

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Donna S. Tripi

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

Official School Name La Jolla Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1111 Marine Street

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

City La Jolla State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 92037-5131

County San Diego County

Telephone (858) 454-7196 Fax (858) 459-6918

Web site/URL http://sandiegounified.org/ljes E-mail dtripi@sandi.net

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Ms. Cindy Marten E-mail cmarten@sandi.net

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

District Name San Diego Unified School District Tel. (619) 725-5550

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 Dr. Michael McQuary

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

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

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 117 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 25 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 24 High schools
  - 1 K-12 schools
- 167 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	38	42	80
1	35	40	75
2	33	40	73
3	59	34	93
4	62	63	125
5	60	55	115
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	287	274	561

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 9 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 13 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 68 % White
  - 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 6%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	33
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	595
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.055
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

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

Azerbaijany, Turkish, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Danish, Norwegian, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10%  
 Total number students who qualify: 58
8. Students receiving special education services: 11%  
62 Total number of students served

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

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 17
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	24
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals	5
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1     23:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	97%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**  
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

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

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

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

All San Diego students will graduate with the skills, motivation, curiosity and resilience to succeed in their choice of college and career in order to lead and participate in the society of tomorrow.

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

Our district is a Choice School district. Parents fill out a Choice application through our Enrollment Options Office. The Enrollment Options Office randomly sorts the applications after the deadline. Schools who have space for Choice students contact the Enrollment Options Office and they provide the list of students who have applied to the school to be contacted by the school. We have not had the space for Choice students in many years.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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La Jolla Elementary School is a beautiful, well-maintained, K-5 school in the heart of downtown La Jolla, a suburb of the City of San Diego, and part of San Diego Unified School District. We are part of the second largest district in California and eighth largest district in the nation. We enjoy the benefits of being part of a large school district, while also providing a small community school experience for our families. The district provides professional development, resources, and subject experts to assist school sites. While at the school level, we are able to make decisions in partnership with the community to meet the needs of our learners.

La Jolla Elementary School's rich history began in 1896, when twelve excited students climbed the steps to their new school located on the second floor of a livery stable in the village of La Jolla. As the population of La Jolla grew, so did the need to expand the school, change locations several times, and add additional schools to serve the community. We are now the largest of the three public elementary schools in La Jolla, serving 560 resident students.

What stands out most about our school is our commitment to excellence. Our expert teachers, strong Tier I instructional program, support for English learners (ELs), response to intervention strategies, work with Special Education students, and parent involvement have enabled the vast majority of our students to meet or exceed the California state standards each year. Our school community's proudest moments in recent years were receiving the California Distinguished Schools Award, a recognition given to only 5% of California schools, achieved for the first time in 2008 and then again the next time possible in 2012. We hope to achieve the new state Gold Ribbons Schools award this year. These accomplishments are due to the hard work of a school community who cares deeply about meeting the needs of our diverse student population through rigorous academic instruction, and a rich, comprehensive educational program, which includes art, music, technology, Spanish, and PE.

Our community of student learners is diverse. Our English learner population has declined in recent years and is now only at 6%, due to shifts in demographics and our ability to reclassify students who achieve language and grade level proficiency. The majority of our EL students are Spanish speaking, but we currently have EL students who speak 15 different languages. All 11% of our students who receive Special Education services are fully included in general education classrooms with varying degrees of support, and this has resulted in the majority of these students close to or meeting grade level standards each year. In addition, 45% of our students in third through fifth grade qualify for GATE (Gifted and Talented Education). We provide the GATE seminar (highest level of gifted education) program for the students from all three elementary schools in La Jolla. We have self-contained classes at third, fourth, and fifth grades.

Our comprehensive professional development structure allows time for teachers to collaborate to design differentiated curriculum and study instructional approaches that enable our students to meet or exceed the new Common Core State Standards in literacy and mathematics and the California state standards in science and social studies. The majority of our students are high performing and our goal is to provide intellectual struggle, while also ensuring that they have the core foundational skills needed for academic success. We use informal and formal assessments as well as anecdotal records of observations to determine whether students have met the goals we set for them, and then design appropriate interventions or extensions to meet their needs. We have been so successful that on the first SBAC testing in 2015, the majority of our students exceeded the standards in both ELA and mathematics.

In addition to academic goals, we work to create a learning environment worthy of our children. Our physical environments in our classroom are thoughtfully designed so that they function well for our students and the behaviors we seek to promote. We have worked with a psychologist in the field of positive psychology to design a social curriculum that helps students to understand and appreciate their strengths and those of others. This is foundational to our work in collaborative conversations and cooperative group work. In addition, our work with growth mindset, agency, resilience, perseverance, and process praise has resulted

in students becoming motivated, engaged, and responsible learners with the social/emotional skills for future success.

Our parent community partners with us in every aspect of our school. Representatives sit on decision-making groups like our School Site Council, and Site Governance Team. We have a large, active volunteer base. On any given day, our rooms are filled with parents working with small groups of students, individuals, or doing much needed jobs in the classrooms. We have two parent groups, our PTO and Friends of La Jolla Elementary, Inc., which support our academic programs, fund raise, provide enrichment, and organize community events.



## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The Common Core standards with their emphasis on critical thinking skills are very much aligned with how we have been delivering instruction to meet the needs of our high performing students for many years. In fact, our whole group Readers' Workshop is known as our Seminars in Critical Literacy because we work with a curriculum designed to enable students to work together to make deeper meaning of text and to think critically about the information being presented to them. In fiction, students are asked to read rich, complex text and to determine the insights the author is revealing to the reader, or a story's theme. We use story arcs to track the plot and the corresponding concepts. In nonfiction reading, our focus is on finding the main idea and explaining how it is supported through key details. We teach students how to use text features to understand the text more fully and to analyze text structures as they determine the author's purpose. In addition, teachers use our "golden hour" time to teach reading in small needs-based groups. In lower grades, students are taught foundational reading skills in guided reading groups, while at upper grades the focus is on reading comprehension work in longer texts, our student "book clubs". While some students are engaged in reading groups, others are working on word study work, vocabulary, writing, and additional reading comprehension work. Students use computer programs during this time to reinforce skills, fill in gaps in their learning, or for an additional challenge. Students who need additional support in phonics, reading, or writing receive services during golden hour with either a "support teacher" or if they have an IEP, through a Special Education provider. Intervention programs, such as Anita Archer's phonics materials are used. We use the GATE approach of Socratic Seminars in the upper grades to provide an additional challenge for the GATE students, however, all students benefit from these rich, evidence-based discussions. Students write to show their understanding of reading from concept "quick writes" to literary essays in the upper grades. To teach students how to organize their writing and develop their craft, our teachers use the Lucy Calkins' Writing Workshop units in the three genres of writing called out in the Common Core: narrative, information, and opinion/argument. Teachers confer throughout each unit to take each student to their just right next step.

In math our emphasis has been on developing mathematical reasoning skills. We have utilized standards-based curricular materials and supplemented them with additional complex, relevant problems for students to solve. In each lesson, we set up a task, teach students how to make meaning of the problem, determine an entry point and strategy for solving the problem, and to persevere until they have a solution that makes sense. Students are taught to represent their work clearly in models, pictures, and words. They share multiple strategies and are taught to use collaborative conversation to understand the thinking of others and to see how their ideas/strategies are the same and how they differ. Students are strategically partnered, and students who need greater challenge given more complex problems to solve. Support teachers are utilized to push into math classes to support students working below grade level.

In science, we feel that student curiosity is peaked through setting up inquiry questions and exploring them through active experimentation utilizing FOSS (Full Option Science System) kits. We utilize textbooks, trade books, and media resources to provide background information on concepts. Each grade level is engaged in 4-6 week units of study in earth science, physical science, and life science. Students keep science notebooks throughout the unit where they record wonderings, hypotheses, observations, and summaries. Teachers reteach or provide additional enrichment, e.g. additional experimentation, based on the results of assessments and notebook entries.

Our social studies curriculum is comprised of rich, comprehensive units. Teachers provide projects and simulations to make the curriculum come alive for our students. For example, our fourth grade students experience "49ers Day" to understand life in the Gold Rush era. Many field trips are planned to compliment both the science and social studies curriculum.

We are in the second year of offering a Transitional Kindergarten for students who will be five between September 3rd and December 2nd. We have utilized the district's TK reading readiness and math readiness curriculum, provided creative experiences, and taught them school routines.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

We believe in providing a comprehensive educational experience for our students. Our district provides one preparation period per week for elementary teachers and we chose PE because we believe in the importance of promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. Our PE teachers provide a comprehensive PE program, with a focus on physical skills, sportsmanship, health and nutrition. Our curriculum is innovative including such units as gymnastics, and golf. Additionally, we provide a Run Club each morning for grades 1-5. To motivate our students to participate, we use Laptracker software to count miles run and we provide incentives for achieving milestones, e.g. charms on a Run Club chain, Run Club Class of the month trophy.

Health and nutrition are also taught by classroom teachers using an adopted text. Additionally, all classrooms have an assigned garden box that is used to give students a “farm to table” experience. Classrooms eat what they grow. We also worked with the Food Services Department to serve some of our produce on the cafeteria salad bar for all students to enjoy.

We believe that the arts provide a unique opportunity for students to express their creativity and explore ideas, subject matter, and culture in different ways. Research tells us that achievement in the arts supports students’ acquisition of essential skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, effective planning, time management, and effective communication. We also find that our students who are not as successful in academics sometimes find the arts their area to shine.

Teachers integrate arts standards across the curriculum, e.g. drama and music are often used to reinforce student understanding of a unit. For example, each year our fourth grade students perform a musical play about California’s history. However, we also feel that the arts are enhanced by having experts teach them. For this reason, some of the funds we raise are devoted to hiring teachers in enrichment areas. We have created a weekly two hour “enrichment block”. Students participate in one hour of art and one hour of technology one week, and one hour of Spanish and one hour of choral music the next week. In this way, all students in grades TK-5 cycle through the four enrichment classes every two weeks. While students are in enrichment classes, teachers have valuable time to collaborate.

We base our curriculum and instruction in music and art on the state standards. Our music teacher provides instruction on the VAPA strands and additionally teaches the recorder to students in third grade, and ukuleles to students in upper grades to enhance their work with reading music, rhythm, and tempo. She also provides an opportunity for students in grades 3-5 to participate in the choir several mornings before school. We have over sixty students in our choir. Our district also provides an instrumental music teacher who comes to our school two mornings each week to work with fourth and fifth grade students on an instrument of their choice (band and string instruments). Both teachers provide opportunities in the year for performance.

Our art teacher provides opportunities for students to learn different techniques, work with different media, and teaches them how to view their work and the work of the masters critically. We turn our auditorium into an art gallery each year and showcase a piece of art from each student at our school. Our student art is also displayed in other venues around San Diego, e.g. district showcase, library.

Our district began the i21 classroom technology initiative seven years ago. It provides for an interactive whiteboard, document camera, and amplification system in each classroom as well as desktop computers in grades K -2, and a one-to-one ratio of students to computers in grades 3-5. We base our curriculum and instruction on the technology expectations outlined in the Common Core Standards. We have aligned the work of the technology teacher with the work of the classroom teacher to ensure that skills and programs that are needed to support the work of the classroom are taught. We also provide several lessons through the year on digital citizenship.

We began including Spanish in our enrichment block this year because we feel it is important for students to learn language early. We also know that learning a second language reinforces their understanding of the linguistic tenets of their first language. Our teacher is providing beginning language skills to all classes TK – 5.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Our teachers use a variety of research-based instructional approaches to meet the needs of their diverse learners.

Across curricular areas each day, teachers use collaborative conversations to deepen students' understanding of content. Teachers ask students open-ended questions requiring intellectual struggle and have students engage in partner talk to rehearse their thinking before the whole group. This supports language learners, quieter voices, and students who struggle with content. Teachers strategically choose students to begin the conversation and have taught them how to build the conversation over multiple exchanges to deepen their understanding. Additionally, students ask for clarification, and agree/disagree with each other's comments by providing additional evidence. In all cases, students have been taught to ensure that no one dominates a discussion, and that all students are invited into the conversation. Co-created charts remind students of the norms of conversation and provide sentence frames for language support. This approach ensures high levels of student achievement by deepening the understanding of all of the students.

We use problem-based learning in mathematics. We provide students with complex, engaging, real world tasks for them to solve. Teachers allow "private think time" for students to think about how to solve the problem which holds all students accountable for the work and allows students time to process. They then collaborate with partners to solve the problem and represent their thinking with visual representations. Teachers have students share their thinking in the whole group to build their understanding of the "how and why the mathematics works". This approach has provided the appropriate challenge for high performing students and has enabled students who need additional reinforcement the ability to hear the work explained by their teacher, and by their classmates.

An approach that has been helpful to all students in writing has been thinking maps. Students are taught how to brainstorm ideas on circle maps or bubble maps, and how to organize those ideas in a meaningful way through flow maps. Tree maps are used to organize categories for nonfiction writing. This has helped all students to write well-formulated paragraphs and then multi-paragraph essays, and has supported students with Writing Workshop pieces.

We integrate technology into all subjects throughout the day. We have programs that are used for intervention support as well as programs that provide challenges for students who work beyond grade level. An example of a program that does both is Spatial Temporal Math (ST Math). It supports students in visualizing the math, can be done at grade levels below a student's grade to fill in gaps, and provides very challenging activities when students complete the grade level program.

### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

We have a comprehensive process of evaluating our students' needs that begins even before the school year starts and is used to strategically plan instruction and support. As teachers prepare for their new students, they learn about their academic needs through analyzing the information passed down to them by the previous year's teacher (writing sample, cumulative math test, essential words spelling list, Development Reading Assessment results), report cards, English language testing for EL students, and standardized testing results. They also give their own beginning of the year assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. Kindergarten students are evaluated over the summer by the principal or reading teacher on concepts of print, phonics/phonemic awareness, and number sense.

Throughout the year, in every subject area, teachers use formal and informal assessment data to improve instruction, to provide reteaching and interventions when students have not understood the concepts taught, and to provide additional challenges for students working above grade level.

In literacy, teachers use the DRA to determine their students' reading levels. The students are grouped by needs and ability for small group reading instruction and students are taught the skills needed to move up to the next level. To assess reading comprehension, students are asked to do responses to literature, quick writes, and notes for their "book clubs". In writing, teachers ask students to write to a prompt at the

beginning and end of a unit to determine their growth in taking on the writing strategies taught. Writing rubrics are used and they confer with all students on next steps to improve their writing. In addition, students in grades 1-5 take the district's formal literacy assessments twice in the year.

In mathematics, teachers give daily "exit slips" to see if students can independently apply what they've learned in the lesson to a similar problem. Based on these assessments, teachers determine whether to reteach the concept to an individual, small group, or to the whole class. End of unit tests, district assessments, and problem solving journal work are all used to assess student understanding and inform instruction.

In science, teachers use written responses in science notebooks, and tests to determine student understanding of the concepts taught. When students do not understand concepts, small group work or additional experiments are provided. Social studies is assessed through quick writes, projects, and unit tests.

Our district does universal testing for all second graders for GATE identification. They are retested at fifth grade if they qualify. Results of the testing are used for placement in the seminar class and to give teachers more information about how their students learn.

Parents are informed of student achievement through the results of assessments, rubrics outlining expectations, two required parent conferences, and progress reporting each trimester.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

We have worked on setting a school climate that engages and motivates students, supports their academic, social and emotional growth, and helps them to become independent thinkers who view intellectual struggle as part of their learning and who persevere through challenges.

In recent years, we have focused on the tenets of Positive Psychology to create positive, effective social environments. At the beginning of the school year, we begin by talking about how to recognize and foster our students' "signature" character strengths, e.g. those strengths that are already well developed in our students, and how to cultivate those lesser strengths that may be needed for school success. The next part of the work was emphasizing a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset (students understand that intelligence is not fixed, it can grow through hard work and intellectual struggle); effective praise (praising process over product); and the development of grit (a passion for a single mission with dedication to achieving that mission). We have time set aside each week for explicit teaching of these concepts and then incorporate this language into everything we do. Teachers have charts and bulletin boards as visual reminders of this work. In all grades there are activities and writing work that accompanies this work. Students also set individual goals for themselves and they are motivated to achieve their goals. We recognize the achievements of students in our recognition assemblies.

The work that we have done in the classrooms to help our students acquire these strengths is yielding significant and observable results. Teachers report that students expect challenges in the work they're doing and are more likely to work through them by themselves or with other students than ever before. They know that their hard work is paying off and are proud of the results of their efforts. They are growing their social intelligence by learning to work collaboratively with their classmates.

We also use the Second Steps program to develop the social skills of empathy, conflict resolution, and anger management. After the weekly lesson, teachers use class meetings to help students apply the concepts to real situations happening in class and on the playground.

Our district counselor also supports individuals, and small groups of students who need help with socialization, grief, or divorce. He is an essential member of our support team for students.

We have a very positive school climate for teachers. Teachers are valued by the principal, the parents, and the students. Our teachers respect, value, and enjoy working with each other in professional learning communities, value each others contributions to the work, and know that their work is becoming stronger as a result.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

We host Back to School Nights in the first weeks of school to begin our partnership with parents as early in the year as possible. We share our high academic standards, curriculum, and instruction specific to their child's grade. As a follow up, the principal highlights this information through the year in our school newsletter and weekly eblasts to parents.

Teachers supply much information through the year to help parents support their children's academic and social/emotional growth. Teacher web pages, homework packets, rubrics for projects, and math reference books are just some examples of supports provided. Parent conferences are held twice each year to update parents on their children's progress, but occur more often if needed.

Each year we host a Family Literacy week and a Family Math week. Parents are invited to come to their child's classroom to experience instruction and learn what they can do at home to support their child's learning. Additionally, teachers invite parents to a variety of presentations and showcases through the year to engage them in their children's work.

We also run parent workshops on topics that will help their students achieve success in school and in life, e.g. developing grit.

Readers are Leaders is a program that brings community members to our campus each year to share the importance of reading in their lives and careers. We have business leaders, attorneys, scientists, doctors, veterinarians, and politicians sharing their time and a good book with our students. This program has been very motivating for our students.

Our very active PTO (Parent Teacher Association) works in partnership with us to provide special programs to support our educational program, e.g. they fund our cultural arts and science assemblies. The PTO runs a family event each month to bring families back to the campus to enjoy a program and build community, e.g. Family Science Night, Family Dance. Parents volunteer in our classrooms daily, working with student groups, and doing much needed jobs in the classroom.

Our partnership with our fund raising foundation, Friends of La Jolla Elementary School, Inc. has been an incredible support to our work. Our foundation runs three campaigns each year: the Annual Giving Campaign, a dinner dance/auction, and a Farmers' Market each week on school grounds. The foundation provides funding for resources, equipment, staff and professional development integral to our academic programs.

Our La Jolla Cluster Association, is a group of parents, teachers, and administrators from the three elementary schools, middle school, and high school in the cluster. We discuss topics pertinent to the cluster as a whole, e.g. providing more STEAM opportunities, as well as vertical articulation.

### 3. Professional Development:

We believe that we have achieved so much success with our students due to the implementation of researched based curriculum and best practices studied through a comprehensive structure of professional development whereby teachers work alongside their principal to determine the needs of their students based on data, to analyze the standards, to read the research, to view models of strong instruction, and to apply their new learning to their own settings.

In the 2008-2009 school year, we formed our first ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) comprised of one teacher leader from each grade level and the principal. The ILT determines the school wide focus of our professional development for the year based on formal and informal student data as well as the needs of our teachers. We then plan our professional development utilizing one Wednesday minimum day per month for whole school workshops, weekly grade level collaboration time, lesson studies, and "cluster pd". The ILT members also facilitate the work of their grade levels during the collaboration time, known as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

This structure is comprehensive and systemic. We use whole school workshops to launch and provide ongoing support for our focus. Our PLC time allows our teachers time to deepen their understanding of the standards at their grade level, to ensure that our curriculum and instruction is aligned to the standards, to apply the work of the focus area to their grade level, e.g. collaborative conversations, to plan instruction at the lesson level that provides the appropriate access and challenges for all of our learners, and to determine the ongoing formative and summative assessments used to inform our practice. Lesson studies are done one time per trimester and provide an opportunity to teach one of the lessons we've planned collaboratively, to determine whether students achieved the desired outcomes, to make adjustments, and then to teach the revised lesson.

The principal does focused walkthroughs to provide feedback to individual teachers, to write about the successes and challenges of implementing the practice in the weekly bulletin, and to use in planning future professional development.

We use one minimum day per trimester to work with the other two elementary schools in our La Jolla cluster. Because our populations and the work we do to meet student needs is so similar, our professional development is enhanced by giving teachers time to share successes and work through challenges in the larger group in order to improve instructional practice and thereby impact student achievement.

#### 4. School Leadership:

The principal of La Jolla Elementary School sees her role as that of an instructional leader. As the sole administrator of the site, she has put systems and structures in place that allow her to spend the majority of her time working with teachers and parents to ensure that all of our learners have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum, have instruction differentiated to meet their needs, and that they are able to meet or exceed the standards. This has resulted in a high percentage of students exceeding the standards each year.

The principal stays informed of new curriculum and best practices through the professional development the district provides for principals, professional reading, our work with consultants, and her attendance at district workshops with her teacher teams. She uses this knowledge base to create a vision of exemplary instruction. She reviews student data and does focused observations in the classrooms to match this vision to her current reality. She brings this information to her school leadership team to determine a professional development plan on areas of need.

The principal knows all of her students by name and does classroom walkthroughs daily. She knows the strengths of her teachers and the next steps to improve their instructional practice. She also learns the strengths and needs of the children in each classroom.

The principal monitors the progress of struggling learners in reading, writing, and mathematics through monitoring forms and teacher meetings several times in the year. Monitoring meetings occur during the teachers' collaboration time and are structured so that teachers share their student concerns and the collective grade level teacher group and the principal make suggestions and design interventions for the students. This has been an effective part of our RTI model.

The principal works with the School Site Council and Site Governance Team, comprised of grade level teachers representatives and parents, to review data, set goals for the year, and allocate budget expenditures to support professional learning and resources for student interventions.

The principal works with two very active parent groups. Our PTO provides events monthly to build community and provide enriching experiences for our students, e.g. Family Science Night. Because we are a high performing school with minimal district and federal funding, we have a foundation that raises much needed funding to support our school. The principal works with the foundation on fund raising events and on how the funding should be allocated to support the vision of our school.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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In the 2008-2009 school year, we added the practice of “Professional Learning Communities” to our comprehensive plan of professional learning and have found it to be the practice with the greatest impact on our school’s success.

The principal formed a leadership team comprised of master teachers from each grade level. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) was trained in the tenets of professional learning communities and, with the principal, structured our grade level professional learning communities. We looked at our schedule of student instructional time each week and determined that we could combine the time that our students attended enrichment classes (art, music, technology, Spanish) and have two-hours each week for teachers to work in PLCs, facilitated by the ILT member.

Our professional learning communities have worked to improve student achievement and build the capacity of our teachers in the following ways:

Collaborative time is used for aligning our instruction, assessments, and progress reporting with the new Common Core standards in literacy and math and the California State Standards in science and social studies.

Teachers create informal assessment tools to use to monitor progress frequently, e.g. “exit slips” given at the end of a lesson or series of lessons, quick writes. They analyze whether students are able to take on the work independently. If they cannot, teachers are able to plan additional whole-group, small-group, or individual lessons to help students master the concepts.

Lesson study has become an important tool for improving instruction in our classrooms. We identify a problem of practice, determine desired outcomes, teach the lesson, assess student understanding, and make any needed adjustments. We then teach the “improved” lesson and debrief that lesson.

Collaborative time has been used to work with consultants and district resource teachers on grade level specific professional development.

The principal and teachers monitor student progress as an important part of our Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Teachers discuss profiles of students with academic or social/emotional needs, discuss intervention strategies, and then follow up on the results of the intervention weeks later.

At the end of our first year working of working in PLCs, we experienced an overall gain of 56 points on the California Academic Performance Index. We know it was due to the increase in informal assessments, becoming more prescriptive about reteaching and interventions, and the increased time for professional development. Teachers feel valued by their team members and know their work is resulting in student gains. These gains increased each year during the former testing and accountability system and were maintained in the first year of SBAC testing.