

U.S. Department of Education
2016 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 Mrs. Linda Creighton

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

Official School Name Laurel Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 95 Edge Road

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

City Atherton State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94027-2254

County San Mateo County

Telephone (650) 324-0186 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://laurel.mpcsd.org E-mail lcreighton@mpcsd.org

Twitter Handle
https://twitter.com/LaurelMPCSD 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*Dr. Maurice Ghysels E-mail mghysels@mpcsd.org

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

District Name Menlo Park City School District Tel. (650) 321-7140

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Jeff Child

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. 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

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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	58	52	110
1	55	59	114
2	68	59	127
3	54	60	114
4	37	39	76
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	272	269	541

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 10 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 17 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 55 % White
 - 14 % 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	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	26
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	465
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.056
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %
54 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Farsi, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, Rumanian, Other

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %
Total number students who qualify: 55
8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
53 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.

- 3 Autism
- 1 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 2 Emotional Disturbance
- 2 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 1 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 10 Other Health Impaired
- 9 Specific Learning Disability
- 26 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: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	99%	97%	97%	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.

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

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

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

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

The best place to spend your childhood! We are confident students, passionate teachers, and an involved community.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Laurel School is a K-4 elementary school, soon to be K-5, in the heart of Silicon Valley in Northern California. We have confident students, passionate teachers, and an involved community, and our leafy campus of 540 students feels cozy and intimate. Although we pride ourselves on high achievement scores and successes in closing the achievement gap, our vision is of much more than academic rigor: Laurel School should be the best place to spend your childhood. Our work is guided by eight principles:

Joyful Learning: student work is meaningful and engaging

Child-Centered Environments: we do what is best for kids, always

Social Emotional Wellness: a supportive environment that values each child

Balance: thoughtful implementation of a variety of tools and approaches

Collaboration: working together is more effective than in isolation

Community: everyone is connected and committed to the school

Global-Mindedness: we appreciate how people, communities, and geography around the world are similar and different

Reflection: we seek continuous improvement, and use our guiding principles to inform major decisions

Last year, Laurel students' achievement on California's CCSS-aligned Smarter Balanced standardized tests were twice as high as the state averages. In ELA and math respectively, 78% and 80% of Laurel third graders met or exceeded grade level standards, compared with 38% and 40% statewide. Among Laurel's Hispanic students, results were 60% (ELA) and 64% (math), compared with 26% and 28% statewide. Although we were commended by the state for these results, we continue to work and innovate towards no achievement gap at all.

Test scores do not provide the full measure of a school. Every Laurel student receives specialist instruction in music, art, library, science, PE, world language and technology. Our full-time school counselor leads Laurel's Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program, and explicit life skills education is also infused through our curriculum at each grade.

Parents play a crucial role in Laurel's successes. More than 85% of families invest time and/or money in the school, with parents devoting more than 100,000 volunteer hours annually. The PTO raises about \$150,000 every year to provide assemblies, field trips, arts education, and more. The Menlo Park City School District as a whole is community funded; the district-wide Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation (MPAEF) contributes 8% of the district's annual budget to fund a science aide, technology, art, music and library services, as well as innovation grants to teachers with unique ideas for curriculum development and implementation.

Our community's impressive fundraising efforts allow Laurel's per-pupil spending to be carefully used to benefit all members of our diverse student population. Ten percent of our students are English Learners (EL), speaking a total of 17 different languages at home. A dedicated EL teacher and two paraprofessionals deliver either small-group intervention for students in need of intensive oral language practice, or in-class support for students who are approaching English language fluency. With these supports in place, 42% and 65% of our English Learners performed at/exceeded state grade level standards in ELA and mathematics respectively, double and almost triple the state rates of 17% and 22%.

Ten percent of Laurel students are from low socioeconomic households. They are supported in multiple ways by our community (see Part V, section 2). Fifty-three special education students benefit from our full inclusion model, which provides a variety of supports, depending on need: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy from a school psychologist, specialized academic supports from resource teachers, paraeducators and on-site occupational and speech therapists.

Approximately one sixth of our students are in our Spanish Immersion program, which provides 100% of instruction in Spanish in kindergarten, transitioning to 50% by fourth grade. This program has been so successful over its seven-year life that we added a second strand this year to meet demand. We also

launched a Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program that provides all non-immersion kindergarten and first grade students with 60 minutes of Spanish instruction per week. If this program is judged successful, we will expand it to cover all grades.

As a school, we are committed to constant improvement. “I feel so lucky that my kids are at a school that has such a rich core curriculum, mixed with programs like art and music,” says one parent. “It amazes me that the school makes continuous efforts to improve programs, even when there seems to be little room for improvement. I like the message that sends to our kids: you can always look to improve.”

We believe that a National Blue Ribbon School is one that excels, but refuses to rest on its laurels. It is closing the achievement gap, but recognizes there is still much work to be done. Its staff finds meaning and joy in doing that work, and its students arrive each day confident and excited to learn. It is a school where the community is highly involved and invested in the vision and mission of the school. We believe that Laurel School is a National Blue Ribbon School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Laurel School plays a leadership role in our district’s adoption of guaranteed, viable core curriculum. Fully one quarter of our staff are considered curricular leaders in our district, and participate in the district’s immersive curriculum selection process. Our curriculum is selected to reach and teach every student - our English Language Learners, special education students, students of color and students that are beyond grade level.

Mathematics

Our math curriculum places equal emphasis on students learning foundational math skills, and on the mathematical practice standards (reasoning and explaining; modeling and using tools; seeing structure and generalizing). Students learn across mathematical strands including Numbers and Operations in Base 10, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Fractions, Measurement and Data and Geometry. The adopted curriculum emphasizes real-world mathematical word problems; asks students to explain their thinking; and provides teachers with explicit guidance on teaching math concepts to EL students.

Laurel teachers use formative assessment and grade level PLCs (see Part VI) to incorporate supplementary elements into the curriculum. Our goal is to stretch and engage students by making real world connections to learning. For example, third graders designed city plaza proposals using their understanding of area, perimeter and scale. At the conclusion of the unit, they presented their scale model designs and proposals to architects, landscape designers and city planners. We use our adopted curriculum as a foundation, but expand beyond those confines to create joyful, meaningful mathematical learning.

English Language Arts

MPCSD is currently in the process of new ELA curriculum adoption, and Laurel’s curriculum experts are enthusiastically piloting and evaluating various CCSS-aligned ELA curricula to complement the reading and writing workshops already in place in our district.

In 2009, Laurel School made an independent decision to introduce writing workshop into the district’s existing ELA curriculum, because it filled an identified gap in our students’ writing abilities. This was so successful that it was adopted district-wide in 2013. By 2014, over 70% of all Laurel students were writing at or above grade level as measured by the Common Core-aligned TCRWP writing rubric. On the 2015 state assessment, only 10% of our students demonstrated ‘below standard’ writing.

The intentions and goals of writing workshop mirror those of the CCSS. The workshop model develops writers who can: produce persuasive, informative and narrative texts; produce clear, organized, and well-elaborated writing that has been revised and edited; conduct research projects; and write routinely over extended time frames, as well as on demand. “The kind of writing my son produces in third grade is something that my third-grade teacher could never have dared dream of,” says one parent. “My kid uses college-level vocabulary to refer to her own writing,” says another. “Who would have thought she would know what a literary essay was, let alone write one?!”

Laurel teachers are now introducing the complementary reading workshop curriculum, which follows the same model of direct instruction, independent work, and teacher conferencing with individuals and small groups. Reading workshop helps students make strides in the critical thinking and comprehension skills that are at the heart of the CCSS.

Social Studies

Social studies is taught through engaging, hands-on learning units. At Laurel, these units of study complement the district-adopted textbooks. The passion of our teachers shines through as they help history come alive for our youngest learners. We engage in a constructivist approach to build on what students already know about Learning and Working, Now and Long Ago (Kindergarten standard); A Child’s Place in Time and Space (1st); People Who Make a Difference (2nd); Continuity and Change (3rd); and California:

A Changing State (4th).

The Laurel community engages wholeheartedly in project-based learning for our social studies curriculum. In one grade, students produce a musical performance about the important professionals in our community; in another, students interview immigrants to empathize and understand their crucial role in our state's history.

Throughout our social studies units, Laurel teachers emphasize the importance of making connections within community, and the value of civic behavior: values that will serve our students well throughout their schooling and professional lives.

Science

Research shows that by the time kids reach fourth grade, one third of them have lost interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Laurel School is determined not to let our students suffer this fate. We use the state-adopted FOSS science curriculum across three science content categories: Earth Science, Physical Science, and Life Science. We fund a FOSS kit for each teacher that includes all the materials necessary to teach an exciting, hands-on weekly science lesson. The critical common core skills of observing, comparing, organizing, inferring, relating and applying are practiced, and scientific concepts, terms, skills, and methods are taught in every grade. Lessons align vertically, so that students build their knowledge of scientific concepts over time.

In addition to the state curriculum, Laurel is able to enrich our students' exposure to STEAM through multiple connections and opportunities in our local community, in the heart of Silicon Valley. In addition to field trips, Laurel has an annual STEAM Fair, in which more than 150 parent volunteers run hands-on, standards-aligned workshops that require a lower adult:student ratio than is possible in the classroom. Students can choose from dissecting owl pellets; exploring the properties of liquid nitrogen; using software to create 3D printables; and more than 40 other opportunities. At Laurel School, students love science!

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

One of Laurel's Guiding Principles is to create a child-centered environment that is rich with hands-on learning opportunities. We know that children love to sing, paint, run, jump, play games, hear stories, and explore technology. To nurture our students' love of learning in all areas, Laurel students are provided with explicit instruction in art, music, physical education, technology, library studies, and world language/cultural awareness.

Music

All K-3 students receive weekly instruction from our Orff-trained music specialist, and second and third graders have music twice a week. (Kindergarten and 1st grade receive additional music time from a PTO-funded music teacher.) The Orff curriculum integrates music, dance and speech into lessons that mirror a child's world of play. Every year, grade levels perform heavily-attended parent concerts that surpass expectations for such young children. Our fourth grade students have a music elective for sixty minutes per week and select between band, orchestra or Orff class.

Art

All students visit the art specialist weekly in our dedicated art room. Our art education program fosters bravery, a growth-mindset, perseverance, and problem-solving skills in a creative and supportive environment. Our child-centered, often choice-based art curriculum introduces students to an array of art media and techniques, as well as art history that they can engage with in a meaningful way. We place an emphasis on exploring the contributions of diverse artists, which opens children's eyes to their places as citizens of the world.

Laurel's art specialist creates units of inquiry-based learning, where children learn risk-taking in art making as they explore, experiment and problem-solve their way through each project's inception, creation, critique and exhibition. Active connections are purposefully made to other academic disciplines.

In addition to our art specialist, Laurel students take part in the national Art in Action program. Funded by the PTO and led by parent volunteers, AIA is grounded in the belief that jobs of the future will demand creativity and visual literacy. Twelve annual lessons reinforce students' foundation in drawing, painting and sculpture, as well as their critical-thinking skills, creativity, self esteem and appreciation of other cultures.

World Language

Cultural awareness is a core value in our community and our school. The Spanish Immersion program has been at our school since 2009, and has always included celebrations of the diversity of Hispanic culture. This year, when we introduced our Spanish FLES curriculum to kindergarten and first grade, the Spanish specialist also introduced cultural days. Students from every grade level and class are invited to monthly celebrations of different Hispanic countries and cultures.

Physical Education

Laurel's PE program emphasizes the importance of all children being physically competent and confident, and of finding joy in developing healthy bodies and mindsets. All classroom teachers lead PE lessons; students also visit the specialist weekly. Our SPARK PE curriculum embraces the growing shift away from traditional PE, encouraging physical activity while incorporating social skills, health-related fitness, team and leadership skills, and appropriate motor skill development.

Library Studies

Laurel students visit the library once a week. Our library has grown from a place for children to check out a picture book, to a true school resource. When in the library, students are learning how to find books at their interest or independent reading level when reading for pleasure, as well as how to find books to acquire new information. Library lessons support curriculum being taught in the classroom, from learning about the continents with first graders to a focus on famous people in history for third graders. The librarian consults with teachers to order and provide books and materials to support the Common Core standards. During recess, the librarian opens the doors and the place is abuzz with readers delighting over books and students meeting to work on projects.

Technology

Our technology program is constantly growing and adapting, along with technology itself. In 2015-16, we added the position of an educational technology innovation coach (ETIC) for the school, to support teachers as they strive to use technology not only to substitute current practices, but to truly redefine our teaching and learning (see part V, section 3). Because we are located in Silicon Valley, most of our students come to us with existing technology experience. While we continue to work to ensure that our low socioeconomic students develop the same 21st century skills, we are also working to ensure all students practice good digital citizenship, and that every student is making the most of available technology to expand and enrich their learning.

The well-rounded, hands-on education that Laurel provides students is setting them up to be passionate, engaged citizens of the world.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Laurel School's leadership, resource specialists and coaches collaborate to ensure that teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies and interventions to propel the learning of all students. An essential part of our evaluation cycle requires all teachers to design observation lessons specifically with the learning needs of target students in mind. This element within our teacher evaluation process provides an opportunity for administrators to underscore the importance of meeting all student learning needs, through instructional methods and strategies, and/or use of intervention.

Within Tier 1 instruction, teachers leverage formative assessment data and collaborative PLC work to inform instruction, and to differentiate the learning experience for our students. The PLC process of analyzing student work, creating strategy groups and designing small group instruction serves to differentiate the learning experience for students below grade level, as well as to stretch those who are high achievers. Teachers are trained to incorporate goal setting with students in one-on-one conferring sessions,

because we know that teacher use of specific and timely feedback is one of the most effective ways to personalize learning and ensure that all students make progress. Teachers, students, administrators and parents recognize this model of instruction as one of the most effective and systematic ways to provide ongoing differentiation for all levels of learners.

In addition to small group instruction within the classroom, we also provide grade level interventions in mathematics and reading. Grade level PLCs review assessment information for all students to identify students who would benefit from Tier 2 interventions. All grade levels use math benchmark information to identify students for grade level Tier 2 math interventions. Credentialed teachers provide small group Tier 2 math intervention several times a week in order to boost student's mathematical foundational skills and conceptual understanding. (In third grade, we also have a math cluster class to address student need.)

Laurel has two reading specialists providing Tier 2 interventions. Based on DRA scores, reading specialists identify students who are not meeting benchmarks in Tier 1 reading instruction. One of our reading specialists focuses on K-1 reading intervention and Reading Recovery, and the other tailors teaching to boost skills of 2nd-4th grade students.

For students who are above grade level, teachers use curriculum-embedded extensions, membership resources from the Silicon Valley Math Initiative, instructional aides and parent volunteers to challenge and stretch advanced mathematicians. The reading and writing workshop models allow for excellent in-class differentiation for advanced students.

Each Thursday we hold our Student Success Team (SST) meetings, which include parents, in order to communicate and align our approach for individual student progress. Within our SST meetings, we capitalize on the broad range of expertise of our caring intervention team members, monitor student progress and create instructional plans to meet the needs of our students.

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

Laurel School's curriculum intentionally lends itself to formative assessments across all core subjects to inform teaching and learning throughout the year.

In writing workshop, student work is regularly scored (by both students and teachers) on a rubric that allows for targeted small group and individual intervention. For example, students who produce well-organized writing, but who consistently fail to include a compelling conclusion, can be pulled into small group instruction during independent writing time.

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is used at a district-wide level to assess and guide reading instruction and intervention from reading specialists and identify students for summer school. Every teacher 'speaks the same language' of writing and reading assessment, allowing for easy articulation between and across grades.

Much of Laurel's formative math assessment is done within our grade level Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups. Common assessments are decided upon and assessment scoring is calibrated to improve validity in comparing classroom data. Over the years, teams have framed their PLCs around Laurel's common, formative assessments. Our focus has always been on localized and curriculum-embedded assessments, because they enable us to monitor progress and adjust instructional plans throughout the year. Keeping the data current allows teachers to flexibly group students, use new materials, pull in instructional aides, bring in intervention specialists, and find technologies to meet evolving student needs.

Because Laurel's K-3 report card is standards-based, parents are provided reports about their child's progress across over 30 standards in ELA and math. The report card language, which was updated in the 2014-15 school year, is clear and focused on grade level learning targets, such as "I can use place value to add and subtract within 1,000." Students are scored on a rubric to communicate if they are above, at, or below standard achievement. Grade level teams of teachers created common rubrics for nearly all grade

level standards on the report card, so that each child's performance will be scored the same, regardless of classroom assignment.

Communication of assessment results occurs with our staff, our School Site Council (SSC) and our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The principal and teacher reps share assessment information such as state testing data, site survey results, and local assessment results. Parent Teacher conferences are held before report cards are distributed so parents and teachers can partner to improve outcomes for all students. At Laurel's winter community meeting for parents in low-socioeconomic households, many of whom are Hispanic and EL, the report card is explained and the principal and counselor answer all questions and comments from parents.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

In 2016-17, Laurel School will expand to a two-campus, K-5 school. As a community, we seized this opportunity to determine our united school's vision, mission, and opportunities for change. A visioning committee, comprised of teachers, parents and administrators, has spent countless hours holding empathy sessions with our broader community, visiting distinguished schools in California, and prototyping educational models that we believe can fit our school vision of Laurel as "the best place to spend your childhood."

The guiding principles that emerged from our visioning and empathy work make our culture clear. We are a school that values joyful, meaningful learning, where the child is central; we believe in educating confident, global-minded citizens; we give teachers time and space to collaborate deeply for the good of all students; and we have a parent community that is deeply involved and invested in our students' education. However, nothing rang stronger with our stakeholder communities than the fundamental importance of students' social competencies and overall wellness.

As part of our Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program, representative teachers have been trained in restorative practices. We want to grow and support our community with the knowledge of how to maintain effective relationships and teach tools and strategies to restore these relationships when needed.

Ten life skills are incorporated into the Laurel school day: respect, responsibility, friendship, generosity, self-discipline, compassion, perseverance, acceptance, cooperation, and honesty. Each month, a life skill is spotlighted. Teachers read books to their classes representing the life skill for the month and students participate in classroom and home activities, reinforcing the life skill.

To ensure a strong home-school connection, students bring home a Life Skills Gram each month for parents to recognize their child's use of the life skill of the month. They are returned to classroom teachers, where they are prominently displayed and shared. Each month, students who did an outstanding job exemplifying the life skill are awarded wristbands, which they wear with pride. (Every student earns at least one by the end of the school year.)

Other positive reinforcement comes through our Life Skills raffle tickets, given to students displaying their life skills on campus. Rewards include lunch with the principal, extra P.E. time, and more. On Fridays, third graders announce the week's winners. Cheers echo around campus in celebration!

Our comprehensive social-emotional program provides our entire community with a common language to discuss character education. Students are often heard using this language at recesses when they are working to solve a problem between peers.

In the first year of full PBIS program implementation the number of incident reports (a form that is completed when students break a school rule) each trimester fell from an average of 60 to only 34 incident in trimester 3. Before the program was implemented, few students and teachers could recite the school rules. Now, everyone one campus knows: "Be safe, be respectful, and be responsible!"

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Laurel School's vision explicitly celebrates and values our involved community. Like all educators, we understand the educational and emotional value of having families involved at school.

According to the most recent National Center for Education Statistics' Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey, only 78% of parents nationally attend parent-teacher conferences. Just 65% participate in school fundraising, and 46% volunteer. In comparison, Laurel School is fortunate to have created a

culture where over 90% of parents attend parent-teacher conferences, 85% contribute financially to our PTO, and our community volunteers more than 100,000 hours annually.

The physical layout of Laurel intentionally promotes parents walking onto campus to meet their children. Families are encouraged to stay and play after school, and we regularly invite parents for classroom celebrations of student work. Our caring community ensures that families without cars are given rides to attend celebrations, and our PTO works to ensure that every fundraiser is simultaneously a community-building event. (For example, our bake sale includes tables and chairs set up for coffee and treats.) One parent said in our survey, “Laurel PTO has a very positive tone, never pressuring parental involvement and welcoming all. I am grateful for the time these ladies and men devote.”

Perhaps the most impactful engagement of our families is through Laurel’s Caring and Sharing (C&S) Program, led by our school counselor. The C&S Program is available to the 10% of Laurel families who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. The program uses PTO funds to pay for after school enrichment programs, Laurel t-shirts, gift certificates to the book fair, yearbooks, grocery gift cards for the holidays, and more. The counselor communicates constantly with families to ensure that she orders lunches the children enjoy, that students are getting the school supports they need, and that families are connected with other community resources.

Three times each year, C&S families gather for well-attended education and informational meetings (dinner and babysitting provided). They tell us they come because they know that their requests will be heard and responded to. (Families who cannot attend are personally contacted by the counselor to ensure they receive the information.) For example, after discussions about homework, the counselor helped launch an on-site Homework Center three days a week after school.

“Looking at my child's face after receiving the wonderful gifts and opportunities that the Caring & Sharing Program has to offer at Laurel School is the best feeling a parent could ask for! Thank you for all your generosity, especially to [our counselor] for making sure my child receives every opportunity available to help her learn at Laurel School.”

3. Professional Development:

Laurel School offers research-based professional development (PD) opportunities to provide comprehensive teacher professional growth and instructional change. We have traditional PD, consisting of staff meetings, workshops, and teacher attendance at off-site conferences and trainings. We maximize the impact of these trainings by having attendees re-teach these sessions back to their peers on campus.

However, the heart of our PD system extends beyond these traditional models. We place high value on the act of teaching and learning with colleagues within our PLCs (see part VI), and with site-based coaching and staff development. Our peer observation system ensures that at least four times a year, teachers are relieved from their classrooms to observe a colleague teach on campus. To streamline and build capacity across our school, we target our PD focus each year. For example, this year we focused primarily on literacy instruction and use of digital tools.

We have two onsite coaches and two outside expert literacy staff developers who tailor professional learning to Laurel’s classroom contexts. Our onsite Literacy and Educational Technology Innovation coaches provide model lessons, build content area expertise and usher in the implementation of new curricula and tools. In just eight months this school year, our coaches have spent a combined total of 353 hours of classroom coaching support with our staff, and an additional 165 hours meeting with teachers to plan lessons and curriculum, and discuss student learning.

As part of our partnership with the Teachers’ College Reading and Writing Project, we host two staff developers for 10 days each year to facilitate PD. These staff developers build our teachers’ capacity by teaching model lessons to our students, and providing feedback to our teachers in Reading and Writing Workshop.

We have seen strong achievement in student learning that ties directly back to our use of coaches and staff developers. For instance, last year only 10% of third grade students performed below standard on the writing strand of the SBAC assessment, which translates to success for 90% of our third graders. Statewide, 47% of third graders were below-standard writers.

Artifacts of new technology use are evident all over Laurel. Over the past few months, at least 400 students created whiteboard videos on the Explain Everything app, to demonstrate mathematics problem solving. More than 200 students published digital books. Teachers report that when students use these apps to record their thoughts and make their learning visual, student learning stretches to deeper levels of strategic and extended thinking and the heights of Bloom's taxonomy.

Laurel's guiding principles of community, collaboration and reflection are inherent in our approach to professional learning. Our models for professional learning and the systems we have in place demonstrate our commitment to continually learning, collaborating and reflecting.

4. School Leadership:

Laurel School's administrators (principal, assistant principal and school counselor) are rarely in their offices: they are out observing in classrooms and on the playgrounds, supporting staff and students in everything they do. They know the names of all 540 students on campus, and take great joy in devoting the time, energy, and focus to know every child's personality, social-emotional strengths and needs.

Our leadership philosophy is inclusive, and leadership structures include representatives from all stakeholder groups. Staff and parents are encouraged to share ideas, and feel confident that they have multiple ways to influence our organizational development. Indeed, it is our school's belief that every adult on campus—parent, bus driver, office manager—is considered a teacher and a leader.

Laurel's School Site Council, which includes parent, teacher and administration representatives, develops and monitors our Single Plan for Student Achievement with embedded academic and organizational development goals. Every year, Site Council surveys the parent body. In 2015, our Net Promoter Score (based on the question of how highly a parent would recommend our school, from 0 to 10) was 78. In 2016, it was 84, a measure of our continual growth and improvement.

Our PTO Executive Board's monthly meetings are attended by a teacher representative, the principal, and a School Board member. PTO leaders are well-informed of decisions and developments at Laurel School, and communicate these weekly with the wider school community.

Our School Leadership Team, comprised of the administration and a representative from each grade level, holds monthly meetings. Comprehensive information about students is used to determine professional development, areas of instructional focus, and next steps for class placement. Our leadership team creates cluster classrooms of students by needs (EL, low math, IEPs), and uses site funds to increase instructional aide time and intervention teacher support for those classrooms.

Teachers at Laurel appreciate that our principal's willingness to innovate is coupled with her belief that small-step implementation of new programs ensures whole-school adherence. For example, two years ago, many students were not reading much during class independent reading (there was a lot of pretend-reading and looking through books). That same year, two classroom teachers piloted the full Reading Workshop model, which includes leveled classroom libraries for students to read daily at their level. The principal and literacy specialists compared classroom data and discovered impressive gains for all students in reading workshop classrooms. After consulting with teachers, the principal funded leveled libraries as a first step toward implementing the full reading workshop model. By the end of the year, all children were making more accelerated progress on their DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) than in previous years, and teachers were eager to take next steps.

This is just one of many examples that demonstrates how the administration uses data to inform decisions, and when new plans are implemented, they are rolled out in small steps, ensuring training and resources are available to all teachers.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Laurel’s Professional Learning Community (PLC) work has been identified as one of the most influential factors in our students’ academic success, and is a collaborative practice cherished by our staff. PLCs meet every six weeks, and are made up of grade level teachers and support teachers. The PLC identifies a skill or concept that needs instructional attention, develops a question (for example, “How can we raise reading achievement for all of our underperforming readers?”), and analyzes student data from common assessments to help create a theory of action. Teachers agree upon lessons and instructional strategies to address this particular achievement gap. The intervention design and implementation include small group or individual instruction to give students the focused attention they need. When the team reconvenes, they analyze the new reality and formulate next steps to address those students whose needs have not yet been met.

An example of the academic success that results from PLC work comes from our first grade team. When implementing a new CCSS-aligned writing rubric, the team identified and developed specific direct instruction and small group interventions to help students organize and focus their writing. The PLC established a learning target of level 3 by the end of the year (on a 1-3 rubric scale) and was committed to improving the areas of ‘Focus’ and ‘Organization.’ The results by month are compelling: In September, 4% of first graders scored a level 3 on Organization. After four months of targeted work, 76% of students had attained level 3. In January the teachers began a new rubric area: Focus. In January, 59% of students attained level 3 on Focus. By April, 80% of first graders reached the benchmark.

Laurel teachers have immersed themselves in PLC work to improve student achievement in writing, sight words, phonics, phonemic awareness, math facts, mathematical problem solving, and number sense. It has helped us garner strong results as measured by inventories and rubrics. It is difficult, however, to generalize the overall results because this work is unique to grade levels, content area, and rubric or inventory. Although it has not been our main method of data collection for our PLC work, California’s Academic Performance Index (API) results help with trend analysis. Since beginning our inquiry model of PLCs in 2010, Laurel School has consistently scored above a 900 API and reached 927 API in 2013. In the four years prior, we averaged 887. In 2015, when California transitioned to the SBAC assessment, our results were double that of the state average.