicultural Festival, and in volunteering during the school day. Our families help serve lunch, visit the classrooms, and lead special events for our students throughout the year. Over the past few years, we have had difficulty securing enough substitute teachers at Romona and our parent community has stepped up to support, signing up to be substitute teachers and even joining our team as paraprofessionals. Our families are encouraged to come into the school and to be engaged in our community at Romona and we are lucky to have them as partners.

Our Romona staff is extremely supportive of each other and their students, willing to go above and beyond to do what's best. They are child-centered, compassionate, dedicated, and extremely hard-working. Our teachers are motivated to support each individual student and work together to ensure that each child is supported and making growth both academically and socially. Our administration trusts the staff to deliver their very best to the students on a daily basis because they have proven that they are masters at their craft who will be innovative and won't stop trying new strategies until they meet all of their students' needs. Our teachers communicate high-expectations for our students and support them as they reach their full potential, helping each child feel that they are important and capable.

At Romona, we cultivate a sense of belonging in each classroom from the first day of the year through the last. We begin the year focusing on identity, celebrating each student and taking time to get to know each other as a part of our Social-Emotional Learning curriculum. Throughout the year, we foster that sense of belonging through strong relationships with staff members, events that bring families into the building, and using inclusive language and respect. We make sure that each child knows that we believe in them, care about them, and have their best interests at heart. Because of this, our students feel known, connected, and valued, which allows them to take academic risks and fully engage in critical thinking.

At Romona School, we are the Mustangs. When our students leave, we remind them that "Once a Mustang, Always a Mustang." Our community is strong and fostering this sense of community has been key to our success.