

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 Mr. Paul-Andre White

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

Official School Name Frank C. Leal Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 12920 Droxford Street

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

Cerritos CA 90703-6068
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Los Angeles County

Telephone (562) 229-7880

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Web site/URL https://leales.edlioschool.com/

E-mail paul-andre.white@abcusd.us

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. Mary Sieu

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail mary.sieu@abcusd.us

District Name ABC Unified School District Tel. (562) 926-5566

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Ernie Nishii

(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):
- 19 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 29 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	42	56	98
1	58	46	104
2	47	57	104
3	61	46	107
4	40	56	96
5	57	67	124
6	67	56	123
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	372	384	756

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 59 % Asian
 - 5 % Black or African American
 - 17 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 5 % White
 - 12 % 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: 7%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	25
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	23
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	48
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	737
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 15 %
112 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Chamorro, English, Filipino (Tagalog), French, Gujarati, Indonesian, Japanese, Kannada, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Marathi, Other languages of the Philippines, Other non-English, Punjabi, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Taiwanese, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 21 %
Total number students who qualify: 160

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %
31 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>11</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>2</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>5</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: 5
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.	27
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 28:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
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. 2013

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

At Leal we respect ourselves and others, we take responsibility for our actions, and we maintain a safe environment that encourages learning and sparks creativity. Our purpose is to promote confidence, knowledge, and the love of learning.

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

Student selection for the school-wide magnet program is managed through the district's schools of choice process. This lottery process is made available to students who reside both within and outside the district boundaries. Presently, 297 students, roughly 39% of our enrollment, attend Leal on permit. Of that number, 228 are here on an intra-district permit and 69 on an inter-district permit.

PART III – SUMMARY

Our mission at Leal Elementary School is to provide a space where we respect ourselves and others, we take responsibility for our actions, and we maintain a safe environment that encourages learning and sparks creativity. Our purpose is to promote confidence, knowledge, and a love of learning. Growth and success then come from students, parents, community, and staff feeling empowered and engaged.

Located in the city of Cerritos in southern California, Leal serves students from kindergarten to 6th grade. The current enrollment of 756 students is composed of American Indian or Alaska Native (1%), Asian (59%), Black or African American (5%), Hispanic/Latino (17%), Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (1%), White (5%), and two or more races (12%). Leal (ES) also serves English language learners who comprise 15.7% of enrollment while students identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged make up 20.5% of our population. We truly serve a diverse group of learners who consistently demonstrate sustained success because our environment is one where all are treated with dignity and respect.

Our learning environment is student-centered with an emphasis on developing both academic and social/emotional growth. In 2018, students exceeded state standards by scoring 101.6 points above average in Language Arts and 77.7 points above average in Mathematics. The highly qualified staff work diligently to provide a balanced curriculum based on the content standards, which includes the use of educational technology and visual and performing arts instruction. We are also able to offer both accelerated learning opportunities through the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program, as well as academic supports to close the achievement gap; through reading intervention and EL support. Leal (ES) is also fully committed to providing a school culture where the social and emotional needs of our students are readily met and supported. Our ongoing work in this area was reaffirmed in 2018 when we were recognized by the state as a gold medal school for Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) implementation. Since then, we have significantly bolstered our schoolwide program through the addition of a full-time School Social Worker. With this added resource we are able to readily offer services, such as individual and group counseling, Check-in/Check-out, restorative justice, trauma informed care, and classroom lessons rooted in our schoolwide expectations (to be respectful, responsible and safe).

Leal (ES) takes every opportunity to show our school pride and spirit. Each Wednesday the staff and students participate in our School Spirit Day. Classes report their level of participation and are recognized the next morning during announcements. We also have special theme days on the first Friday of each month which correlate to lessons on interpersonal traits meant to build friendship and inclusivity. Festive occasions such as Halloween, Valentine's Day and Dr. Seuss Day offer additional opportunities for students and staff to engage in fun and spirit building activities.

Leal benefits from a strong home and school partnership that is made apparent by our active PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and Education Foundation. Our PTA provides support for schoolwide programs emphasizing academic development, such as instructional technology, field trips, and digital subscriptions. Additionally, the PTA works with the school to continually find avenues by which to include and welcome families onto campus through programs and special events like Family STEM Night, Harvest Festival, and Parent Engagement Nights. The foundation, known as the Leal Elementary Arts Program (LEAP), is focused on sustaining and supporting our visual and performing arts magnet. Through their support, we are able to take on a full-time theater arts instructor and offer a hands-on art history program to all students. LEAP also generously supports our school band and subsidizes a yearly school musical which is performed at a local high school theater. Like PTA, LEAP works to deepen student and parent connectedness through culturally immersive events such as our annual Diwali, Lunar New Year, and International festivals.

Since last being recognized as a Blue Ribbon School, the school leadership has changed hands and several initiatives have been implemented, including the transition to new state standards and assessments. PBIS has been systematically put in place, a School Leadership Team with representatives from all grades meets regularly as a means of developing shared leadership and building capacity. A school calendar facilitating weekly structured and organic professional collaboration has been adopted, and we provide 1:1 access to a device for every student. In that time, Leal has been recognized as a California Distinguished School, a Gold

Ribbon School, an Exemplary Arts Education Program school, a Gold Medal PBIS school, as well as a California Business for Education Excellence Honor Roll school.

Our sustained commitment to providing an engaging and rigorous learning environment is evidenced by these honors, but more so by the success our students achieve in and out of the classroom. Our ongoing reflective practice shows we are committed to developing well-rounded students that will contribute in significant ways to the advancement of our society. Leal is an exceptional school providing high caliber academic and arts programs that open the gates to a world of possibilities in a safe and nurturing environment.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

Utilizing the district adopted curriculum and resources, Leal teachers typically spend upwards of 40% their daily instructional time focusing on reading and language arts. Because the skills learned within this core subject are universally applied across all content areas, there is a premium placed on mastery and development within the discipline.

Teachers routinely apply diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to monitor student progress toward mastery, adjusting instruction accordingly. Three times per year, students take the STAR Reading test which pinpoints their reading level or Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This data point not only helps teachers make sure students are accessing text at an appropriate level, but also serves as a benchmark for reading. Twice per year, students in grade 2 through 6 take district issued assessments in language arts and in the spring, all students take a writing assessment. Data from the assessments are reviewed during grade level collaboration sessions and help guide data-based conversations about instructional practices and strategies.

Teachers routinely scaffold instruction and support struggling learners through varied instructional strategies and in-class interventions as needed. Should greater support be necessary, students can take part in our Spotlight ELA program which is a tier 2 intensive pull-out program.

Leal does implement a 1st-6th grade literacy program through Accelerated Reader (AR). Working in conjunction with the STAR test, learners are issued a points goal each trimester that correlates to their individual ZPD and reading frequency which is set at 30 minutes per day. Though not a mandatory component of our curriculum, we have been able to draw a direct correlation between student growth in fluency and comprehension to their participation in AR. In addition, because goals are individually set based on the reading level of each student, all learners experience success and satisfaction which in turn promotes confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

1b. Mathematics:

Like most districts, ABC Unified has developed a curriculum and pacing guide for each of the core content areas aligned to state standards. As a result, all teachers have implemented a comprehensive core curriculum that systematically progresses student learning throughout the school year. All content areas, including mathematics, are approached with instructional strategies that incorporate critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication.

Working with the provided curricular resources, teachers are able to differentiate math instruction for all students. A robust digital library puts a resource catalogue rich with supplemental materials at the tip of teachers' fingertips. Access to those items has increased student development, not only for struggling learners, but for those exceeding grade level as well. The component that both teachers and students are most excited about during math instruction is the embedded Problem Based Interactive Learning (PBIL) component. PBIL activities are highly engaging and stimulate students to approach a math-based problem using new and previously learned skills. Learners exhibit a lot of pride when presenting their findings to classmates, especially when they realize how to solve the problem in a new way.

As a supplemental resource, we offer access to IXL math to all students in grades 1 through six. This web-based computer adaptive program develops student fluency in math through an interface that is as engaging as it is educational. With the flexibility of around-the-clock access via any device, IXL allows our students to work on and deepen their number sense from anywhere. The teacher dashboard gives immediate feedback and allows staff to monitor progress, assign student practice by standard, and even see "time on task". Since first providing access to our learners in 2017, we have seen very steady growth amongst users that routinely

access the program just 10 minutes per day. Teachers are now regularly assigning time on IXL as part of their homework because it is so effective at bolstering classroom instruction.

1c. Science:

Leal is in the midst of transitioning and aligning science instruction to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Throughout the course of the year, teachers have been examining curricular options available for adoption and becoming more familiar with the depth and complexity needed for student mastery in the NGSS. Even during this transitional period, there has been a clear shift in instructional practice among the staff when it comes to science. They are taking distinct steps away from the memorization of isolated facts and methods to a broader more conceptual understanding, which enables learners to grasp ideas in a transferable manner. Teachers routinely present a demonstration or activity that raises a question students can then explore using critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

At Leal, learning about science is not restricted to the classroom setting. In third grade, students perform two musical theater productions that align to the science standards. “Star Search” is a wild romp through our solar system and explores the contributions the planets (and Pluto too) make to our universe. “Name that Internal Organ” is a musical comedy that examines the important structures in the human body, focusing on the digestive, respiratory, circulation, and urinary systems. Through a special grant from Boeing, our 3rd and 4th grade students are all given the opportunity work with Dash & Dot robots as a means to introduce block coding through play and exploration. Our 5th and 6th grade students take a dive into the world of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) by building recycled racers, parachutes, and solar ovens that, once completed, go head-to-head against each other to determine our site champions. These finalists are then invited to demonstrate their models at the district’s STEM Olympics held annually in May. Our largest and most successful science theme program is our Family STEM Night. During what has now become a Leal tradition, this program offers families the opportunity to explore, investigate and invent.

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

Teachers at Leal often creatively embed history and social studies in with other disciplines. Our first grade students, for example, learn about American symbols. Each class participates in a musical about American symbols, reinforcing the lessons taught in class in a creative way, and coming back to it again later during class discussions. Our 6th grade students present themselves as historical figures in their living history museum. During this culminating assessment for their unit on ancient civilizations, students research, memorize, and present the achievements, struggles, and contributions of their historical figure. Dressed in full costume, learners present their 1 minute production to students, parents and community members.

Taking a more literary approach, the 5th grade students enrich their core curriculum through historical fiction. Three novels tied to their social studies standards are read throughout the school year and enhanced through online interactive novel study assessments. When studying the American revolution, students audition for roles as lawyers, defendants, jury members, and judge as they prepare to hold a mock trial of the Boston Tea Party. Students are responsible for speaking, researching, planning, and performing the trial.

Students are also exposed to history and social studies content through field trips. Third grade students have the opportunity to visit the nearby Artesia Historical Museum. With a focus on learning local history, students are able to make direct connections and observe the changes that have taken place in their own neighborhood from one generation to the next. In 4th grade, learners first study and then visit a California mission, helping them develop a foundational understanding of how the state was settled. After learning about the impact the 21 missions made on California, students are challenged to develop a 22nd mission, given a finite number of resources. This sort of project based learning not only excites students, but also deepens their learning and understanding.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at Leal are routinely given the opportunity to learn and grow beyond the core curriculum. Every student spends over two hours a week being exposed to learning opportunities outside their classroom. Our learners are actively participating in programs that expose them on a regular basis to the arts, physical education, technology, and literacy.

Every student at Leal receives 45 minutes of weekly instruction from a credentialed theater teacher. In the fall, students rehearse and prepare for our annual schoolwide “Holiday Sing” performance. This program showcases singing, dancing, and instrumentals by our school band. Every spring, in collaboration with classroom teachers, our theater teacher casts students in each class in musicals that are aligned to grade level content standards. In third grade, for example, they perform “Biomes” which teaches about animal habitats and adaptations. Fourth graders focus on early American history by learning lines and lyrics from their play “The Thirteen Colonies.”

Throughout the year, all students are also formally exposed to the visual arts through our partnership with Fibo. Each trimester, Fibo sends instructors on site and expose students to the impact artists, such as Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, or Picasso, have made on society. During assemblies they learn about the artistic methodologies used to create their art. The following week the Fibo staff returns and meet with each class for a workshop. During that time students are guided through the process of creating their own piece of art using similar methodologies and mediums inspired by the artist they had previously learned about during the assembly.

Beginning in 4th grade, students are offered the elective opportunity to join the school band. Boasting 125 members, our band is one of the largest in the district. Students have band practice twice a week, once before school and once during school, for a total of 90 minutes. Throughout the year, the beginning and advanced bands perform multiple times at school and district events as well as on special occasions for city programs.

What is exciting about having such an arts forward focus is that we are now seeing activities expand beyond the scope of the school day. Multiple annual evening performances are produced by community groups and parent volunteers, including a Spring Musical, Diwali Night, Chinese Lunar Festival, and the International Festival, each offering an opportunity for students to showcase their talents.

In order to meet state instructional standards, each grade level at Leal is responsible for planning a minimum of 200 physical education minutes for every 10 days of school. Throughout the school year you may see some classes running agility courses, a grade level kickball tournament, or perhaps catch a glimpse of our 5th graders preparing for the physical fitness test. The spring is also when we hold tryouts for our track team. Students in 5th and 6th grade are invited to participate and prepare for the districtwide meet held on the first Saturday in June. Once on the team, students have practice two to three times a week until the competition. So whether it is a soccer game on the kindergarten playground or a volleyball match on the 6th grade court, our students are exposed to a variety of activities that promote fitness and a healthy lifestyle.

Though every student has access to their own school issued device, every class receives 45 minutes of weekly instruction in our computer lab with a certificated teacher. We have found that having that focused instruction develops the basic skills necessary for navigating digital assessments and projects assigned in the classroom. It also serves as a space where we can teach digital responsibility and citizenship. Additionally, every class visits our school library on a weekly basis, also for 45 minutes per session. During that time, students select books, read, or get read to, and are offered the opportunity to take Accelerated Reader quizzes which tests their reading comprehension.

There is no doubt that each of these programs make an impact on our learners. Clearly, they bolster their

academic achievement, but of greater consequence, is how they support the development of well rounded and diverse learners brimming with creativity and self confidence.

3. Special Populations:

Leal elementary is responsible for the ongoing growth of development of a varied student population. Our students with disabilities are supported through access to multiple resources including two special day classes, a resource specialist, as well as a speech and language pathologist. Students performing above grade level are supported by teachers who provide embedded curricular opportunities through implementing strategies that have a higher degree of depth and complexity. In upper grades, teachers are Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) certified and infuse the use of GATE Icons into their instruction. This enables them to differentiate instruction for all learners in their classes. English Language learners (ELL) have a designated daily instructional block at every grade level reserved to specifically support their development of the English language. Emerging ELL students also participate in further development through our Spotlight ELL program. That program, along with our Spotlight ELA initiative to support struggling learners, pulls students out of the classroom for intensive supports at designated times throughout the week with a credentialed teacher.

Spotlight ELL students meet three times per week for 40 minutes per session in a small group setting. The focus of the program is to support emerging ELL students develop their vocabulary, phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension. During each of these sessions, the intervention specialist applies a variety of resources and instructional strategies to support student learning with an emphasis on implementing Imagine Learning. A district supported program, Imagine Learning is an adaptive web based language and literacy program. It features engaging interactive activities, videos and games. Using data reports provided by Imagine Learning, the teacher regularly works with individual students, or sometimes in pairs, on specific areas of need. Additionally, she collaborates with the classroom teachers and parents to share progress and gain feedback.

Students qualifying for ELA support, identified through various assessments and our Student Study Team (SST) process, make up the Spotlight ELA groups which meet for 40 minutes two times per week. Students taking part in these groups are at or below the 25th percentile within their respective grade level. Group sizes range from four to nine students and largely depend on the level of support needed. For students in the primary grades, there is an emphasis on developing foundational reading skills such as phonemic awareness, decoding and vocabulary. Upper grade students typically receive support in reading comprehension and fluency, though needs can vary.

The goal and purpose of both ELA groups is to close the achievement gap that exists between themselves and their typical peers. Students taking part in these programs not only experience gains in their academic performance, but in their self-confidence as well.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Developing and nurturing a positive school culture for students and staff is the cornerstone to Leal’s success. Work is continually being done to provide a space that is inclusive, caring, and supportive. We strive to make all stakeholders feel as though they belong and are loved. As a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school, we have implemented a multi-tiered approach to providing social, emotional, and behavior support. Since its inception at Leal 4 years ago, PBIS has improved the social, emotional and academic outcomes for our students.

Built on the premise of praising expected behaviors and outcomes, interactions between staff and students are overwhelmingly positive and uplifting. Students collect “PAW Slips” which are issued by staff when learners are observed abiding by our schoolwide expectations, which are to Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe. These PAW slips can then be submitted for rewards and prizes throughout the year. This year, we have also implemented what we call “First Fridays.” On the first Friday of each month, we hold a special theme day tied to a focus for the month, which is accompanied by curriculum. Themes have included: “Start With Hello,” “In My Shoes,” and “Ways to Connect.” Students are also supported through our Check-in/Check-out (CICO) process implemented by our school social worker. Nominated by teachers, students in this program check-in daily to retrieve a goal sheet and encouragement. Teachers provide feedback throughout the day and, at the end of each day, students check-out with the social worker and review the goal sheet together before sending it home to be signed. This program has proven to be very effective and under the guidance of our social worker, and we now have 6th grade ambassadors that mentor and support primary students who are a part of CICO.

Aside from managing CICO, our full time school social worker coordinates with staff for push-ins focusing on creating a positive environment. During these strategic sessions social/emotional lessons are taught through children’s books such as “Spoon” for addressing self-confidence, and “Beautiful Oops” for developing a growth mindset. Additionally, the school social worker provides support for referred students on an individual and small group basis.

The needs for adults, as outlined by Maslow’s hierarchy, do not vastly differ from those of children, but are supported in different ways. The administration, with its open door policy, is accessible and responsive to staff needs. There is consistent and predictable communication as well as a clear effort for transparency and the equitable distribution of resources. Collaboration and shared leadership also contribute to a culture of very cooperative professionals where there is a generous sharing of strategies, lessons and ideas.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Overwhelmingly, our school community is most responsive to digitally based forms of communication. As such, the primary avenues by which we share information are our website and via Remind which is an application based method of communication. Though a variety of messages are typically shared throughout the week, the most pertinent communicate is disseminated every Friday evening. The “Friday Flyer,” a digital newsletter highlighting events for the upcoming week, is sent out via Remind, Facebook and Twitter to each of our stakeholders.

The collaborative network that exists at Leal is rooted in partnership. With a clear objective of supporting academically based initiatives, our PTA provides the school with contributions to causes that directly impact students. Through our partnership, the school is able to send students on field trips, program assemblies, and provide access to web based learning tools. Our foundation, know as Leal Elementary Arts Program (LEAP), is focused on supporting the school’s VAPA magnet. Contributions from LEAP are earmarked for arts based programs; namely, the salary of our theater arts teacher and the in-school art education assemblies and workshops. Clearly, in order to be able to commit to providing such significant resources to the school, the greater community understands the impact these groups make and feel connected enough that they readily support them.

School connectedness at Leal can also be exemplified by the family engagement nights held throughout the school year which are part of the partnership between the school, PTA, and LEAP. Whether it is Harvest Festival, Diwali, Lunar New Year, Open House or our International Festival, our community is always there to support our students and school.

Several community groups have established sustaining partnerships with Leal with the joint objective of providing diverse growth opportunities for our students. The JC Culture Foundation (JCF) recruits 10 to 15 students per year and teaches them complicated Chinese dragon and lion dance routines which they later perform throughout the region. Another arts based partnership emerged with 3-2-1 Action! Kids' Musical Theater. Every spring, the company takes up to 80 students and casts them in a musical theater production held at a local high school. Seeing a need to develop young leaders, a bond was forged with the city of Cerritos. Annually, up to 30 nominated fifth grade students take part in the Students in Leadership Training (SILT) program. Taught after school by staff from the recreation department, the six week leadership institute introduces participants to subject matter that builds confidence and capacity.

3. Professional Development:

Leal approaches professional learning in a collaborative manner that also develops shared leadership. At least once per month, grade level teams meet and review agenda items disseminated through their School Leadership Team (SLT) representative. Through the school plan, teams are granted two full days together during the first six months of school to deepen their understanding of the curriculum and implement new instructional practices. During staff meetings, curriculum teacher leaders in ELA, Math, and Science routinely share insights and best practices gleaned during training sessions at the district office. Additionally, during this time, the school social worker will offer best practices for social/emotional support. Each of these practices improve the efficacy of the staff by building their capacity and thereby supporting student achievement.

The professional development (PD) plan implemented by the district focuses on improving instructional practices in language arts, English language development, math, science, and technology. Instructional rounds in each of those content areas are scheduled at least twice per school year for each grade level. While substitutes cover their classes, teachers attend a 30 minute instructional lesson during which new content or strategies are presented. Immediately following, there is a demonstration lesson provided by the trainer emphasizing the new skill to be learned. After a short break, teams reconvene and debrief the model lesson and new skill(s) learned. This model has been effective as teachers report enjoying observing the model lesson and readily looking to implement their new learning. Another area of recent focus for district level professional development has been GATE certification. Having adopted a new GATE model, upper grade teachers throughout the district needed to be trained and re-certified. For the last two years, eight cohorts have been formed and trained on GATE Icons. Each cohort required teachers to take several days out of the classroom in order to attain their certification. In so doing teachers were newly equipped with strategies capable of enriching the learning of all their students.

The professional learning for administrators occurs for a full day once per month at the district office. Topics during these Leadership Academy workshops vary greatly but are always pertinent and often presented by other site administrators. More than just information sharing, these meetings are highlighted by a clear and deliberate effort to build capacity within the site leaders through a variety of approaches including book studies, guest presenters, reflection, and collaborative discourse.

4. School Leadership:

“The real job of a leader is not about being in charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge.” This statement by Simon Sinek exemplifies the leadership philosophy in place at Leal. The administration is diligent about putting people first and addressing the concerns and needs of each stakeholder. With their open door policy, the principal and assistant to the principal (ATP) are readily available, approachable, and receptive to students, parents, and staff. The time invested in taking care of those in their charge has led to the development of individual connections and relationships that have a lasting positive impact on the

school community as a whole. Therefore, it is those connections and relationships that lead to the school's continued success.

With so much time absorbed in building connections and working directly with students, it is necessary for the principal and ATP to be very efficient at managing timelines and projects. To help accomplish that, the administrative team divides tasks and responsibilities. Curriculum, staffing, school budget, school plan, PTA, master scheduling, and school-to-home communications are primarily taken on by the principal. Student assessments, student discipline, LEAP foundation, Student Study Team, 504 plans, English language learner progress monitoring, and tech support are typically overseen by the ATP. Any remaining responsibilities, such as special education meeting coverage, student rewards, and night events are shared amongst the team.

The inclusive leadership model at Leal has been strategically assembled in a manner that builds capacity and provides opportunities for shared responsibility. Grade level representatives attend monthly Site Leadership Team (SLT) meetings with the administration during which school business and teacher concerns are addressed in a confidential manner. Within a week's time, those teacher representatives run grade-level meetings reviewing topics discussed at SLT as well as incorporating other team-level items. Curriculum teacher leaders also take on some of the shared responsibilities connected to informing and developing staff on matters pertaining to instructional content. Information is brought back to the site from district level committee meetings for math, language arts, science, and technology. To ensure balanced representation, there is one primary grade teacher and one upper grade teacher on each of the core content committees. It is important to note that though some responsibilities taken on by staff may be more informal than others, they are no less valued or appreciated. Some of these vital contributions include adjunct duties, union representation, and student supervision.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The greatest shift that has taken place at Leal since last being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2014 is a deliberate effort to maximize collaboration. The challenge was in finding ways to build that time into the school calendar in a systematic and consistent manner. The first step taken was aligning the times each grade level goes to their pull-out programs (POPs), which consist of the library, computer lab, and theater arts. Previously, teams had been scattered throughout the day in a seemingly haphazard fashion. By aligning POP times by grade level, teams increased their potential for collaboration by more than 2 hours per week. This additional time for teams to meet informally proved to be productive and laid the foundation for the development and adoption of a more structured collaborative model.

Understanding the importance of time together to develop as a professional learning community, the teaching staff overwhelmingly supported a change in the bell schedule. Their agreement to that change enabled the establishment of a weekly window of time for the staff to gather, and for a structured collaboration schedule to be put in place. In so doing, the formal collaboration time at Leal increased by 200%. Now, every Wednesday, dismissal is an hour earlier than normal. It is during that time that staff come together and engage as a community of professional educators, so they can work on systems to better the school and support the development of every child.

Whether as a grade level team or as a whole staff, the gift of time to listen, think, share and create together has had a profound impact, and propelled academic and social/emotional development of our students. Since being implemented, the additional time has also been used to support the transition to new standards. It has been used to become more proficient with the newly adopted language arts and math curriculums. Additionally, a significant amount of collaboration has taken place when working with each other on the infusion of technology in the classroom, and the integration of PBIS. Without the collaborative structure in place, the depth and complexity in which school programs and initiatives have been implemented would not be what they are today, and in turn, neither would our students.