

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Karen van Putten

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

Official School Name Argonaut Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 13200 Shadow Mountain Road

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

Saratoga CA 95070-4362
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Santa Clara County

Telephone (408) 867-4773

Fax

Web site/URL

https://www.saratogausd.org/argona

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E-mail kvanputten@saratogausd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Ms. Nancy Johnson

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail njohnson@saratogausd.org

District Name Saratoga Union Elementary Tel. (408) 867-3424

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Cynthia Miller

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	29	29	58
1	23	21	44
2	21	21	42
3	28	40	68
4	27	29	56
5	41	34	75
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	169	174	343

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 80 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 12 % White
 - 5 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: 2%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	379
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %
38 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Mandarin, Korean, Cantonese, French, Farsi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Tamil, Turkish, Uzbek

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 2 %
Total number students who qualify: 6

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
26 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.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>1</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	97%	98%	98%
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 2017.

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. 1994

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

To provide an enriched academic program in a positive environment that empowers all students to think critically, to interact cooperatively, to learn to their fullest potential, and to become responsible contributors to society.

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

Argonaut Elementary School's motto is: "Inspire. Achieve. Learn. Play." A dedicated and experienced staff enjoys the challenge of working at Argonaut with its diverse and talented student body, involved community members, and commitment to excellence in education. The students are bright, inquisitive, playful and creative. Argonaut Elementary is a school that aims for excellence in both academics and the arts, and this begins with a culture of "trying." We are a learning community that celebrates the whole child, where we recognize the potential for creative expression and we encourage an appreciation of artistic and musical contributions as much as we celebrate the traditional core academic subjects.

Argonaut School has served the community of Saratoga, California, for over 50 years. Previously known for agriculture and thriving orchards, Saratoga has transitioned into a town where engineers, technology trailblazers and highly educated professionals from around the world, both U.S. educated and newcomers, have settled down based on its history and tradition of strong K-12 academic programs. Approximately 30 different languages are represented in our student community, and with that rich diversity, we celebrate our unique backgrounds in class heritage projects, International Festivals and daily interactions in class and on the playground. We serve 343 students in fifteen self-contained TK/K-5 classrooms plus a Resource Specialist Room. Argonaut also hosts two Santa Clara County Special Education classes, pre-school and K-2; our students serve as big buddies to the students in these special education classes and actively partner with them in weekly visits, Friday assemblies and Special Olympics. We are a student-focused learning community where we have re-organized our student leadership program so that students work in focus-area committees, representing the voices of their classmates and selecting activities that directly and positively impact our local school community, our Saratoga community and then our larger, global community. Student voice and student agency are foundational to Argonaut's Single Plan for Student Achievement; the energy and enthusiasm of our student leadership members are clearly evident on campus.

The volunteer program at Argonaut School has experienced its ebbs and flows since the last time we were recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School in 1994. The demographics of our community have changed with the proximity to Silicon Valley's boom in the high tech industry, higher real-estate prices forcing many of our young families to require two, full-time working parents, offering limited opportunities for our parents to serve on the PTA or as classroom volunteers. In spite of this real challenge, we have worked diligently in the last two years with a small but committed and passionate PTA group of leaders and a focus from the new principal to create many flexible opportunities for working parents, extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, and high school students from Saratoga HS to partner with our student programs. Our volunteers help in the classroom, office, library, as well as in school-wide programs throughout the year. With the help of our renewed commitment to outreach and recruitment of volunteers, our students benefit from the following programs: Art Docents teaching art history and visual arts; Math Olympiad, an enrichment program for math-loving, math-passionate students; the Musical, Variety Show featuring student and staff performances, Robotics Club/ First Lego League Team, Science Fair, Read-In Literacy Day, Scholastic Book Fair, Kindness Week, Yearbook, Boxtops for Education, Family Movie Night, Family Dance / Winter Ball, Carnival, special assemblies, campus beautification and our newest MakerSpace/Innovation Lab and Garden / LifeLab project development.

One of the most important school-wide programs is Project Cornerstone and our parents/community members, including school board members, who serve as ABC Readers who teach lessons in building the developmental assets of our children. We believe in the social-emotional development of our students as foundational to the success of our students. Our parents partner with the school in a very open, trusting relationship because we believe it does take the entire village to raise a healthy and balanced human being. Parent volunteers also serve as chaperones and drivers on many curriculum-based field trips and present special lessons sharing their heritage, interests, or career expertise. Our volunteers donate nearly 2,000 hours of time each school year, and without them, we would not be able to offer the quality or variety of essential and enrichment programs.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Argonaut Elementary School educators provide a “guaranteed and viable curriculum to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn”. Each student has access to a highly effective teacher, and access to the same content, knowledge, and skills in each class (Marzano, 2003).

Over the past few years, we’ve begun the process of rolling out a balanced literacy program. Our TK- 5 grade teachers have been trained extensively on the Teachers’ College Writing Workshop Units of Study program. Many of our teachers have also begun to implement reading workshop in their classrooms using Teachers’ College Reading Workshop or Daily 5 curriculum materials. Argonaut’s reading and writing workshop model is an efficient and engaging method of teaching reading and writing. Within the workshop structure, teachers are able to address both the whole group’s needs, as well as differentiating for the needs of small groups and individuals. Argonaut’s workshop model is: a component of a balanced literacy block; standards based; driven by student assessment; and differentiated instruction (by level, interest, groupings). During a workshop lesson, our teachers model reading and writing in front of students, have students spend time engaged in independent reading and writing, have students share writing, have students share in the reading by utilizing partner reading strategies, and confer with students to guide their reading and writing and teaching them skills and strategies. Our students are engaged in meaningful activities and instruction based on assessed needs. Ongoing formative assessment practices drive the instruction. This could be through a whole group lesson, small needs based skill or strategy group, or conferring with individual students about their writing or reading. Our teachers engage with students in the essential components of Balanced Literacy, which are: interactive read aloud; shared/close reading; small group reading instruction; independent reading; writing; word work (grammar, spelling); and speaking and listening. Students in grades TK-3 participate in small group guided reading with leveled books available through our well-stocked bookroom.

All of our elementary classrooms use the Eureka Math curriculum. Common Core Math instruction blends foundational skills with problem-solving applications as we complete our third year of this program implementation. This year our focus has been on making intelligent decisions to guide students from the beginning of the lesson, up the ladder to the end of the lesson, focusing on the desired student outcomes as the end goal. This process involves teachers collaborating with one another to identify and address potential stumbling blocks and to help each student move successfully and confidently toward success. At districtwide grade level meetings teachers have discovered innovative and creative strategies for implementing the math curriculum. Small group instruction, technology, and hands-on games and manipulatives provide both intervention and challenging enrichment to students in the area of mathematics.

In the primary grades, the Full Option Science System (FOSS) Next Generation is a research-based science curriculum that engages all students with meaningful active learning experiences, integrates robust reading and literacy strategies for all students, and utilizes technology to deliver engaging learning experiences. In fourth and fifth grade, STEMscopes, our engaging and rigorous science curriculum, combines digital resources, supplemental print, and hands-on kits. The transition to the NGSS standards are supported through design thinking and engineering challenges in the STEAM lab and reinforced with project-based learning. Argonaut has been transitioning to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which provides real-world problems and hands-on experiences to drive inquiry-based instruction. Teachers begin with an overarching question and facilitate student investigation to master concepts. NGSS incorporates Disciplinary Core Ideas, Crosscutting Concepts, and the Science and Engineering Practices using the California integrated science approach. Our science classes are a balance of standards-based hands-on labs, reading for meaning, demonstration, lecture, writing to explain, and inquiry learning.

Argonaut teachers use a variety of curriculum resources to teach Social Studies, including Scott Foresman and Harcourt Brace. Teachers in third, fourth, and fifth grade also utilize Studies Weekly, which is a California standards-aligned newspaper with engaging lessons and projects. Our elementary teachers will be considering new elementary social studies curriculum materials to update the shifts in content, inquiry,

literacy, and citizenship included in the 2016 California Social Studies Framework.

Science and social studies are integrated into our language arts and are also taught through our adopted curriculum programs. Project-based learning and experiential activities provide the basis for opportunities to enrich information and curriculum. Field trips to the pumpkin patch, children's theater, a mission, and science camp provide those opportunities. Our blossoming school garden and new MakerSpace involve students and parents in lessons related to science in a real and meaningful way.

With a focus on social-emotional cognitive development, the TK class at Argonaut integrates early learning and elementary school systems. Child directed learning centers such as science exploration, dramatic play, fine motor activities and hands-on activities are balanced by explicit and direct teacher instruction. A typical day in TK includes a morning message, an opening routine that incorporates communication and collaboration, ELA choice and math choice times with small group teacher instruction, PE, and free choice. Argonaut's TK prepares our youngest students to succeed in traditional kindergarten classrooms and beyond.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Argonaut is defined by so much more than literacy, math, social studies, and science. Teaching the whole child is emphasized and non-traditional curriculum areas are developed and seen as essential as we create global citizens. Instruction in Performing and Visual Arts, Physical Fitness, Technology, STEAM, and citizenship occur on campus daily.

It is a priority at Argonaut to ensure performing arts instruction for all grade levels. Our district music teachers have provided high quality arts education to Argonaut students for many years due to generous funding from the Saratoga Educational Foundation. In the area of performing arts, TK-5th grade students learn along a continuum of experiences in artistic perception, creative expression, and the historical and cultural context of music. Students at all grade levels analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, while noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers. An example of kindergarten music instruction for this standard is singing and playing simple singing games from various cultures; third grade students sing and play memorized songs from diverse cultures; and fifth grade students describe the influences of various cultures on the music of the United States. All TK-3rd grade students learn to play Orf instruments, and all fourth graders learn how to play the recorder. Music instruction is expanded through the Band and Orchestra program that extends beyond the school day. Students who choose to participate select an instrument, are given instruction on that instrument, and learn to play as part of a group. Most of these students continue to play in the award-winning Redwood Middle School Band and Orchestra upon leaving Argonaut.

Argonaut TK-3rd grade students receive art instruction from trained parent art docents. The fine art instruction focuses on the elements of art and principles of design. Our district visual arts teacher is a professional artist who provides standards-aligned studio art lessons to Argonaut's fourth and fifth grade students. All students have opportunities to create ceramics projects each year. Each spring, students' artwork is exhibited for the community to admire.

Physical Fitness is prioritized at Argonaut. Credentialed teachers from Rhythm & Moves (a district contracted agency funded by the Saratoga Education Foundation) provide a comprehensive curriculum to teach sports and sportsmanship. Units of study such as field hockey, dance, and soccer culminate in a field day celebration of fitness. Classroom teachers provide frequent brain breaks through movement activities. Our district elementary counselor provides an eight week series of mindfulness lessons to students. Mindfulness practice has been scientifically proven to reduce anxiety, increase focus, boost memory, and enhance the immune system. The lessons will focus on mindful breathing, learning about the brain, cultivating gratitude, mindful movement, focusing the senses, perspective taking, and kindness.

At Argonaut, technology is integrated throughout the school day. All classrooms utilize Chromebooks and other technology devices as an integral part of their learning. All students in all grade levels are taught Common Sense Media lessons, which demonstrate responsible and respectful use of technology, including

topics from internet safety to cyber-bullying. Completion of these lessons support our students' social-emotional needs as they interact with technology. Our district technology teacher provides direct instruction and opportunities for students to innovatively incorporate digital tools into their learning. School-wide participation in the MakerSpace lab and school garden allows for equity and access to important 21st century skills around technology and engineering. Using a variety of investigative methods (design thinking, inquiry-based instruction, tinkering), all Argonaut students learn skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to creatively and collaboratively solve real-world problems.

Instruction continues outside of the classroom at Argonaut. After school clubs offer instruction in a variety of high-interest topics. Student leadership is encouraged. Student Council encourages school spirit, working together, and encourages student leadership. Student Council members work together to solve problems, organize school activities, and help the community. The Argonaut PTA supports a plethora of enrichment opportunities for students, including the Robotics Club, Art Docent Program, Math Docent Program, Variety Show, The Musical, Authors' Expo, Science Fair, Math Fun Day, Read-In, Red Ribbon Week, Fit Kidz Program, Yearbook, Community Service projects, International Day, and special assemblies. After school, students can choose from a variety of fee-based and free enrichment programs through a partnership with the Los Gatos Saratoga Recreation Department.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

One of our strengths as a school is that our teachers and staff are constantly striving to learn about best instructional methods and improve as professionals and as a school. Our collective goal is to provide an appropriate challenge for all students: those who need additional support, and also those who are performing at a high level. Argonaut teachers have a variety of ways in which they differentiate instruction for students. Through our outstanding special education offerings, we are able to meet the needs of our special population in the least restrictive environment. This is in addition to classes with modified course content in math, English, science, and social studies. Within the regular education classrooms, our teachers are skilled in providing targeted instruction for each student: remedial/intervention and accelerated/extension. Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of a diverse student community is integrated into all curricular areas at Argonaut. Students' engagement and responsiveness are increased when instruction is provided at their readiness levels and considers their interests. By providing students with choices in learning activities and assessments, students take ownership of their education and thereby increase their confidence. In many classes, students are given choices for topics on individual and small group open-ended and performance-based projects. Prior to starting a unit, pre-assessments may be used to identify skills needing reinforcement. Lessons are presented in a variety of modalities, including but not limited to video, interactive lectures, labs, problem-solving, and project-based learning. All classrooms at Argonaut are collaborative and student-centered. Teachers use instructional strategies including discussions, debates, presentations, and group work, ensuring that students actively engage in their learning and develop the skill to substantiate their opinions and conclusions with documentation. Project-based instruction is used in all classrooms.

Assessment is critical to Argonaut's academic success. Many formative and summative assessments are used and discussed during grade level meetings. Systematic formal and informal assessments are given in the classroom. For example, exit tickets are used in math, daily guided reading provides opportunities for running records, and rubrics and checklists give students feedback in writing. Formal assessments include writing assessments; Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA); and math, ELA, social studies, and science content assessments. All Argonaut teachers use the curriculum-embedded assessments in their subject areas to monitor student progress and the effectiveness of instruction. The results are used to reteach, modify, and differentiate the curriculum for students needing extra support. Special Education qualification testing is available if recommended by the Student Study Team or requested by parents. Elementary Student Progress Updates provide written records of student performance on curriculum outcomes over a period of the trimester.

Technology plays a big role in providing differentiated instruction at Argonaut. For example, teachers are able to work one-on-one with students over a collaborative document (Google Docs) online, providing specific feedback and individual direction for improved learning achievement. All students have access to

laptops throughout the day. Students are frequently given a choice in how they can demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge to their teacher.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Inspire. Achieve. Learn. Play.

These four words are colorfully painted outside our Multipurpose Room and every student and staff member walks by this mural several times a day. These four simple words stand high above our students at lunchtime and they can be seen across the wide lawn to the blacktop, reminding us and beckoning us to take action. From our youngest students in TK to our oldest scholars in 5th grade, we hope that these four words become realities during their time here at Argonaut Elementary School and that they resonate for the rest of their lives.

Inspire. From an “Aha!” moment during a Mystery Science experiment or a breakthrough of writer’s block in Writer’s Workshop to the moment when a wide-eyed kindergartener watches older students perform a classical piano solo or Bollywood dance routine at the Variety Show, our students find inspiration from each other, their teachers and within their own creative spirit.

Achieve. Our students strive to achieve at high levels in all the activities they encounter. Sometimes, achievement comes easily and quickly. Other times, it takes many practice opportunities. At times, it means making mistakes. And sometimes, it includes failures. But it is from these varied experiences of success or struggle in academics, athletics and social situations where achievement is reached.

Learn. Walk into any classroom at Argonaut and teachers are using a variety of strategies from Guided Reading with a small group to peer editing conferences to Mindfulness techniques to lower the anxiety of a student. They use all their resources and tools to engage students in their learning. As role models, teachers participate in many hours of professional development and staff collaboration in order to deepen their own learning to share with students. Learning is not always orderly or neat. Often, it is messy and boisterous, a balance of inquiry and problem solving...and many attempts for trial and error. We are fortunate to be part of a community that holds education and educators in high regard, and with this tight partnership, learning takes place in every classroom, in the cafeteria, during recess, in the office, on the fields and at home...every day.

Play. “Play” is the last word written on the mural. It is foundational to learning, discovery and growth. We encourage organized and organic play at Argonaut because children are naturally wired to play. Through play, children engage in communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Through play, our students find a healthy balance of inspiration, achievement and learning that will serve them well as they find that the rules of “playing nice and playing fair” exist far beyond the idyllic campus of Argonaut. The staff at Argonaut are especially cognizant that many of our students are involved in structured activities beyond the school day. Oftentimes, our students are already under some pressure to be the best, be at the top of the class, be number one, and we provide opportunities during the school day and the week so that our students can be children, and we encourage a healthy dose of play time.

Teachers are the most important change makers on campus. While the principal works with District leadership in setting instructional goals, monitoring progress and evaluating staff and programs, instructional leadership is carried out by all staff who have responsibilities for instruction. Through site and grade-level collaboration and professional development, teachers share their knowledge and keep each other informed of exceptional current instructional practices. TOSAs or teachers on special assignment also serve as instructional coaches in language arts, guided reading, math, science and educational technology. Teachers at Argonaut have many years of experience in the classroom, but they are always looking for ways to improve their craft, often participating in summer workshops, weekend PD opportunities and way beyond their work day, you can find teachers planning new or improved lessons or prepping a lab or hands-on problem based learning opportunity.

Every teacher has a voice in decision-making at the site level through staff meetings, Student Study Team meetings, participation in District Leadership Team, STEAM Team, PTA, SSC and formal and informal

survey input for District and school decisions. Teachers' input is both vital and encouraged for agenda topics and they often reflect the needs of the students and the staff. Schoolwide activities are planned as a team. Teachers' input is sought during staff meetings as well as informally around the staff lunch table. Friday assemblies are thoughtfully arranged with communication between the principal, teachers, student leadership and pressing current issues such as playground safety or appropriate internet use. Argonaut teachers are valued and respected for their excellence as leaders and decisions makers by the entire school community.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We have worked diligently in the last two years with a small but committed and passionate PTA group of leaders and a focus from the new principal to create many flexible opportunities for working parents, extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, and high school students from Saratoga HS to partner with our student programs. Our volunteers help in the classroom, office, library, as well as in school-wide programs throughout the year. With the help of our renewed commitment to outreach and recruitment of volunteers, our students benefit from the following programs: Art Docents teaching art history and visual arts; Math Olympiad, an enrichment program for math-loving, math-passionate students; the Musical, Variety Show featuring student and staff performances, Robotics Club/ First Lego League Team, Science Fair, Read-In Literacy Day, Scholastic Book Fair, Kindness Week, Yearbook, Boxtops for Education, Family Movie Night, Family Dance / Winter Ball, Carnival, special assemblies, campus beautification and our newest MakerSpace/Innovation Lab and Garden / LifeLab project development.

One of the most important school-wide PTA sponsored programs is Project Cornerstone where parents, community members and school board members attend monthly trainings to serve as ABC Readers in the classroom. They teach lessons in building the developmental assets of our children and address social-emotional growth that we want to develop in our youngest members of the community. We believe in the social-emotional development of our students as foundational to the success of our students. Our parents partner with the school in a very open, trusting relationship because we believe it does take the entire village to raise a healthy and balanced human being. Parent volunteers also serve as chaperones and drivers on many curriculum-based field trips and present special lessons sharing their heritage, interests, or career expertise. Our volunteers donate nearly 2,000 hours of time each school year, and without them, we would not be able to offer the quality or variety of essential and enrichment programs.

We communicate with our families through a weekly eNews blast with pertinent and timely information, celebrating our students, staff and district's accomplishments. We have updated our website to be more user-friendly and we have a very open communication system of teachers and parents and principal reaching out to each other.

3. Professional Development:

Argonaut teachers and administrators are engaged in professional development regarding "Visible Learning" (John Hattie). Visible learning involves teachers seeing learning through the eyes of students, and students seeing teaching as the key to their ongoing learning. When learning is visible the student knows what to do and how to do it and the teacher knows if learning is occurring or not. Teaching and learning are visible when the learning goal is not only challenging but is explicit. Essentially, the big idea of Visible Learning is for teachers to know the impact they are having on each of their students. Argonaut educators have identified the following high-impact strategies: 1. Collective teacher efficacy: helping all teachers on the staff to understand that the way they go about their work has a significant impact on student results. 2. Formative evaluation and assessment: feedback that provides teachers with formative information on attention to the purposes of innovations, the willingness to seek evidence on where students are not doing well, the keenness to see the effects on all students, and openness to new experiences make a difference. 3. Feedback: teachers seek feedback from students as to what students know, what they understand, where they make errors, when they have misconceptions, and when they are not engaged. 4. Teacher Clarity: teachers provide organization, explanation, examples and guided practice and assessment of student learning. 5. Teacher-student relationships: teacher behavior reflects non-directivity, empathy,

warmth, encouragement of higher order thinking, encouraging, learning, adapting to differences, genuineness, and learner-centered beliefs.

One of our strengths as a school is that our teachers and staff are constantly striving to learn about best pedagogical practices and improve as professionals and as a school. Our collective goal is to provide an appropriate challenge for all students: those who need additional support, and also those who are performing at a high level. Argonaut teachers have a variety of ways in which they differentiate instruction for students. Through our outstanding special education offerings, we are able to meet the needs of our special population in the least restrictive environment. This is in addition to classes with modified course content in math, English, science, and social studies. Within the regular education classrooms, our teachers are skilled in providing targeted instruction for each student: remedial/intervention and accelerated/extension. Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of a diverse student community is integrated into all curricular areas at Argonaut. Students' engagement and responsiveness are increased when instruction is provided at their readiness levels and considers their interests. By providing students with choices in learning activities and assessments, students take ownership of their education and thereby increase their confidence. In many classes, students are given choices for topics on individual and small group open-ended and performance-based projects. Prior to starting a unit, pre-assessments may be used to identify skills needing reinforcement. Lessons are presented in a variety of modalities, including but not limited to video, interactive lectures, labs, problem-solving, and project-based learning. All classrooms at Argonaut are collaborative and student-centered. Teachers use instructional strategies including discussions, debates, presentations, and group work, ensuring that students actively engage in their learning and develop the skill to substantiate their opinions and conclusions with documentation. Project-based instruction is used in all classrooms.

4. School Leadership:

The principal embraces the school's vision and leads the entire school community in meeting the student-friendly goals: Inspire, Achieve, Learn and Play. The principal, who is in her second year in the position, is highly visible and accessible. She has brought a new energy, enthusiasm and strong leadership and she has quickly earned the respect of the students, staff, parents and the community. She provides direction and motivation for Argonaut School's positive camaraderie, school spirit, rigorous curriculum, academic achievement, enrichment, discipline and school safety. While inspiring staff and students to try new things and follow their passions and excel in school and personal goals, she is a role model to both the youngest students to the most veteran staff members. Parent leaders, integral partners in the school vision, commend home/school communication, school spirit and the excellence in instruction and school environment where students thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Shared decision-making and frequent open communication provide a trusting, cohesive organization with all individuals working toward school goals and priorities. High standards and expectations result from the school's shared leadership, collaborative spirit and consistent planning and improving current systems in place.

Leadership is shared by the principal, teacher leaders, Parent Teacher Association, School Site Council and Student Leadership representatives from 3rd to 5th grade. Regular and open communication between all these groups has been fundamental in deciding on what is best for our students in terms of academic programs, social-emotional health and extracurricular opportunities.

We have incorporated the Project Cornerstone spirit in all aspects of Argonaut Elementary School. The principal leads the school staff, collaborating with the parent community, high school community and empowering students through Student Leadership. The following are a few examples of the community buy in and partnership with school leadership to empower all the players involved in making Argonaut a great place to be:

The staff of Argonaut recruited school alumni to paint positive Project Cornerstone messages on the wall-ball walls (a highly used and visible part of the school campus).^[1]_{SEP}

The principal facilitates visits by our local high school students to elementary classrooms where teenagers talk with third through fifth graders about leadership and what they have to look forward to in high school

and the high school students serve as readers on Read-In Day, promoting literacy and K-12 partnership. As much as our students in K5 look up to the older students, the HS students gain so much from the shared experience.

Our Student Tech Crew, supported by our District Technology teacher set the conditions for creativity and collaboration in Argonaut's "Innovation Wing," a hands-on environment where Argonaut students work side-by-side with STEAM Club members of Saratoga High School on multi-disciplinary projects. This past week, the principal and teachers held an evening "Innovation Wing" hands-on event for families.^{[[SEP]]}

The staff has fully integrated the "Expect Respect" program with student leadership development. We worked with a Project Cornerstone facilitator to design a day-long workshop for her Student Council - helping students to envision what respectful behaviors peer-to-peer look like and planning for special community-building events.^{[[SEP]]}

Our 5th grade students partnered with the PTA to empower 5th graders to choreograph their own act/dance for the annual variety show - a first in Argonaut Variety Show history.^{[[SEP]]}

The principal leads the Friday whole-school weekly assemblies that highlight specific, key developmental assets under development at Argonaut--which supports coherence of the many student-centered initiatives underway at the school.^{[[SEP]]}

Argonaut Cares: student-driven, student-selected community service programs that we have placed an emphasis on as part of the Project Cornerstone developmental assets of community partnership. One of our school goals this year is to "promote service to others" and give our young students a chance to make a positive impact in our local community.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

John Hattie's research in Visible Learning indicated positive teacher-student relationships as one of the most effective strategies for student learning. This suggests that teacher behavior reflects non-directivity, empathy, warmth, encouragement of higher order thinking, encouraging, learning, adapting to differences, genuineness, and learner-centered beliefs. Argonaut teachers have developed this as an art form more than a strategy. Argonaut teachers begin building positive relationships with their students on the first day of school. They create learning environments based on mutual respect and trust where students may experiment and take risks. Whenever possible, students choose their own topics to explore and investigate. Thought provoking topics and assignments that are purposeful and of high interest assure student participation, and therefore, promotes success. For example, third grade students wrote persuasive letters to the principal during her first year to share their desire for a place to build and design their own creations and a robotics or First Lego League Club. Their passion and their reasons were enough evidence to motivate the principal to present these needs and wishes to the District, the PTA and the Saratoga Education Foundation, and we were able to get both in place at the start of the 2017-18 school year. We now have a fully operational Innovation Lab (or MakerSpace) and an Argonaut Robotics Club and three teams who competed in the First Lego League competitions. It is in the teacher-student relationship where the magic happens. When our students report that they feel heard and they feel warmth and kindness from their teacher and staff members, these are the foundational pieces for learning to take root.

Argonaut School provides many opportunities to foster close relationships between students and adults. A community and family feeling of togetherness is clearly evident. Students often return from middle school, high school, college and even as adults to say hello, to say thank you, reminisce and to help out at their alma mater. Our new principal is highly visible and emanates a friendly, approachable, caring attitude which some describe as contagious. She referees basketball and four square games, jumps rope with students during recess, invites students to the conference table to address peer conflicts and she is always there for the teachers, too. Not afraid of tough conversations, the principal models caring for the adults as well as caring for each student. Teachers often hold lunch dates with a rotating group of students and they have a special lunch together, catching up with each other beyond the classroom dynamics. Several times a year, at the beginning of staff meetings, teachers spend some quiet time to write a personal note to a student and the notes are mailed home. Through these positive interactions and a genuine humanity toward each person and his or her situation, the teachers and staff members at Argonaut School build up from there. We firmly believe that a positive and caring teacher-student relationship is essential to a student's social-emotional and academic success. We are fortunate to work in a school community where education is valued and teachers are respected; however, we also know that we live in a highly competitive global community where academic and financial success are priorities. Teachers at Argonaut work thoughtfully in creating procedures and classroom environments where students are celebrated for their individualism, their creativity, their growth and their potential. We are constantly striving to find a balance for the students in our classes who may face high expectations in all areas of their lives. With this strong student-teacher relationship as a foundation, we added the following LEARNERS statements to our school expectations.

- Learn from our mistakes.
- Explain your thinking. Show evidence.
- Ask questions and accept challenges.
- Receive and respond to feedback.
- Never give up.
- Effort matters
- Respect yourself and others.
- Stand up. Be an upstander.

One of the main goals for this school year has been to make our practice and our learning visible, based on John Hattie's research. The Student Leadership and our Staff all agreed to following LEARNERS statements in as many experiences we encounter throughout the school day and to extend the learning beyond school, at home, at practices, in the community. Every Friday assembly, we focus on one of these

statements and we share how we demonstrated or experienced the Argonaut Learner characteristic. For example, we kicked off our commitment to the LEARNERS statements through stand up / sit down interactive activity with all the students and staff showing our commitment to put into action these positive actions. These are practices that we talk about, demonstrate, and try to embrace in every lesson, in the classroom, at school, and hopefully, beyond the Argonaut campus. It captures our school-wide commitment to a growth mindset and our Project Cornerstone goals. We have included this in our weekly eNewsletter to parents, inviting them to print out the poster and use these at home, bringing the school-home partnership full circle. Ultimately, we have confidence that these statements become part of our students' thought process because we have established the strong foundation of the student-teacher relationship built on mutual respect, trust and empathy.