

U.S. Department of Education
2019 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 Mrs. Elizabeth Leon
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 1200 North Acacia Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Fullerton CA 92831-2102
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Orange County

Telephone (714) 447-7700 Fax (714) 447-7595

Web site/URL https://acacia.fullertonsd.org E-mail elizabeth_leon@myfsd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Robert Pletka
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail robert_pletka@myfsd.org

District Name Fullerton Elementary School District Tel. (714) 447-7400

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 Janny Meyer
(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. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 17 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 20 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	49	43	92
1	41	55	96
2	49	72	121
3	53	43	96
4	55	45	100
5	56	46	102
6	44	59	103
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	347	363	710

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 16 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 34 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 36 % White
 - 10 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 3%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	701
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7%
52 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Greek, Hindi, Chinese, Taiwanese, Arabic, Gujarati, Amharic, Polish, Mandarin, Nepali, Russian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19%
Total number students who qualify: 136

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %
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>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>3</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>46</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 32:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	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 2018.

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.

Provide an education of the highest quality, blending home, school, and community resources. We are committed to empowering all students to reach their full potential.

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

“Nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by school, family, and community working together in partnership,” explains Michael Fullan, author of *Results*. Acacia Elementary School is the quintessential example of such a partnership. Nestled in a beautiful neighborhood on the edge of east Fullerton, Acacia has been a part of the Fullerton School District since 1957. Our school can be easily identified by the large ficus tree, referred to as the “Acacia Tree,” that grows at the entrance of our campus. This tree stands tall, with our mascot the Panda, to greet all who visit our school.

Growing in ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity, Acacia serves as a distinguished Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) site for the district. Roughly half of our students transfer to Acacia. Within our surrounding areas, we have a wide range of parent professions represented with varying socio-economic levels. Fullerton is known as having a “big, small town feel.” We observe this daily when parents pick up a carload of neighborhood children and alumni return to share their success in college and beyond.

The Acacia staff is committed to the belief that all students can learn and achieve at high levels. Forming an alignment to rigorous academic standards, outstanding instruction, and collaboration with family, staff, and community, our students have shown ongoing achievement. Our staff consists of twenty-two classroom teachers, one instructional coach, and seventeen support staff. Altogether, Acacia’s highly qualified team holds one doctorate, twenty-three Master’s degrees, five specialized credentials, fifteen GATE certificates, and one Nationally Board Certified Teacher. We value ongoing education by modeling lifelong learning for our students.

Acacia’s signature practice is Balanced Literacy, an approach we began cultivating organically in 2012 by adopting Lucy Calkins’ *Writer’s Workshop*. This naturally led to the implementation of *Reader’s Workshop* in 2014. Simultaneously, we began a four-year partnership with the Cotsen Foundation that would provide nearly two-thirds of our staff with one-on-one coaching, access to quality training, and tools to improve student learning. The growing practice of *Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop* led to a schoolwide adoption of the Balanced Literacy approach and an extension of the coaching model for all teachers. Consequently, we saw a direct positive impact on our CAASPP data. Between 2015-2018, our overall English language arts (ELA) scores increased from 75% to 84% at/above grade level. We attribute this success to quality instruction and ongoing support for our teachers and students alike.

Acacia also recognizes the importance of social and emotional growth for students. We accomplish this through programs such as Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS), Lunch Bunch social skills groups, a Big Buddy/Little Buddy partnerships, classroom meetings, and counseling support to meet the needs of the whole child.

Teachers meet biweekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to review data, discuss individual student needs, plan for interventions, and strategically collaborate vertically and horizontally to provide rigorous academic instruction. By following a research-based PLC cycle, teachers uphold a student-centered approach to create engaging standards-based lessons that result in building lifelong learners who are successful in school and career.

As a one-on-one iPad school, teachers personalize learning by capitalizing on student interests and strengths to build agency. Accelerated learning occurs through programs such as ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) and Freckle Education. Teachers expand learning beyond the classroom walls through Global Read Aloud and Mystery Skype exploration. Additionally, our STEM Lab provides students with project-based learning opportunities designed to ignite learning, collaboration, and creativity. Through such 21st-century learning opportunities, Acacia is preparing students for jobs of the future.

The Acacia community takes great pride in being able to reach high levels of academic success for our students as we prepare them for the demands of the future. We recognize this is possible through the collective efforts of all involved in the education of a child. Parent involvement is a crucial component to the success of our students and staff. Through the support of our PTA and non-profit Parent Education

Foundation, our school is able to provide students with a STEM Lab, technology-related resources, and an instructional coach. The parent community willingly volunteers in and out of classrooms. They serve on integral committees such as School Site Council (SSC) and organize over thirty-five community building events.

Like the Acacia tree branches extend out in an invitation, we welcome the partnership with our community to help our students excel academically. Our school takes pride in creating a community of highly-qualified teachers, parents, volunteers, community members, and students working together to achieve success. We are rooted in this collective focus of the interconnected community sharing in Panda Pride for the school we love and embrace.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Acacia implements a Balanced Literacy approach for our English language arts instruction. This includes daily Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop and layered support practices such as Interactive Read Aloud or Shared Reading. Each workshop begins with a directed lesson, whereby the teacher names a teaching point, demonstrates the skill and strategy, and provides scaffolded support for students. Then, students are released to continue working independently on their own writing piece or in a genre-specific book while the teacher meets in one-on-one conferences or small groups. This allows for focused intervention by ability, language, and academic need, at times with technology-based support such as Read Naturally.

Teachers also provide students with multiple modalities to process learning. Students work in partnerships, record strong thoughts while reading, prepare artifacts demonstrating their approximation of skills, or self-reflect using a calibrated rubric. The fundamentals of this approach include high instructional support paired with student choice to increase engagement and autonomy. Teachers promote continued learning by focusing on language that builds the identity of readers and writers. Teaching points are strategically crafted to name a skill (what is being taught) and strategy (how to use the skill) using Common Core standards in reading, writing, and other content areas. Through workshop, students are exposed to a variety of genres in reading and writing, which expands opportunities to transfer knowledge. All units conclude with students sharing their learning to an authentic audience. Examples include podcasts for a historical fiction reading unit or problem-based persuasive letters submitted to the appropriate channels seeking change.

On-demand assessments bookend each unit. Initial data informs the sequence of teaching points and the formation of strategy groups. Throughout a unit, teachers assess student approximation through one-on-one conferencing and running records. Post assessments show student growth and help them reflect on the learning standards. Altogether, this data gives us a schoolwide glance at trends so that cross grade level articulation can occur.

1b. Mathematics:

Math instruction mirrors best practices represented in our workshop model. Teachers pose real-world problems to highlight skills and strategies needed to meet Common Core State standards and address relevance. Students participate in conversations and activities around the Standards for Mathematical Practice (SMP) to build their identity as mathematicians. Instructional strategies, such as Number Talks or Counting Collections allow students to build their conceptual understanding and functionality of numbers. Acacia’s overall approach is responsive to and addresses students’ unique needs.

Teachers provide explicit instruction or inquiry based activities so students can access and use multiple strategies to solve problems. Students are given time to practice and apply their learning. Teachers check for understanding and collect data using multiple measures, such as exit tickets, student conferences, and district benchmarks. Similar to ELA workshop, teachers meet with students in small groups or individually to adapt the rigor, provide intervention, and conduct ongoing assessment to plan instruction. This strategic instructional cycle gives students and teachers constant and effective feedback focused on improving learning. Students needing additional support receive intensive assistance from our math intervention teacher. Those who show mastery may accelerate their learning through compacted units and/or use adaptive math apps designed to adjust the rigor of the lessons based on student responses.

Oftentimes, to concretize math, teachers create relevant and engaging math projects. For example, in the learning of percents, teachers plan entrepreneurial activities whereby students determine the cost and profits of running their own business. Students may also participate in daily problem solving stories to share strategies that demonstrate how to manipulate and study numbers. As a reinforcement, these methods are shared with parents that allow for extension at home to further impact student achievement.

1c. Science:

Acacia aligns our Science instruction with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) utilizing an assortment of resources as they become available. Specifically, teachers implement the Smithsonian Maker Lab and Mystery Science to provide hands-on learning experiences that evoke curiosity and provide rich cross-curricular connections. Each Mystery is aligned to a topic, performance expectation, science and engineering practices, and disciplinary core ideas. Within each lesson, lies a mystery with discussion questions, capitalizing on investigating using natural curiosity. Students are learning how to think scientifically by using the 5E model for teaching and learning: Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend (or Elaborate), and Evaluate. This critical thinking cycle is fundamental to future careers for our students. Since each science activity is driven by student learning experiences, teachers establish behavior expectations from the start. The learning environment is collaborative and holds high standards for responsibility and respect, components of our PBIS program. When students are working through their collaborative inquiries or investigations, teachers can provide on-the-spot coaching with individuals or small groups needing intervention.

Teachers use Mystery Skype sessions to explore other communities and learn about different geographical regions or “visit” animal sanctuaries around the world. Through this technology-based support, we are able to bring the outside world into our classrooms to expand our students’ critical thinking skills.

Science instruction may also be integrated into Reader's and Writer's Workshop, providing a cross-curricular approach with opportunities to transfer learning. For example, fourth-grade students apply informational reading strategies while studying various forms and effects of extreme weather. Teachers strategically pair investigations into this unit with final projects requiring students to apply writing, speaking, and presenting skills.

Science assessments focus on students’ ability to interact with the 5E model, work collaboratively with peers, problem solve in a respectful manner, and contribute to the investigation. Formal assessments, often created by teachers, are used to determine content approximation or mastery.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Acacia teachers teach Common Core standards for social studies, history, and civic engagement through project-based learning and embed social studies content into our Balanced Literacy approach. Each grade focuses on different social studies topics ranging from the development of communities to social issues and Westward Expansion to Ancient Civilizations. Teachers create high-interest units using a variety of instructional practices, learning opportunities, and assessments. Students participate in inquiry-based discussions, study primary sources, and analyze multiple perspectives, such as debunking myths and theories. Learning opportunities are highly collaborative and incorporate strategies from Reader's and Writer's Workshop, including supporting reasoning with text evidence and main idea. Teachers also facilitate learning through field trips related to a historical unit or novel study, like the third-graders visiting the Heritage House after reading *Ostrich Eggs for Breakfast*. Students participate in grand conversations in order to process learning, test ideas, and draw conclusions. Each instructional decision is focused on bringing history to life for our students.

Additionally, our sixth graders study Teen Activism as part of their social issues and civic learning focus. Students are immersed in a variety of reading, writing, and inquiry strategies to grow themselves as future members of society. This thought-provoking focus is transformative, providing a space for students to uncover issues within their own community and devise personal plans to be a contributing citizen. As an extension of learning, our Student Leadership Team took this responsibility seriously and created a schoolwide service learning project to assemble sack lunches for the nearby homeless shelter.

Assessment methods allow students to demonstrate knowledge, namely, cross curricular projects, presentations, or written reports. Due to the collaborative nature of this content, teachers provide small group and individual interventions mostly focused on social and critical thinking skills as we seek to develop the whole child.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Acacia is proud of the many non-core subjects we offer to give our students a well rounded educational experience. These include our STEM & Robotics Lab, All the Arts for All the Kids, Physical Education (PE), and character building supports.

Our STEM & Robotics Lab is designed to engage all students in a project-based environment that explores the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Grades 1st through 6th attend STEM once a week, in six-week rotations. Kindergarteners attend STEM once a month. This experiential learning supports the acquisition of essential skills for 21st-century learning: collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and creativity. Students utilize technology and engineering through robotics and learn the principles of coding to address skills in science and mathematics. Collaborative activities provide opportunities for students to build social skills, practice perseverance, and work as a team to accomplish STEM challenges. Taught by a credentialed teacher, our STEM program ignites real-world problem solving and application.

Acacia places the Arts as a priority in every child's education. Through the All the Arts for All the Kids program, every student receives rotating lessons in art, dance, music, and theater as part of their regular school day. These lessons are thoughtfully designed to teach NGSS and Common Core Standards through the Arts. The Arts LAB movie-making bus provides students with media arts instruction, including filming and editing. Fifth and sixth-grade students can learn to play an instrument during a year-long elective. Third through sixth-grade students may participate in an after-school award winning Shared Theater Arts Grand Experience (STAGE) program where they perform a full-scale musical production. Through our Arts Education, students acquire essential skills to explore and grow their artistic talents and interests.

Our PE program is comprised of the SPARK (Sport, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids) curriculum for grades K-6. This research-based program has proven to increase our students' fitness and academic achievement, enjoyment of physical activity, and sport skills development. All students receive 200 minutes of PE every two weeks. Lessons for primary grades begin with getting students "Active As Soon As Possible" with a short activity or dance, then focus on specific skills, such as throwing, balancing, jumping, etc. Starting in third grade, students begin applying these skills to different sports they will play. Upper-grade curriculum includes a "Focus on Fitness," such as jumping rope, aerobic games, chasing and fleeing, fitness circuits, etc, and a spotlight on sports like basketball, hockey, volleyball, and flying disc. Our PE teacher and aides use a performance rubric matched to content standards and unit objectives. The PE team guides learning using an empowering "I can do this" mantra, which helps students acquire essential life skills such as perseverance, confidence, and self-control. In addition, students learn about social responsibility, sharing of ideas, acceptance of personal differences, and compromising. Students use a self-check assessment and peer-assessment sample to guide their learning as teams.

Acacia seeks to support our students' social-emotional development through character building and social skills activities. We create a positive and inclusive culture to help students acquire essential interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. In weekly classroom meetings, students learn to express concerns, recognize accomplishments, and advocate for their peers. In Reader's Workshop, students analyze characters' interactions using a social justice lens to evaluate how they can best respond to social situations. Students also participate in musicals focused on different social skills, such as conflict resolution, to equip them with the tools needed to grow their emotional intelligence. Additionally, our counselor hosts Lunch Bunch for those needing additional support to develop their social skills in a small group setting.

Through our PBIS program, we proudly meet the academic and socio-emotional needs of all students and recognize them for following our schoolwide expectations: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Ready. PBIS supports social competence and academic achievement by teaching behavioral expectations as a preventative measure. This establishes a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm. As students need, behavior supports are established to ensure each student is able to access their best self as they contribute to our learning community. Schoolwide, classroom, and individual incentives help motivate students to grow as scholars. Citizenship is celebrated with recognition notes, Principal Awards and game days.

3. Special Populations:

Acacia is responsive to the diverse needs of our special populations working to continually address instruction, interventions, and assessments.

About 11% of our population are Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) identified and grouped with high achieving students in specialized classes taught by GATE certified teachers. Teachers use innovative strategies and alternative modes of instruction to ensure the unique needs of all learners are met. By expanding the core curriculum with differentiated instruction, using curriculum compacting, and inquiry-based modules, we are able to help students engage and apply complexity and rigor. GATE teachers are attentive to nurture the unique social and emotional needs of our gifted students in ways that empower them to grow.

Acacia follows a highly structured Response to Intervention (RtI) process to identify and support students performing below grade level. This program is a systematic, data-driven approach to instruction providing schoolwide and classroom supports. Students are identified based on data analysis and a universal screening process. Instruction is targeted to meet individual needs and integrates a comprehensive system of tiered levels of support.

In Tier I, all students receive core instruction and behavioral support through PBIS. Students needing an additional assistance receive Tier II support through flexible grouping, small group instruction, and targeted behavior modifications. Tier III is an intensive program providing at-risk students with strategic support. ELA and Math RtI teachers use “push in” and “pull out” models to provide intervention in 6-8 week rotations. ELA RtI focuses on foundational literacy skills. Math RtI focuses on skills-based concepts. Students are presented with models, manipulatives, and cooperative learning activities to assist their ability to acquire SMPs. Students set growth targets and reflect on their progress. Formative assessments are used to monitor progress with ongoing communication with the teacher.

About 19% of our population are Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED). Our 2018 Math CAASPP (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress) scores show an achievement gap of a 15% point difference. Acacia is working to close this gap, beginning with adherence to the multitiered intervention process. To supplement in-class interventions, time with our Math RtI teacher has been increased so more students receive intervention, providing them with additional strategies, time, and attention. Teachers transfer effective ELA teaching practices to their math instruction, including open-ended questioning and collaborative learning practices. Additionally, teachers have begun collaborative conversations around strategic instructional practices, such as Number Talks and Counting Collections, to help solidify foundational math concepts in primary grades. Furthermore, administration checks in regularly with students and connects families with outside services when basic needs are not met. Our collective philosophy is that all staff are involved in the education of each child to ensure their needs are met.

Although not a significant subgroup, Acacia intentionally supports English Learners (EL) through an integrated ELD program that immerses students to listening, speaking, reading, and writing across all content areas. Based on comprehensive testing results, teachers target instruction and provide individualized language support through Balanced Literacy. Students are put into flexible strategy groups based on language acquisition needs and provided with Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English. Teachers regularly assess EL progress and adjust groups accordingly.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Our positive climate supports the academic, social, and emotional growth of our students. PBIS promotes the celebration of our students who demonstrate Respect, Responsibility, and Readiness to learn, our schoolwide goals. Across classrooms, community circles cultivate relationships and support learning by intentionally creating structures that foster safe, nurturing relationships and environments to ensure that all students are thriving and taking academic risks. Further, our Balanced Literacy approach includes ongoing celebrations that build the identity of our students as scholars. We strive to make social connections amongst students across grade levels with our Big Buddies/Little Buddies classroom partnerships. Passion Projects showcase inspire, and honor student accomplishments around self-selected topics. We participate in national initiatives, such as Global Play Day, giving students an opportunity for unstructured play which builds creativity and teamwork.

Critical to our school climate are the contributions made by our Student Leadership Team (SLT). Their goal is to promote empathy and positivity through service learning projects and modeling admirable behavior to younger students. SLT coordinates school spirit days, kindness campaigns, and canned food drives. They also design videos demonstrating exemplary problem solving behavior to foster a safe learning environment. The YouthTruth student survey which exemplifies our students' perspectives on school climate, revealed Acacia's most positive school experience to be the valuable relationship they have with their teachers.

Acacia's school culture is unified by a student-centered vision of purpose grounded in collegiality and collaboration whereby teachers and staff are valued and supported for their hard work, efforts, and contributions. Creating this important vision of purpose as a staff propelled the belief that our students are destined to make an impactful change in this world. This belief induces a level of gravity and mindfulness as teachers approach the complex task of educating our youth. Teachers are constantly learning to improve their practices which speaks volumes to their high standards of excellence and the supportive environment they establish. Our administrator, who recognizes passion and dedication, values input and equips teachers with resources, experiences, and professional development that shape and foster the student-centered vision. This influences teacher actions with the constant preparation they put forth to enhance their practice and speaks volumes to their sense of duty to the profession. Teachers are granted opportunities to take risks and explore new ideas, participate in decision-making, and are unwaveringly supported by administration during their growing journey as an educator.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

A critical cornerstone to the success of our students is our family and community engagement. We build community relationships with altruistic motives that contribute to the education profession as a whole.

We relish the opportunity to elicit volunteers from our parent community and have found success with the Acacia Partnership, a collaboration between our PTA and Parent Education Foundation. This partnership focuses on hosting community building events, including the annual Fall-Festival, Sons/Daughters of Acacia events, Acacia Talent Show, family picnics, and family movie nights to name a few. This helps create a positive and inclusive culture between parents, students, and staff and promotes a powerful sense of belonging. The engagement that results from this increases student competence and confidence as a learner. We recognize the importance of bridging school and home to transcend learning into both environments. As an example of this dedication and commitment, our Parent Foundation was created to financially support student achievement, such as 21st century learning resources students use everyday to personalize learning. We are also proud that our parents volunteer in classrooms for the unique opportunity to participate in our Balanced Literacy approach which allows them to be an audience for and give feedback to students. They experience first hand how to support their child at home, strengthening continuity for students which has resulted in schoolwide improvement of reading and writing performance.

Parents are kept in constant communication about our instructional focus via our monthly Panda Press newsletters, teacher weekly messages/newsletters and website resources, progress reports, conferences, and assessment reports. The administrator shares updates and resources pertinent to instructional practices during PTA, School Site Council, Foundation meetings and Coffee with the Principal.

Acacia encourages purposeful partnerships with local institutions and community members to support our overall school improvement. We place prospective teacher candidates from local universities in classrooms to gain mentorship and work with our students to support academic growth. The exchange provides a positive learning platform for future educators. Another vital community partner is our relationship with the Cotsen Foundation. Through this partnership of one-on-one coaching, Acacia has benefited from instrumental instructional and financial support which has directly impacted our academics. In return, Acacia is a host school for Cotsen professional development which energizes teachers to continually reflect and grow in their practice.

3. Professional Development:

Acacia School's professional development (PD) approach is to build capacity within our teachers by providing differentiated learning opportunities that align with our school and district visions. We recognize each teacher learns at a different pace and brings unique strengths to the team. Acacia's PD approach is grounded in Malcolm Knowles' work on andragogy. We value teachers' input and choice when planning for PD then provide meaningful reflection and output. This impact builds confidence in our teachers, honors their journeys, and provides individualized support.

Acacia provides multiple PD opportunities aligned with academic standards. In addition to grade level PLCs, teachers participate in staff PD that focuses solely on Balanced Literacy. This single focus is thoughtful in that it streamlines our study. Recently, all teachers calibrated writing and analyzed trends across grade levels. This allowed teachers to celebrate student growth within their perspective to the rigor of subsequent grades. This led to Instructional Rounds, a practice to gather site-wide trends and plan next steps. To build capacity, teachers facilitate portions of our PD highlighting their strengths and new learning. Teachers also attend districtwide PD for curriculum training to build their foundational practices that supports student achievement.

Acacia draws from different sources to differentiate PD through our Instructional Coach and consultants. Teachers participate in a non-evaluative coaching cycle with the Instructional Coach to grow individual Balanced Literacy practices. The coaching cycle is highly individualized, builds on teacher strengths, and provides opportunity for reflection directly connected to student achievement. This improves teacher efficacy and student achievement as observed by the increase of qualitative data captured through one-on-one conferences. As a result, teachers have a deeper knowledge of students' strengths and areas for growth, both academically and socio-emotionally. Additionally, Acacia works with consultants to receive expert training aligned with our approach by facilitating learning instead of lecturing, a fundamental of andragogy. In this differentiated PD teachers choose the topic for their study, moving along the continuum of learning. Recently, teachers selected between studying Interactive Read Aloud and deepening conferencing practices.

Our PD model gives us a universal language to reflect our core beliefs and instructional framework that transcends in a cross-curricular model. Administration participates in PD as a learner to model a growth mindset which unites us to a set of common principles. Consequently, our students experience continuity of expectations as they progress through grade levels and the leadership capacity of our teachers expands by maintaining our mission to provide the highest quality of instruction to the whole child.

4. School Leadership:

Acacia has a distributive shared leadership philosophy. We focus on building capacity through collaborative practices as an invitation for all constituents to invest in student achievement. Our leadership structure consists of our administration, Leadership Team, and key community/parent stakeholders. The role of administration is to lead by example: maintaining integrity, transparency, and collaboration with all.

The Leadership Team is comprised of grade level lead teachers, the Instructional Coach, and administration. Parents play an integral role through School Site Council, PTA, and the Acacia Education Foundation. The convergence of administration, staff, parents, and community partnerships provide a diverse yet unified team of leaders.

Acacia's leadership ensures our programs, policies, and resources align with our school vision and focus on student achievement. To do this, all constituents participate in creating the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). This document matches each program with resources and funding to support student achievement. The SPSA is a transparent document outlining funding allocations requiring parent and staff approval. Under the guidelines of SPSA, the leadership team regularly collects data to monitor the effectiveness of each program. This collaborative approach allows for multiple perspectives and regular feedback. Specifically, Acacia leadership decided to create the position of and fund our Instructional Coach. Administration and staff recognized the importance of this support for teachers and the direct impact it has on students. This was presented to the parent leadership who recognized the value, honored the teachers' request, and provided financial support. Our PE program, STEM Lab, and Math Interventions are examples of other programs similarly established.

Acacia's leadership team serves to sustain relationships between staff, parents, and the community. The purpose of our meetings is to celebrate achievements, provide up-to-date information, align curricular focus, and work together to bridge the home-school connection. As a result, we have a high population of knowledgeable parent volunteers who contribute to our school community. Acacia's relationship with the Cotsen Foundation was a catalyst in transforming our teaching practices. In return, Acacia serves as a Balanced Literacy lab site for Cotsen and district trainings. We believe in the reciprocity of our work, knowing we would not be where we are without the support of many.

Together, Acacia's leadership is a myriad of voices working together to improve student learning for each child.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most influential practice in our school's success is our Balanced Literacy approach that blends reading, writing, listening, and speaking strategies. We thoughtfully implement Reader's and Writer's Workshop along with literacy support practices to target all literacy standards. Through Balanced Literacy, our teachers have a deeper understanding of how students access content standards and respond to each child's strengths and areas of growth. This academic approach has had a positive impact on assessment outcomes and the social development of students.

Teachers thoughtfully layer the Balanced Literacy practices throughout their schedules, recognizing each component offers a different level of support. For example, workshop includes direct instruction with extended time for students to work towards autonomy. An interactive read aloud provides teacher-led examples of the metacognition readers do to comprehend the text.

Each component is purposeful, and the data collected informs the direction of subsequent lessons. This responsive approach is highly strategic. Balanced Literacy provides students with multiple opportunities to work towards mastery and transfer learning across contexts, one of the highest markers of learning. In reading, fourth graders conduct character analysis by decomposing how characters change over time and how their interactions with others influence behavior. Then, students transfer learning to narrative writing by developing their character based on the impact of secondary characters' behaviors.

One benefit of our Balanced Literacy approach is the way we help grow our students socially and emotionally. Although teaching points are written as a skill and strategy, our aim is to develop scholars who can apply these in other areas of life. An example includes the teaching point, "Readers are mindful of overgeneralizations by remembering that some characters' perspectives are not all perspectives," which extends to real-life lessons for students to uncover bias both as readers and citizens.

Assessment is ongoing in Balanced Literacy. Most powerful is the qualitative data collected when teachers work one-on-one with students. Teachers have a deeper knowledge of their students' abilities, which has proven to be highly useful in parent conferences to establish credibility and communicate explicitly how their child is progressing rather than just a test score. Teacher efficacy has increased as they are more knowledgeable about each student's progress.

Since implementing the Balanced Literacy approach, we have experienced a heightened increase in students' love of reading and writing as well as our ELA CAASPP scores. We are cognizant that this is a difficult feat and attribute our growth to the strategic instructional supports and collaboration of all involved in the achievement of our students.