

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Oak Street School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 70 West Oak Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Basking Ridge State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07920-1735

County Somerset County

Telephone (908) 204-2565 Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://oakstreet.bernardsboe.com> E-mail hfoley@bernardsboe.com

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Nick Markarian E-mail Nmarkarian@bernardsboe.com
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Bernards Township Tel. (908) 204-2600

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Keith Molinari
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

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

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 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	67
2	73
3	67
4	65
5	80
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	416

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.9 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 11.9 % Asian
 - 1.1 % Black or African American
 - 4.9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 77.4 % White
 - 3.8 % 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: 7%

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	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	27
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	404
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Spanish, Castilian, Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %

1 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1 %

Total number students who qualify: 5

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 3 %
Total number of students served 14

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>18</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</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: 27

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

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	24
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	18
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	13

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 20:1

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%	98%	97%	99%	95%
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 ☐ No ☒

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

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

To provide a superior education which results in academic excellence, responsible behavior, good citizenship and fosters social- emotional development so that ultimately each student will be able to maximize his/her potential, become a contributing member of society, maintain a commitment to life-long learning, and achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards at all grade levels.

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

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11rlyQ0DfwNL59LTBdHsxARivTOzpNiRWQxcZ8QBfpaI/edit?usp=sharing>

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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

Kindness Matters at Oak Street Elementary School (OSS) because we are a curious and passionate learning community who is eager to make the world a better place. We are the Oak Street Eagles and we ... SOAR!

Oak Street School is one of four K-5 elementary schools in the Bernards Township School system in Basking Ridge, NJ, which also includes Ridge High School and William Annin Middle School. We are a suburb of New York City. Our beautiful building was built in 1939. It has a gorgeous tower feature and a collection of additions that give it charm and a very useful layout. It boasts one of the best sledding hills you can find in the area!

Inside the building you will find an experienced and passionate group of (90 +) caring educators. We function as a team with the purpose of creating the most magical learning spaces and conditions possible. Our PTO is helpful and dedicated to supporting our learning goals. Our district supports us with supervisors and administrators who cultivate our resources. Our crisis and climate and culture teams spend their time monitoring our physical and emotional safety.

The most special part of our school community is our (416) students. They are kind, creative, collaborative, and curious. They are readers, writers, and leaders. They love math, science, art, and music. The newest addition to our school is a K-2 Comprehensive Behavioral Analytic Program that services special needs students. Growth and joy fill our hallways as we welcome our new friends.

One interesting fact that might help someone understand how unique we are, is our in-person attendance rate during the recent pandemic. Eighty percent of OSS students and 90 percent of staff came to school in person during the fall of 2020. This is when there were no vaccines and a very unsure set of health procedures and regulations. The rest of our district and most New Jersey schools were operating at between 50-70 percent capacity and our rate was highly unusual. Our strong community, highly trusting families, incredible school nurse and extremely dedicated teachers came in person and made learning gains and growth at a rate much higher than the average at the time.

Our school is dedicated to being inclusive and welcoming of all races, religions, nationalities, and people of all gender identities. Our learning materials represent diverse perspectives and experiences and our teachers are encouraged to focus on social and emotional learning. This helps students manage their feelings in addition to understanding the curriculum.

We use CASEL core competencies as the basis of our character education program. Classroom teachers have a partner (co-teacher) who is a specialist or another staff member who doesn't have a homeroom. Weekly, these partners engage in learning experiences and activities that were developed in the summer by a team of teachers. Then, twice a month, we rearrange our students into small multi age groups (one or two students from each grade are in a NEST). There are between ten and twelve students total with a staff member leading the group.

These multiage NESTS (remember, we are the Eagles) are where our little chicks make and grow meaningful relationships across the school that really enhance our learning community and culture. The older students are great models when we work on building relationships and responsible decision making. Social awareness, self awareness, and self management skills are fundamentals that these groups work on together. Our annual SEL (Social Emotional Learning) day is a great time to relax and shift our focus completely away from academics. Students recently played sustained games and built projects and crafts with their friends, all while connecting with the adults in the room.

The families of students become involved in the fabric of our school by participating in family dining (having lunch with their child in the cafe). Mystery Readers bring special stories often of culture or unique jobs or hobbies to the classroom. When the PTO organizes a family pizza night, reading night, dance, science fair, or art fair: staff, students, parents, and siblings are all on hand to celebrate.

We have a career day to help highlight and celebrate all of the ways students can hope to utilize the knowledge and skills we are working so hard to teach. Parents and community members come in to share stories and examples from their career. Time is built in for some of the grade 5 students to have a question and answer session. This helps them as they begin to encounter choices in middle school course selection.

We partner with all the town services to have a community day for the younger students where they can see a fire truck, ambulance, police car, plows, and some DPW equipment up close and meet those community employees. There is not a more joyous day for kindergarten students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

At Oak Street School and all of Bernards Township elementary schools we are creating students who love and value reading and writing and can use it for pleasure and informational purposes. We understand that a strong phonetic baseline is critical to the foundations of early literacy.

We use the 95% Core phonics program in grades K-3 as a word study program and the progress monitoring that goes with it is our assessment data. Our students progress through Fountas and Pinnell reading instruction in systematic small group guided reading. To track and support reading level progressions, the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments provide invaluable information for teachers when making guided reading decisions for instruction.

The principles of Notice and Note by Kylene Beers are also an influential theory for our teachers. You can often notice stop and jot post-its through the books of our students in many grade levels. The younger students use “wow moments” and “questioning moments” to build comprehension and the older students use the signposts like “again and again”, or “contrast and contradiction” to be active, responsive, close readers.

Interactive Read Alouds provide the modeling and thinking of good readers and are an opportunity to connect our reading content to other subject areas. We have a wider goal of exposing all of our students to a variety of perspectives and a global lens of learning. We choose diverse authors, settings, and problems. The fluency modeled by the teacher and the higher level question prompts create a strong literacy opportunity for the class to bond together.

Our District Writing Sample routines are a best practice as we connect teams of teachers to monitor writing growth on a trimester basis. These inter reliability rated, rubric graded samples show how our students are able to demonstrate and apply writing instruction that is given in our daily, one hour long literacy block to all students. Focused mini lessons, along with regular workshop writing and student-teacher conferences, strengthen student writing skills.

We also use our literacy block to offer handwriting instruction. We utilize the Handwriting without Tears program, introducing cursive writing in grade three. Additionally, we are supporting our students with technology like Epic, Readworks and CommonLit to have an even wider variety of literature available to them beyond classroom and school based library books. We are a Google for Education School. Google Documents and Google Slides allow students to collaborate and easily revise their writing pieces. Students also use Book Creator to share and celebrate their written work.

Overall, our strong, supportive, consistent attention to our students’ reading and writing skills individually, in small groups, and as a whole class, is evidenced in our ELA standardized test scores, our active library statistics and writing which is celebrated both in school and at home.

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

Our Bernards Township Math curriculum, which is utilized at Oak Street School, is based on the idea that mathematical thinking is the most critical component of all math instruction. All grade level topics and units encourage problem solving skills through both modeling and explanation.

Classes are taught in most K-5 classrooms as a whole group mini lesson and followed by a math workshop format, with learners working independently, in small groups and ultimately with the teacher. We utilize our interactive whiteboards and individual student white boards to introduce concepts.

Our youngest learners are focused on the decomposition of five and ten. This helps them build strong visual

concepts around these number values. When learning early math facts, we spend a great deal of time with ten frames, manipulative models and pictures. These hands-on strategies and frequent feedback are critical to establishing a strong mathematical foundation.

You will find that math plays an important part in classroom morning meetings. Calendar concepts, as well as tallying and bundles, make numeracy part of this daily routine. It helps solidify place value to slowly mark the days of a school year!

Geometry, time, and money are concepts that have units throughout every grade. These are the basis for many of the real world problems used by our adopted math curriculum resource “Go Math.” We have many manipulatives and technology programs that help illustrate these more visual parts of the math curriculum. IXL is a program utilized in grades 3-5 to support math interest, practice and growth.

When students enter the realm of multiplication, division and later fractions and decimals, students already have developed a number sense which truly helps them see the integral parts of numbers. Algebraic thinking has been developed along the way to see patterns in math problems.

Students have chapter tests and benchmark assessments at the end of each unit which help make formative and summative decisions in the next steps of teaching. We have a robust program for meeting the needs of students who are mastering the concepts that are taught and are ready for a challenge .

In grades 4 and 5 we offer an “advanced” math class, which is a twice weekly supplement to regular, daily, one hour math instruction. This class is full of math problems and thinking challenges. Students who meet a matrix of criteria are invited to take an “accelerated” version of math in grade 5, which covers all of the standards of 5th and 6th grade mathematics, so that the student will be ready to take an advanced math course in middle school.

All along the way, we find it critical to maintain a positive “can do” attitude about math for all students. We try to message that math is everywhere and for everyone by using many real world scenarios .

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

We are big fans of Mystery Science at Oak Street Elementary School. It presents a real life phenomena or problem, asks an intriguing question and then provides a hands-on activity to model, practice and discover the science behind the mystery, making science come to life.

Our Next Generation Science Standards allow visits to each “field” of science once per year (earth and space, life, and physical science). Science units are arranged in trimesters this way. We dedicate a 50 min block that rotates between social studies and science in grades K-4, while in grade 5 we have a dedicated Science teacher teaching a period of science each day .

Students who see themselves as “scientists” are much more likely to develop and maintain an interest in science work and courses. So rather than reading about or watching science lessons, we really try to engage our students in the scientific process of making claims and trying to collect evidence and data by testing those claims with experiments.

We have a beautiful learning garden right outside of our kindergarten wing that helps us create life science lessons with first hand experience. A highlight for our younger students is when they monitor the growth and life cycle of butterfly eggs and ultimately release the full grown butterflies into the garden .

One of the signature science experiences comes in the winter of grade 5 when the students identify and “tap” maple trees throughout our campus and collect sap. They then use physical science principles of adding heat to make the thin liquid into a delicious gooey syrup. It ranks right up there as most memorable along with dissecting owl pellets, an experiment where students discover tiny mouse bones and other contents of an owl's diet.

We measure our students' science growth with benchmark and standardized tests, but also with anecdotal evidence and reports about scientific practices.

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

Our K-5 Social Studies curriculum has different topics, beginning with helping the students understand their family and the immediate community around them. We then progress through geography of the US, including an intensive study of New Jersey in Grade 4.

Students learn about civics and the parts of government in the upper elementary grades to help them understand what good citizenship means. Students learn from Scholastic News along the way to discover interesting issues around the world in both social studies and science.

We utilize the TCI Alive interactive technology infused program to deliver information along with supplemental materials from both Discovery Education and Nearpod.

Historical topics are touched upon through our ELA historical fiction units. Read-alouds and book clubs that focus on specific time periods are especially helpful in adding context to the facts and information that is presented through text books and articles.

Students are assessed on their ability to communicate knowledge of social studies, through both collaborative and individual problem based learning products. This area of the curriculum also provides a nice opportunity for art, acting and writing application.

Basking Ridge, NJ is recognized for its rich history during colonial times, so there are many resources within walking distance to explore and discover architecture and important historical events. On the morning of Dec 13, 1776 Charles Lee (Washington's second in command) was captured at a local tavern.

Along with our 4th grade classes celebrating a "1770s day," we also celebrate the South Asian and Muslim history and traditions of an increasing number of our student population.

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 elementary fine arts program in Bernards Township School District is fortunate to include art and four different music programs. Oak Street Elementary School offers 50 minute art and general music classes each week to all our students.

Our art program is fortunate to have not only a creative art teacher, but a well-outfitted, bright and inspiring classroom. The lessons are arranged by artists and medium type with context provided to all projects. It is another opportunity to learn about culture and the world, as the artists chosen are of diverse identity backgrounds. We have a new kiln, so 3 dimensional sculpture projects are an integral part of our curriculum.

Additionally, the music teacher has a chorus that meets before school for students in grades 3-5. Grade 3 students are offered a string orchestra class as these instruments are easier for younger students to start with. In Grades 4 and 5, a band, which includes woodwinds, brass and percussion instruments, is offered. All

students get private or small group lessons to support the learning of their instrument. Fall and spring performances allow our school community to celebrate the excitement and pride of our young musicians and their incredible teachers.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

The gymnasium at Oak Street School houses our fantastic physical education program. Our two physical education teachers meet with each class in two 50 minute sessions per week to develop small and large motor skills, along with the ability to collaborate and express good sportsmanship when playing and learning new sports, games and challenges. We have a nice selection of equipment to support our program and utilize our outside areas as well.

The rock climbing wall is a unique and special piece of equipment for us. The beginning of the year unit includes how to safely play on the outdoor playground equipment, the rules of the gaga pit, and some outdoor painted sidewalk games so these areas can be used for physical enjoyment at recess and after school.

The physical education teachers have a unique bond with our children with developmental needs as they support them with adaptive physical education. They often visit them in classrooms and at lunch and recess since the relationship is so special.

Health and nutrition is taught and assessed by the classroom teachers through their science curriculum. New Jersey just passed a new set of standards in health and physical education which our board and community is trying to embrace.

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

Oak Street School delivers a 25 minute Spanish course to our grades 4 and 5 students, two times per week. This introductory language course serves as both a cultural and linguistic introduction to Spanish speaking countries and people. Our Spanish lessons introduce many of our students to a new culture, encouraging them to connect with our ELL students.

In middle school and high school the students are offered many language program choices, so this course gives students their first taste of foreign language instruction. Part of the work in elementary Spanish class discusses the immigrant experience and achievements as well as the perspective of being in a place where the language you speak is not predominantly your own.

The sentence structure of language is also explored to help students identify parts of speech and basic sentence structure as well as some specific vocabulary and listening comprehension.

Our Spanish teacher also serves as a liaison to the Spanish speaking students, translating materials and making phone calls home to make families feel welcomed and informed.

The assessment for this Spanish course is formative and conversational with some projects being evaluated for effort, inclusion, and application of vocabulary.

2d. Technology/library/media

We have combined Technology/Library and Media into a STEAM based course called QUEST (Question, Understand, Explore, Seek, Think). It is co-taught by the library /media specialist and a former math specialist to all students once per week for 50 minutes. Here is a sample of an experience to explain how these topics come together.

Students started with a project about the difficulty the people of Malawi have getting water and keeping their pump system working. The students then researched different pump ideas, since we don't struggle for water here, we transferred the problem to a flooding basement and they need to get the water out, and others

- using the Engineering Design Process to guide them through the creation of a prototype pump.

As the project went on, the teachers started preparing them for the next step - creating a PSA. Discussion about plastics in the ocean, the lead situation in Flint Michigan and the drought in Arizona and California began the conversation, allowing students to share many ideas about changing the world to make a difference. This got the conversation going - students had so many ideas about how they could change the world, how they could make a difference. They brought up issues from big (global warming) to small (trash around the school). They offered solutions and wanted to spread the word. It was nice to see that the future leaders of our world were passionate about helping it.

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

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

One of the gems of Oak Street is the instructional support team. There are three literacy support teachers and three math support teachers. Between them, every classroom teacher gets a chance to have a second highly skilled instructor supporting them and their students. These co-teachers help develop plans and use formative assessments and benchmarks to develop specific interventions.

WIN (What I Need) is a program in grade 1 where students are grouped based on phonetic assessments and taught directly to their skills needs for 30 minutes each day . Instructional Support, Special Education, and General Education teachers are all partners in this program.

Math support can take the form of both individual and small group reteaching of concepts that have been identified as fundamental deficits through assessments. This fortification of mathematical thinking and practices can drastically increase a student's confidence, leading to their eventual success in math.

Since the instructional support team works across grade levels, it is easy to track students and the progress they make throughout Oak Street School. The team typically has a great communicative relationship with parents and can help classroom teachers quickly know the history and backstory of each identified student.

Approximately one quarter of Oak Street School students are serviced by this team. The caseload for each includes between 4-6 focus students per room, with others who need social, emotional, or behavioral concerns with whom they can also assist.

As a child presents with challenges that are increasing or concerning, these teachers navigate through the Multi Tiered Systems of Support and the Response to Intervention process to document growth, concerns, and intervention at the tier two level, and help inform further inquiries about the student potentially moving forward in the Child Study Team process.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Bernards Township in general, and Oak Street School in particular, have developed a comprehensive system to determine which children operating above grade level can best be served with special programming.

Each classroom teacher has materials in every subject that can be used as enrichment opportunities. Instruction is designed with differentiation in mind. Pre-assessing allows teachers to recognize when a student already knows the material that will be taught and they can substitute different options to that student. Centers and adaptive online technology programs are very helpful delivery methods.

The program for Technology, Library and Media mentioned earlier has the potential to maximize students who have strengths as leaders in problem solving based work. This program, "QUEST," is also the title of

our Gifted and Talented Enrichment programming. The top 3-5% of students are pulled out weekly to interact with peers working to solve challenging tasks.

Since all of our classes are heterogeneously grouped, classroom teachers often spread out the most talented students to help others nearby and support all projects moving forward. The QUEST program uses multiple criteria sources to identify its members, including creativity tasks, to capture some of the skills and talents that aren't easily measured with standardized academic tests.

In a recent Quest activity as part of the selection process, a group of students were asked to brainstorm a school flag. They were then given a tutorial on some important things to consider when designing a flag, such as few colors, no words, minimal and clear symbols. After a revision of their draft based upon the newly presented information, students were gauged by how well they responded to the feedback for their creative task as well as their originality and explanation of the performance task.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Oak Street school is inclusive and accommodating for children with identified disabilities. Our Comprehensive Behavioral Adaptive Program meets the needs of students with developmental disorders. This program is staffed by highly skilled and trained teachers and paraprofessionals. The students show everyone in our school that you can be strong, proud, and courageous as a learner every day.

We have found, especially since the pandemic, that a significant amount of children have been identified as having anxiety and attention deficit disorder. These students are given 504 plans to accommodate the American Disabilities Act and we have many special plans and solutions to help maximize their learning and regulation of emotions.

Most of the IEPs (Individual Education Plans) at Oak Street School are given for speech and language services. These children are identified and serviced to help support their articulation abilities. Students often exit this classification once their needs have been met with success.

A small number of students are classified at Oak Street School with a specific learning disability, which requires a resource room placement. Due to their small caseloads, the special education teachers are able to support the students in their care very well.

We have incredibly skilled and talented special education teachers in our building. They have a lot of experience and compassion for their students and are extremely helpful to the students' families. They help all teachers and staff in the building understand the unique demands of a child's profile so they can meet with the most success possible.

The behaviorist that works at Oak Street School is an extremely helpful team member. Her unique training has come into popular demand as we come out of the pandemic and see many social and emotional needs that are complicating students' ability to be available for learning.

3d. English Language Learners:

Our English Language Learner program at Oak Street Elementary school is extremely small. We have less than one percent of students (3 students currently) not meeting the WIDA proficiency scores, qualifying them for this program.

We have students from a Chinese, Ukrainian and Latin American backgrounds. Our main goal for these students is to expose them to as many opportunities for interacting with their English-speaking peers as we possibly can. Some of these immigrant families have circumstances that make their situation trauma informed. Extra care is given in those cases to meet the psychological and emotional needs as well. Finally, we need to spend time helping families with access and translating important materials to support them.

Our ELL teacher spends time supporting these students in vocabulary, culture, context and the structure of

English. He is very friendly, accessible and helpful to the families of the students with whom he works. Due to our small number of cases, he is shared with another elementary school, so sometimes the needs of the students are met by our Spanish teacher (mentioned earlier) and other caring staff members.

The world language and ELL supervisor is always looking for ways to meet the needs of the ELL students. She has high energy and is creative. We are able to utilize funds from Title III and Title IV federal grants to support the teachers, families and students with materials, programs and training that can help their students more rapidly acquire English learning capacity, making them available for the curriculum.

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

Oak Street School has a caring and compassionate full time guidance counselor who works with the district guidance department to develop programming to support students' social and emotional needs. We additionally share another counselor across the district as a direct result of higher social and emotional needs since the pandemic. This is quite helpful!

Classroom lessons delivered by our counselor are based on the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) framework which support and reinforce the team's character education program fully. She meets with classes and their teacher to introduce strategies and skills that can be practically applied to social problem solving.

Besides seeing students on demand in times of emotional crisis, and meeting students individually who have that as an accommodation in a 504 or RTI plan, there are also a series of lunch based small groups that are designed to cover eight week sessions including topics such as confidence builders and stress busters. There are groups built around divorcing family needs as well as grief groups when sadly necessary.

Our guidance counselors are a critical part of our team at Oak Street Elementary School.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Each morning Oak Street Students are greeted with a short, videotaped announcement that has been created by student leaders. The Pledge of Allegiance is followed by important notes about the significance of the day. Jokes are told and various classes submit videos of themselves singing “Happy Birthday” so we can “shout out” the students celebrating a birthday. This makes for an engaging community.

Our Motto “ Kindness Matters “ is emphasized in many ways at our school. As students move about the building, they are met with friendly staff smiles and compliments on their respectful deportment. Smiles, eye contact, and friendly greetings are day-to-day interactions among our school community.

Our Character Education program focuses on CASEL competencies. We teach students how to recognize and manage their emotions as we notice that the world around us needs this. Relationships and responsible decision making are the hallmarks of building a good culture. We do this through class lessons, NEST meetings, and whole school assemblies.

As students interface with families through programs such as Family Dining, Mystery Classroom Readers, and Career Day, they continue to see and honor a wide variety of interests, hobbies , skills and careers. We give as much importance to the learning that takes place at lunch, recess, music and art class, as that which takes place in a math or ELA classroom.

Our PTO organization frequently provides additional curriculum programing from local museums, theaters, and speakers. Teachers organize field trips to zoos, farms, and museums which help keep students engaged and motivated. This reinforces the idea that school is a comprehensive place of learning beyond books and computers.

Most classrooms have group reward systems and incentives to inspire desired behaviors. We organize fun activities, mysteries, scavenger hunts, and contests to keep engagement high. We offer after school clubs called mini units that allow teachers to give special time and attention in a passion area: science experiments, games, crafts, or nature. We also have intramural collaborative sports opportunities and a school wide talent show or play each year.

Our School Culture and Climate Committee is continually monitoring the pulse of the students and offering solutions when we notice flagging behaviors. We make special connections with students when we notice someone struggling. There are many, many opportunities for adult modeling and support for student learning and growth.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

One of the first and most crucial contacts between the Oak Street School community and the outside world is our front office administrative assistants. They are both friendly, helpful and competent in getting answers for folks and welcoming visitors into our building. They also coordinate our weekly message to parents as well as manage our substitute coverage. The front office is the heart and soul of our school.

Next, and especially important during the pandemic, is our school nurse. She is incredible. A hurt or sick child needs to trust that we have responded in a timely and professional manner. . Communication is critical. Our nurse is an ultimate professional, responsible for networking with all the medical professionals related to our students. It is a high priority for us to collaborate with families and the health community to keep everyone safe.

Our dedication to the Parent Teacher Organization partnership is one of our most treasured relationships. Beyond fun and school based celebrations, this organization connects us with opportunities to benefit the community. We regularly support the local Somerset County food bank as well as the Purple Apron

program, where food kits are created and given to local families experiencing food scarcity.

Each holiday season, through Homeless Solutions, we adopt struggling families. Our staff and students purchase holiday gifts to help take the burden off of these families, offering some joy during the holiday season. It is a whole school effort to collect money, purchase, wrap and deliver gifts.

The PTO organizes and sponsors Saturdays in the spring for families to help plant and harvest crops that we then donate to our food bank sources. The Basking Ridge Garden Club also helps in this process.

We interact with local universities like St. Elizabeth's to sponsor student teaching programs, visitations and practicum experiences so that young adults entering the teaching field can be supported and encouraged to join our ranks.

Our local library is a source of literary delight, support, and programming. Our students obtain library cards, make visits, share and display projects and creation, as well as participate with their families in events. We have grown a deeper partnership with the staff there over the last few years.

We work closely with the local Bernards Township Police Department to give families the support they might need in times of crisis. Our local hospitals and mental health crisis services like Tri County and Good Grief are also partners when students and families need extra support.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Creating professional culture is actually our strategy for excellence which will be discussed a bit later in this application submission. There are two main strategies that achieve this goal. One can be explained here to help demonstrate how special our staff really is.

All staff are truly valued and supported by our building administration. They are trusted and utilize the open office door policy to be strong advocates for their students. They request everything they need to properly do their jobs.

One thing that became apparent when the educational world shut down for the pandemic was that our very different roles as professionals became isolated within our homes and the communication to collaborate became critical. A grade 3 teacher's responsibilities became onerous. Support services, a specialist class, an admin assistant or custodian roles had to be redefined to fit into the new and emerging online schedule and lack of a physical building structure.

Once back in the building, and with the addition of a new principal in summer of 2020, it was necessary to reformulate a professional team approach. One aspect was a strategy called "Trading Spaces." In this particular Professional development model, staff members spend time shadowing one another in their "space", either a specialist's schedule or a teacher's classroom.

To participate, staff members fill in a survey which measures climate and attitude at that moment (both as a temperature gauge for administration, and to measure if the "Trading Spaces" experience can help improve skills, attitudes and motivation for teaching.) Then teachers identify a focus for the visit. It isn't about critiquing someone's teaching, but rather, experiencing their interaction with students. They often share new strategies, materials, resources, and routines.

The learning is debriefed in "Wisdom Wednesday," informal conversation where the guests and hosts meet up for snacks and socializing. Compliments are shared, questions are asked, and it is noted how different, but equally challenging, all different positions in the school are.

The advantage of this program, which celebrates our professional culture, is that relationships are cross referenced throughout the school so learning doesn't just take place within your specific department or grade level.

Everyone is eager to learn more about a new strategy they saw. They are rejuvenated about learning again. In the education profession right now, joy, excitement, admiration, reinforcement and compliments are necessary components to create a professional culture.

We also offer professional development regularly in the form of a “staff college model” with peers teaching other peers content and skills. The trainers to all of our major curriculum projects coach us along with our fabulous team of internal instructional coaches.

4. School Leadership:

At Oak Street School we include all caring adults in our leadership category because we are all caring role models and will pitch in as a team to support all students. We are backed by a strong district leadership team that supports our various curriculum departments and endeavors.

The principal and assistant principal both share a collaborative and student centered approach to planning and supervising all student experiences. If you tune in to our walkie talkie channel 6 you can reach the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor and nurse for immediate assistance with any student emergency. This includes physical safety, emotional distress and any behavioral situations that need immediate attention.

We are all regularly circulating in and out of classrooms, lunch spaces, library, gymnasiums, and our grounds, making sure we are interacting with all of our team and celebrating the learning and hard work exhibited by students.

Teacher evaluations are opportunities to have conversations about reflection, teaching, learning, tools, resources, curriculum, routines, and social emotional and behavioral needs of students. We value risk taking and honor mistakes as human experiences that involve grace and the opportunity to know better and do better.

When interacting with families about student experiences, we are open, honest , listen to all perspectives, try to get every stakeholder to the table and we take an in depth look at how we can support the student in every way possible.

The principal holds monthly “chats” though zoom to make sure every stakeholder has access to leadership to ask questions, make observations and offer solutions. A surprisingly large amount of school business takes place with genuine casual conversations in the car line and waiting areas during dismissal. The assistant principal can be found there in every kind of weather!

There is administration presence in our Multi Tiered Systems of Support model with RTI (Response to Intervention) being a way to communicate with parents, teachers and specialists in a systematic method to organize layers of help for students with academic, social, emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

The principal comes into classrooms to read books with each homeroom class monthly. These are golden opportunities to engage classes in discussions about a wide variety of their learning topics, character education focus and general world awareness. Our leadership team knows each and every student and family personally and we take great pride and joy in their growth and development into fine young people.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The school culture of Oak Street School is largely determined by the values and priorities of the families that entrust their children to us. The adults in this community value formal education and take it quite seriously. While many families have been living in this area for generations, we do have a group of families that have a more international experience and background.

We find it critical in our choices of instructional materials and in our celebrations and references to always be cognizant of any and all students and what they might be experiencing and celebrating in their homes.

This includes religion, language, and country of origin.

We often have families come in and share books and crafts from their culture. Ramadan is one popular time of the year when students can benefit from understanding that the islamic religion includes fasting during the day as part of their tradition. The students like learning about all of the values represented in this tradition. The winter holiday variations are also a popular time to celebrate differences.

Our social studies curriculum spans time and place and starts to add understanding to various groups of people throughout time who have faced challenges. When we focus on learning about other cultures, we recognize similarities and differences to our own experiences. We are able to read books by diverse authors with diverse perspectives and analyze that literature. We spend a lot of time pulling out themes and making interdisciplinary connections.

The health curriculum helps us to recognize human growth and development which includes developing our gender identities and respecting and understanding a range of identities by the time our students leave elementary school.

Our district plans and policies ensure that all staff and students are protected for every unique characteristic that they possess. Our calendar honors holidays that are prevalent and has provisions for anyone needing an excused absence to celebrate something unique to them.

Our character education program CASEL has a competency based in social awareness. This is a practice of understanding and respecting all of the cultural elements discussed in these curriculum areas, as well as more informally with our friends in less structured parts of the day. Kindness is about recognizing and celebrating differences and similarities, and it matters at Oak Street School!

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

The one practice that has been most instrumental to Oak Street's success is something we call "Reboot."

In the 2021-22 school year the Reboot focus area was grade 4 writing. This was chosen because those particular students had noticeable writing weakness following the pandemic instruction. Their writing samples were revealing troubling trends and we wanted to focus on setting specific goals and subsequent growth from the students.

We began "Writing Reboot" by putting a monthly half day meeting on the school calendar. The invitation went out to the superintendent, assistant superintendents, principal, assistant principal Supervisor of ELA, instructional coaches, instructional support teachers, special education teachers and (three) grade 4 classroom teachers. One grade 3 and one grade 5 teacher rotated each month, joining these valuable meetings. This pre-planned, consistent sustainability was a big part of the success of the program.

When we gathered, we were divided into three "data teams." Each grade 4 teacher was the leader of the teams that focused on their students. The team was made up of one classroom teacher, one administrator/coach, one (or more) fellow teacher(s), one instructional support person, and one special education teacher.

The first task was to mark all the starting data points we could think of on Google forms for the 3-5 most challenged writing students in each group. This small group would be tracked throughout the project. We tracked test scores, writing sample rubric scores, and noted anecdotally, behavioral and emotional challenges, noted which teachers they had through years, what family structure they had, who their friends were, what were their hobbies and motivators and a few other unique characteristics that each team chose. The goal was to have the team members see these students as comprehensively as they could.

Each month we set a goal for what kind of writing artifact we would bring. This conversation was also a helpful way to communicate about the curriculum units and pacing in each classroom. The artifacts were reviewed for progress. We sometimes also brought samples from higher achieving students for comparison goals. We noticed patterns and the team offered ideas for mini lessons and focus points to help the writers during mini lessons and conferences.

Success was noted in student writing, and the teamwork and camaraderie between team members was remarkable. For the 2022-23 school year we are working on Grade 1 Math. It is having a similar transformational impact on our staff and students.