

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name PS 253, The Magnet School of Multicultural Humanities  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 601 Oceanview Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Brooklyn City      NY State      11235-6399 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Kings

Telephone (718) 332-3331

Fax (718) 743-7194

Web site/URL http://www.PS253.org

E-mail lsperon@schools.nyc.gov

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Ms. Isabel DiMola  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail IDimola@schools.nyc.gov

District Name New York City Geographic District #21 Tel. (718) 648-0209

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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

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

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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

1. 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

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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):
  - 22 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 10 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools

38 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	18	15	33
K	87	66	153
1	81	75	156
2	85	72	157
3	80	57	137
4	85	72	157
5	67	76	143
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	503	433	936

\*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
  - 35 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 37 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 26 % White
  - 1 % 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: 14%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	82
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	44
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	126
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	911
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.14
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	14

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 21%  
197 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Arabic, Baluchi, Bengali, Cantonese, Dari/Persian Farsi, English, Georgian, Lithuanian, Pilopino (Tagolog), Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tadjik (Tajik), Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 85%  
Total number students who qualify: 796

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
135 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>9</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>17</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>46</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>55</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 16
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	37
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	30
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	27
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	95%	95%	95%
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.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

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

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

PS 253 is a safe, equitable, empowering environment embedded in high expectations with increasingly rigorous and challenging instruction that prepares our students to meet the global expectations of the 21st century.

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

In 2005 we became a Magnet School for Multicultural Humanities. The school received funding for three years. The focus of our magnet was Social Studies and Humanities. Entry into the school was based on parent choice and availability of space, in each grade, inclusive of ENL and SWD, rather than the traditional zoning regulations set forth by the DOE. From 2008 until the present we have received no additional funding and students are now enrolled based on the current policy of the DOE followed by all schools within NYC.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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P.S.253 resides in the heart of the Brighton Beach Community of Brooklyn, New York. This is a low income, ethnically diverse community, the majority of whom are of Mexican, Pakistani, Middle Eastern, Ukrainian and Russian. They keep us grounded in the work we do as a school, to provide an education for our students, and a support system for our families built on a relationship of mutual trust and utmost respect.

Under the leadership of our current principal and administrative team, working closely with our community, our school has moved from a school whose doors were almost closed due to corrective action to our current ranking as one of the highest performing elementary schools in the district. Each year we continue to make consistent gains in proficiency and progress. In 2003 we were one of the lowest performing schools citywide. Our trends over the last 5 years have evidenced a 39% gain in ELA and a 40% gain in Math proficiency levels. We currently demonstrate outstanding academic performance with 71% of our students proficient in ELA and 82% of our students proficient in mathematics. This past year, we made historical gains with a 20% increase in literacy proficiency and a 21% increase in mathematics proficiency, one of the highest proficiency gains found city wide. We are extremely proud of these achievements as our school serves students from one of the most impoverished and high needs neighborhoods in our district.

The success of our school lives in its journey of fostering relationships, changing mindsets and raising expectations beyond what most thought possible. We are committed to closing achievement gaps with a shared philosophy that every student can and will reach proficiency. We are a team whose success is reliant upon a culture grounded in learning and sharing with one another.

Our success stems from building a community of lifelong learners which includes constant cycles of learning embedded in specific, actionable and targeted professional development. These plans are constantly refined to bring the specific learning teachers need to improve their pedagogy, believing even the most “highly effective” teacher has room to grow. We focus the work on “what” we are teaching and “how” we are teaching it, creating a shared and cohesive understanding. This has created a community where administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents see themselves as lifelong learners embracing the work and looking forward to new and creative ways to reach the next level of success.

We work to nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning and high expectations where teachers feel valued and supported. We access staff expertise by promoting activities such as lab sites, peer coaching, mentoring, and collegial inquiry. Teachers willingly open their classrooms to colleagues, lead professional development and share ideas and resources. We utilize Google Drive as a central hub to share lessons, resources and personal videos. This has allowed us to build strong leadership capacity among teachers, as well as a culture of collegial respect and support.

We believe that data provides insight into what we need to modify to improve student outcomes. Through systematic progress monitoring embedded in cycles of examining assessment data of school wide, grade bands, classes and subgroups we meet the needs of diverse learners. Looking at student work has created regular opportunities for reflection that has impacted instruction. All data including biographical, reading levels, baseline, interim and culminating exam scores are shared live on Google Drive, which allows instantaneous access to student performance and progress monitoring. This data is used to inform instructional decisions, make programmatic changes, revise curriculum and guide professional development. Teachers reflect on each assessment with concrete next steps and action plans that focus on groups and individual students to ensure each child has a plan to meet their needs.

Our children are the most important piece of our puzzle. We are committed to fostering caring, confident and open-minded individuals with the 21st century skills to be successful in the world they live in. This has meant providing them with social emotional awareness that empowers them to be reflective, to think flexibly, consider other perspectives, persevere through challenges and take creative risks. We have established a student climate that embraces learning through student voice and agency. This is evident across classrooms in our work with Habits of Mind, Student Led Clubs, and Meta-Cognitive Learning. These have been key pieces for our most struggling students by tapping into their interests and instilling in

them a positive mindset that they can and will succeed.

These core foundational pieces have allowed our school community to thrive. These pieces guide our day to day work and make us who we are, a community of learners united in bringing our children what they need to grow and flourish academically and emotionally in order to become productive and actionable members of society.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

Our Reading curriculum is grounded in the belief that all students, regardless of disability or language, can and will learn how to read proficiently. We teach reading through a model of actionable learning in which student ownership lies at the heart of the work. This approach fosters productive struggle and metacognitive reflection so that students persevere through challenges and reflect on understanding.

In PreK-2 we focus on developing strong foundational skills with an in-depth focus on phonics through explicit instruction combined with whole language approaches. This integration enables us to appeal to the diverse learning needs of all students, including our ENL and Special Education students, by ensuring all have access to the strategies that best support their learning needs. Our core program is Wilson's Foundations which utilizes tactile, auditory and visual learning.

Across all grades PreK-5 we are dedicated to fostering strong readers who can fully comprehend, as well as think deeply and critically, about rigorous text across a wide variety of genres. Our curriculum is school created by teacher/administrative teams grounded in research based approaches through thematic units of study aligned to state standards in ELA, Social Studies and Science. Through thematic integration we are able to support students in deepening understanding of content in order to think critically, as well as develop the literacy skills and strategies needed to be successful readers. Each unit begins with a baseline aligned to targeted literacy skills derived from the standards. These skills are assessed as a means to drive instruction and target the specific needs of individual students through small guided groups.

Progress monitoring enables us to track progress throughout each unit and make revisions as needed. At the end each unit students take a culminating exam to track progress and plan for next steps. Growth percentages for skill mastery are calculated for both class and grade in order to measure gains, meet with teachers to discuss action plans and make school wide instructional decisions. Other assessments used to inform instructional decisions include technology based programs such as Iready Online diagnostic and NewsELA along with Fountas & Pinnell Running Records and Fall/Spring benchmarks assessments.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

Our Mathematics curriculum is grounded in providing students a strong foundation in the conceptual understanding of mathematics; the belief that math is much more than just isolated facts. Our approach to learning is student-centered, providing opportunities to explore problems collaboratively, engage in conceptually based and number sense activities, and use manipulatives and visual representations to deeply understand the math. To support our ENL students, vocabulary and visuals play a key role. Daily incorporation of math vocabulary fosters understanding of word problems and concepts.

Intense professional development in mathematics provided by Generation Ready and teacher inquiry work has provided teachers with the content understanding that has allowed for access and entry points for all learners. We focus on teaching students how to think flexibly using multiple approaches to solve problems and use reasoning skills to justify their thinking.

Our curriculum is designed through a purposeful sequenced progression, aligned to the standards, that builds on understanding year to year. Our curriculum is school created by teacher/administrative teams using pieces from the standards, Engage NY, Generation Ready, Exemplars and Go Math. Our school curriculum provides our students an opportunity to deeply understand math.

Assessment plays a major role in the success of our math curriculum. All grades begin with a pre-requisite exam that assess the skills needed prior to learning new content. This allows teachers to remediate and re-teach concepts. We utilize ongoing assessment throughout the unit, as well as baseline and culminating

performance tasks, along with end of unit exams that assess the fluency and problem solving skills from the unit. Other assessments include Iready and Fall/Spring benchmarks. All data is tracked and analyzed by class and grade to plan for instructional next steps as well as inform school wide decisions.

### **1c. Science:**

Our Science Program is supported by Amplify Learning and teacher created curricula, grounded in an inquiry based approach to student learning. The goal of our program is to ensure that our students build knowledge in science which enables them think critically to develop ideas grounded in evidence that can explain and predict phenomenon.

Our approach provides students with the opportunity to “figure out” and remain curious about the world around them. Student led scientific investigations foster agency and collaborative learning. Literary and digital tools support students in understanding content, thinking critically and questioning the world around them. To support ENL and diverse learners, classroom instruction is rich in vocabulary, sentence frames, charts, diagrams, and 3 dimensional models. Students act as scientists speaking, reading, writing and visualizing each part of the investigation they are conducting. Students become integral participants in their learning through meta-cognition and a hands-on approach that focuses on the Next Generation Science Standards. Such investigations assist students in gaining an insight to how and why specific events occur and how to connect this information to their everyday lives.

In order to monitor the progress of all students, targeted performance based and written assessments measure a student’s ability to think critically about content, conduct experiments and write evidence based arguments. Assessments are analyzed by teacher teams to determine student understanding and next steps for instruction and curriculum.

Celebration and sharing of the work is key to our success. In PreK-2 our STEAM fairs integrate work done around science and literacy into hands on projects and student led demonstrations infused with technology. Additionally, our annual school wide PreK-5 Science Fair showcases student led investigations which utilize the scientific method and are grounded in student autonomy and choice. Our gym is transformed into a hands-on museum with decorative artwork, life size models and sculptures and hands-on demonstrations, which have included model planetariums, life size archeological digs and a life-sized igloo.

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

Our Social Studies program is supported by Passport to Social Studies and our teacher created curriculum that supports cultural competence and sensitivity. Each unit is aligned to the NYS Social Studies Framework and the Next Generation Learning Standards. We believe in fostering a strong connection between literacy and social studies through interdisciplinary units. Teacher teams meet regularly to ensure that the learning of new information and gathering of new resources is ongoing and integrated into our work.

Our program is grounded in the belief that content is as important as students engaging in historical thinking. We encourage students to think like historians, to raise questions, gather evidence, think critically and consider multiple perspectives. We utilize primary sources, historical artifacts, and images to gain deep historical understandings. These tools enable students to make sense of the world in which they live, think about the world around them and make connections between major ideas and their own lives.

Our units of study leverage the rich diversity of our students and the city in which they live. Class trips bring history to life with visits to places including the N.Y. Historical Society, Colonial Richmond Town and museums. As a School for Multicultural Humanities, celebrating diversity plays a central role in our curriculum. Classrooms are culturally responsive environments as evidenced by translated vocabularies, cultural connection boards, and bilingual and multicultural libraries inclusive of books written by authors from around the world.

Our assessment plan includes formative assessment using approaches such socratic seminar, class debates, image analysis and artifact exploration. These pieces foster critical thinking and allow for deep work around

primary and secondary sources, bringing the past into the present. In addition, we utilize summative assessments such as end of unit exams and research projects to monitor understanding, modify curriculum and provide professional development to deepen content understanding.

**1e. For secondary schools:**

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

Our Pre-K program is supported by Interdisciplinary Units of Study and Building Blocks, a technology-based math program. Both programs are fully aligned to the PKFCC standards. Our program provides explicit instruction in the development of early language and literacy skills across content areas. Students develop their individual schema and vocabulary by listening to nonfiction and fiction texts, participating in discussions and related activities that develop content knowledge preparing them for their transition to kindergarten.

We believe that a successful Pre-K program is developmentally appropriate and encourages learning through play. Students are provided warm, nurturing classrooms that promote literacy, science, math, engineering, arts, and interactive technologies. This fosters a student-centered experience which encourages student choice, collaboration, creativity, language acquisition and critical-thinking skills.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Our Arts program focuses on fostering empathetic and observant learners who make connections to universal themes related to embracing diversity, understanding multiple perspectives and cultivating positive personal identities. These themes are embedded throughout our school across all disciplines, allowing us to weave the arts seamlessly into our curriculum. All students PreK-5 participate in either visual or performing arts weekly. We partner with Ballroom Basix, a non for profit organization where our students partner with children from other district schools for shared ballroom dancing performances.

Our school has received a grant allowing us to outsource Marquee Studios for programs in animation, film-making and science through sculpture and painting. We also offer a performing arts club allowing students to collaborate and prepare for school wide performances. We were selected by the Disney Foundation, as part of a three year grant, to perform The Lion King, Aladdin and The Jungle Book. Through a partnership we collaborate with Grady H.S whose students assist us with scenery and stage design.

Physical education teaches students to be physically active, work as a team and set personal fitness and mindfulness goals that can last a lifetime. As a school, we believe in the importance of physical fitness as research shows that students who are more physically active in school also perform better in the classroom. We engage students in positive sportsmanship and collaboration through tournaments and basketball games with other schools. Students have an opportunity to select Physical Education as an additional club period. In addition, we are a "Move to Improve School" where all teachers have been trained in maximizing opportunities to incorporate PE into the daily curriculum. We expand the boundaries of our PE program through nature walks, organized soccer games, student/teacher basketball games and cheerleading. In addition, our Special Education students also participate in adaptive PE field trips with peers across the district.

We foster cultural diversity and maintain a gender neutral environment where students are free to express themselves as they are. Learning about others and embracing differences among our diverse, multicultural population promotes anti bullying and the acceptance of others. We incorporate social emotional learning throughout all disciplines via student autonomy, metacognitive reflection, Habits of Mind and Respect for All. PS253 was recognized for this work, designated as a Chancellor's Showcase School in promoting student agency.

We foster student agency through student centered clubs. Students join clubs based on their interest. Club choices include: digital photography, culinary kitchen, digital journalism, stepping, and student government. A student government is elected each year to promote student voice. Through this work our students have participated in multiple charitable drives including: Toys for Tots, Valentines for Vets, Spaghetti Day, and Pennies for Patients. Last year we raised close to \$30,000 for Pennies for Patients, the highest recorded amount in history for any NYC public school.

Creating 21st century learners and their use of technology is prominent throughout classrooms. Beginning in Pre-K, students begin learning digital skills through programs such as Building Blocks and Coding. This work has allowed students to make choices based on their interest and move through a continuum of learning with increasing levels of complexity based on their individualized levels. All classrooms have Smart boards, document cameras and scanners. In grades PreK-5 all students have access to laptops and/or I pads. Students utilize computers for research, word processing, building presentations, and using digital platforms to communicate with other students, thus expanding the boundaries of their classroom. We also use computer assisted instructional programs including: Iready, NEWSELA, Myon, and IXL, to support individualized learning needs.

### **3. Special Populations:**

Tailoring instruction to meet the needs of our diverse students has been key to the academic success of our school and the social emotional health of our students. It has required us to use programming, grouping, enrichment and interventions strategically to provide each student what they need to reach the next level of success.

Currently in grades 3-5 our SWD's are performing at 59% proficiency in ELA and 70% proficiency in mathematics. This past year our SWD subgroup demonstrated a 36% increase in ELA and a 20% increase in math proficiency. Each year this gap continues to lessen. Currently in grades 3-5 our ENL students are performing at 43% proficiency in ELA and 66% proficiency in mathematics. This past year our ENL subgroup has demonstrated a 27% increase in ELA and a 22% increase in math proficiency also showing historic gains in proficiency growth levels.

To continue to close gaps grouping our students by need has been instrumental. Students are grouped according to assessment data across classes and disciplines. We use baseline data in Math and ELA to group students with similar needs for daily guided instruction. We use Computer Assistive Technologies; specifically, Iready to provide individualized student data which drives small group instruction. Grouping has allowed us to intensively support our most struggling students in what we call "Triad" and "Quad" classrooms. Three to four strategically placed specialized teachers are programmed into classrooms during guided reading. This has allowed for all students in our ICT and ENL classrooms to have the support of instructional experts during the work period. ENL and SWD teachers modify small group needs to provide language supports, scaffolds, organizers, and differentiated text, as needed. Across our ICT classrooms we use the alternative model for teaching to support the diverse learning needs of students within the same classroom setting. In our ENL classrooms we have implemented targeted vocabulary instruction focused on acquiring tier 2 vocabulary and accelerated phonics plans to support newly arrived students.

To support student needs in math, we programmed departmentalized math pull out for our students with 2.6-3.1 proficiency levels from our ICT classrooms. This enables our specialists to meet the needs of this targeted group. We support ENL students through intensified math vocabulary instruction and the use of math organizers such as the 3-Read and UPSC to deconstruct language and comprehension of words problems.

Providing enrichment to our students scoring above grade level has allowed this population to make sustainable gains each year. Highly performing students are grouped together across grades to receive instruction beyond grade-level standards. Additionally, we provide remediation and enrichment opportunities to all students through after-school and Saturday programs.

Our school community takes great pride in the successful advancement of our subgroups. Our current NBRS 2019

School Quality Snapshot indicates a score of excellent in all categories including closing the achievement gap for our SWD's and ENL subgroups.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

At P.S.253 we strive to create a climate of value and respect. Our culture is grounded in the philosophy that everyone's voice matters. Students and staff feel safe to share their concerns, opinions and ideas. There is mutual trust focused on the success of all inclusive of parents, staff and students. Our instructional program allows for common planning time, teacher leadership opportunities and collaborative inquiry.

Listening to teachers, fostering their capacity and supporting their individualized needs, has been key. At our professional development committee meetings where teachers meet with the principal everyone plays an active role in planning and decision making. Through our two-part inter-visitation process, teachers become mentors where they visit one another to learn and then change roles, allowing exemplar teachers to watch new teachers try a practice, providing informal feedback to support them in the work. Teachers lead a variety of workshops for both parents and staff sharing content knowledge and pedagogical approaches to improve learning outcomes for the community as a whole.

Our school is dedicated to fostering positive social emotional health for all students. Each year we use "Habits of Mind" to develop college and career readiness skills students need to be successful in the world they live in. Each month hones in on a specific habit that is infused across the disciplines. A monthly piece of literature is used to promote that habit. Students use pre and post self-assessments to rate their use of each habit, reflect on its importance and track their growth in its use.

Respect is an important piece of our culture. We foster respect by teaching our students the importance of being empathetic, embracing diversity and understanding other's perspectives. For three years we have been acknowledged as a Respect for All School. In 2016 we won the city's "Respect for All: No One Eats Alone" contest. As a result, the mayor's wife visited our school and acknowledged the work we are doing to support inclusiveness. Additionally, in 2015 the Honeywell Corporation and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children recognized our school as the Northeast Coast Regional Safety Dance winners for outstanding commitment to safety.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Our school is dedicated to engaging our families and the community in the work we do each day. We believe that parents play an imperative role in the academic and social emotional success of their child. We strive to create a relationship with our parents that is embedded in trust and support, so that all children will reach their fullest potential.

Our strong family connections begin by fostering positive personal relationships with families, grounded in understanding their family dynamics. These relationships allow us to know our families at a deep level, so that we can address their needs in a way that is respectful of their customs, cultures and personal beliefs. This work is supported by an outstanding Parent Coordinator who helps foster these close knit relationships. Teachers and Administrators maintain clear, constant and open communication with families through parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences, progress reports, emails, the Remind App, parent newsletters, class websites and Class Dojo. We make parents a part of the work, by inviting them to applaud the accomplishments of their children through monthly assemblies, special school wide events and classroom celebrations.

We believe that a school extends far beyond the walls of its building. Our school community was deeply impacted by Super Storm Sandy. Many of our students, staff and families were forced out of their homes and relocated well beyond the boundaries of our neighborhood. Due to the structural damages to our school we were relocated to a school on the other side of Brooklyn. Despite these challenges our staff continued to provide instruction that yielded academic success. This resulted in our school receiving an "A" on our Annual School Report Card.

Together we challenged ourselves to restore our community as quickly as possible so that our students and families could return to a stable base. Staff members selflessly gave up their nights and weekends to distribute much needed supplies to our families and their pets. We spearheaded food, clothing and charitable drives. We partnered with Cantor Fitzgerald, UFT, United healthcare and community based organizations to provide monetary relief and essential services.

Community connections are a priority. This can be seen in our work with Grady High school providing opportunities for students to collaborate through holiday celebrations and school wide performances. We work closely with the Shore Front Nursing home to provide opportunities for students to work with elders. Local parent owned businesses have supported us by providing costumes and artifacts for seasonal performances.

### **3. Professional Development:**

Our Professional development centers around research which indicates that teacher quality is the most powerful influence on student achievement. It is grounded in the belief that by improving content understanding and pedagogical craft we improve the instruction we are bringing to our students. We seek to achieve this by working together through shared learning and growing professionally. We believe that teachers, administrators and support staff must be provided with ongoing, high quality, differentiated professional development to sustain and enhance their practice.

We begin by analyzing school data, which is then reviewed by our Professional Development Team composed of Teachers and Administrators. School level priorities are determined and aligned to the Chancellor and District initiatives. Goals are formulated and a PD plan generated which includes short and long term goals, along with topics to be shared, reviewed and supported throughout the year.

Professional development plans support the learning needs of all staff members, inclusive of paraprofessional, teachers working with special populations and newly hired teachers. All staff participates in their own professional growth through leading and or participating in workshops, mentoring new teachers, hosting inter-visitations and planning sessions, allowing for the continued fostering of leadership capacity across the school community.

Shared learning and feedback are key to sustaining effective professional development. Through collegial conversations, professional development calendars, workshop samples, teacher surveys, a teacher video library, inter-visitation schedules and artifacts supporting teacher feedback, learning is constant. Teachers participate in monthly professional development committee meetings to share feedback with the Principal to plan and revise professional development and curriculum.

Professional workshops are topic specific, built on content knowledge, shared work and reflection. Each session hones in on deepening content understanding enabling the theoretical to come to life in classroom application. At the completion of each series exit slips provide feedback that is reflected upon by our Administrative Inquiry Team and used to support future staff learning opportunities. Observations and cycles of actionable next steps serve as resources to help to improve and enrich the individual learning of teachers through the lens of the Danielson Framework. Next steps allow for teachers to work on areas of need. This mindset of growth, learning and reflection sustains a community of "lifelong learners" who are committed to improving pedagogy to best impact student achievement.

### **4. School Leadership:**

Our school's leadership philosophy is grounded in trust, building capacity and shared responsibility. It enables individuals to work collaboratively overseeing, delegating and providing guidance maximizing the potential of members within the school community.

Working as collaborative partners we overcome challenges and create solutions which ensures the success of our students. Together, with all stake holders, the Principal leads this work by promoting shared decision-making. This can be seen through weekly cabinet meetings, monthly professional development

meetings with teachers and monthly School Leadership and PTA meetings. These structures allow staff and community members to share their opinions and concerns. The principal listens openly and is committed to making changes that align to the school's vision for success. She believes in an "open door policy" encouraging stake holders to come with any ideas and suggestions. This has contributed to a positive school climate where voice matters and is valued.

Assistant Principals work to support the school's vision through a philosophy of both instructional and organizational leadership. Their primary role is to serve as instructional experts who support teacher learning by hosting workshops, instructional demonstrations, providing feedback, planning lessons and discussing student data. These pieces support teachers in their leadership development. Teachers meet regularly with the principal to discuss their designated grades, share data and resources and brainstorm action plans accordingly.

Teachers play a large role in the leadership capacity of our school community. They moderate clubs, design curriculum, lead professional development, serve as mentors for new teachers and organize grade and school celebrations. Lead teachers meet with their grades to discuss upcoming events, delegate work, set goals and share resources. They meet regularly with the principal to share the grades' concerns and contribute ideas to improve student achievement.

Our Parent Coordinator works closely with our parents and students and is involved in all aspects of decision making, providing a valuable lens and perspective for our families. She helps organize important school events and functions such as parent workshops, trips, prom, and monthly assemblies.

Our beliefs around the value of developing leadership has enabled, our school to navigate as well as create change through shared decision making. We believe the most important work of a great leader is create more great leaders.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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One practice that has been instrumental in our success is a metacognitive student-centered approach to teaching and learning. This approach is at the core of our vision for both our academic curriculum as well as our social emotional work. It provides an opportunity for students to build agency and voice and form strong metacognitive awareness grounded in self-application and self-reflection. It has promoted a collaborative learning environment fostering interdependence where students take the central role in their learning. We were recognized for this approach and its success within our school by Chancellor Farina and as such were invited to become A Showcase School of Promising Practices. This opportunity has allowed us to share our practices with schools across NYC.

Meta-cognition lies at the foundation of our student driven approach. Students are taught to be aware of their thinking through extensive planning, self-monitoring, decision making, self-assessing and reflective activities. For example, in reading we “track and code our thoughts”. This has allowed students track and monitor understanding and pay close attention to the strategies they chose to use while reading. This enables them to set goals, analyze their thoughts and modify their patterns of thinking based upon reflection and feedback. In all subjects students take part in routine self-assessment practices through the use of checklists, rating systems, rubrics and written reflections. This has resulted in students’ understanding the active role they play in their own learning. This has made the work more valuable as students come to their own understanding about the content and the world around them. This has enabled teachers to become facilitators of learning; where the students productively struggle by doing the "heavy lifting" thus giving them the voice and agency to take control of their learning.

Meta-cognition and self-driven learning are also at the forefront of our work with teachers. Ongoing cycles of reflection in the areas of data, curriculum and instruction to improve student outcomes, coupled with collegial sharing, continues to be at the cornerstone of our success. This has resulted in a school community of pedagogues that take ownership over their learning and an environment that thrives on expanding knowledge, understanding and ability.

Our work in self-learning and reflective thinking has shifted mindsets for our entire school community, impacting all dimensions of our success. It has fostered students who are "not afraid" to do the work, teachers who constantly reflect on their craft and a school community who embraces the voice of children.