U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 27031 Preciados Drive
         (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Mission Viejo   State CA   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 92691-5214

County Orange County

Telephone (949) 586-5830   Fax (949) 586-5876

Web site/URL
https://www.svusd.org/schools/elementary-a-l/de-portola   E-mail brendon.morrow@svusd.org

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

         Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Crystal Turner   E-mail crystal.turner@svusd.org
         (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Saddleback Valley Unified School District   Tel. (949) 586-1234

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. Suzie Swartz
         (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, leave blank.

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.

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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district   24 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   4 Middle/Junior high schools
                                          5 High schools
                                          1 K-12 schools

                                         34 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/ (Find your school and check "Locale")

   [ ] Urban (city or town)
   [X] Suburban
   [ ] Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	30	29	59
1	43	34	77
2	44	31	75
3	36	28	64
4	40	43	83
5	37	28	65
6	35	49	84
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	265	242	507

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school (if unknown, estimate): 13.5 % Asian
                                        1 % Black or African American
                                        15.3 % Hispanic or Latino
                                        0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                        60.3 % White
                                        9.8 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 3%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	17
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	575
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

    Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin, Polish, Spanish, Vietnamese

    English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %

                                                      32 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 13 %

    Total number students who qualify: 64

8. Students receiving special education services: <u>12</u> %

    <u>63</u> 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>5</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>16</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>11</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>28</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</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: <u>3</u>

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 <u>31:1</u>

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	98%	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 2020.

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 <u>X</u>

   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.

Excellence, innovation, and inclusion in teaching and learning.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

This school year began with full-school distance learning for kindergarten through 6th grade due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staffing and student assignments were determined based on parent selection for which learning model they preferred for their student should students be allowed to return to campus during the school year. Parents were given the option of distance learning for the full year or hybrid learning if the state, county, and district determined we could return to in-person learning on campus. On September 29th, 2020, all K-6 hybrid students and staff returned to school, while distance learning staff and students continued their learning virtually. Due to social distancing, students in the hybrid model returned for one of two half-day academic sessions, either 2.5 hours in the morning or 2.5 hours in the afternoon. Approximately 72% of our students are enrolled in a hybrid learning class, while the other 28% are enrolled in distance learning. For hybrid students, we anticipate having them return to school for full-day, in-person learning April through June of 2021.

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

De Portola is considered both a choice school and a magnet school. In our district, school choice is an option for all families. This year's data shows approximately 33% of our students are enrolled through school choice. Our school is also considered a regional magnet school for gifted and talented students. Any student qualifying for the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program may apply to our school through the

district's choice process. Space permitting, based on the enrollment of our neighborhood students, GATE students are placed in special day classes for gifted students.

PART III - SUMMARY

Rather than simply existing in the neighborhood as the result of our city's master plan, de Portola is a shared source of pride between our community, current and former students, and our staff. Over 40 years of history resound as the congregation of students and faculty members enter campus each day, being greeted by an authentic train caboose from the Southern Pacific Railways, one of multiple charming gardens, or inspirational quotes painted throughout the school—each the result of a partnership between school and community. Students routinely walk to class together in solidarity. It is common to see children start the day with smiles and cheers as good-natured teachers greet their classes each morning. Kindness resonates amongst our adults and our children. This is a stated goal, an expectation for all, and natural outcome of purposeful application. A sense of acceptance permeates each classroom, play area, and office throughout our campus as a result.

Nestled in a quiet neighborhood in Mission Viejo, California, de Portola's student population is representative of the community it serves. Typically delivering instruction to about 500 K-6th graders, the school hosts children from a diversity of cultures and a variety of home languages. Student families are known to be hard-working, supportive, and understanding of the value of education. All students receive general education, while groups of students with disabilities, those socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English language learners (ELLs) occur at rates roughly equivalent to schools throughout the area. Gifted and talented students also attend de Portola as one of five GATE magnet schools throughout the district.

Just as our train caboose was added to our campus to provide a classroom space for students with exceptional needs, our school family has embraced those who come to us by residence or by choice. Innovative, impactful, and purposefully-planned instruction has traditionally helped yield outstanding assessment scores, yet our staff has taken the next steps of examining its practices to recognize the next level of improvements. Analysis of our data uncovered that some subgroups of students were not improving at the same rate as the student body as a whole. This new staff awareness resulted in a shift of focus. Rather than relying on historically high test scores when viewing the results of the school as a whole, a choice was made to address the needs of those who were not achieving at the same rate as their peers. Teachers began examining assessment data to gain an understanding of the academic strengths and deficits of their students. Also devoted to the social-emotional improvement of students, staff members began to consciously model, promote, expect, and reward each other and their students for exhibiting kindness and acceptance of all people in all circumstances.

Collaboration, both social and academic, is used to promote the value of acceptance at de Portola. Recognized by the Orange County Department of Education and through the awarding of a grant, de Portola developed a program promoting collaboration of GATE and special needs students working together on project-based lessons. These students have collaborated and communicated through discussions using Socratic seminar; reader's theater; science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) challenges; math workshop; and English language arts (ELA) workshop models. Also collaborating virtually, students use Google Classroom, shared documents, EduProtocols, Seesaw, Flipgrid, Pear Deck and Padlet.

Known to attend training both during after-school hours and on weekends to better promote and engage students while honing their practice, our teachers are no strangers to collaboration. Attending our district's Math Summit, Leadership Academy, and GATE Collaborative, our staff also implements key strategies from EdTech trainings including Google Classroom, EduProtocols, robotics, and Seesaw for Remote Learning. Further, instructional rounds are a unique professional practice utilized for teachers to observe colleagues while taking objective notes. After participants have a collaborative, non-judgmental conversation, strengths and weaknesses of systems and strategies throughout the school are discussed. Without incriminating individual teachers, staff members make commitments to improve problems in practice. Ongoing instructional rounds have helped teachers facilitate an ongoing, open dialogue regarding overall school strengths while working as a team to achieve improvements with our practice.

Our school has many innovative programs and techniques implemented throughout the school to promote acceptance and kindness. Prior to COVID-19, flexible and group seating, which fosters increased student

engagement as well as enhanced creativity, communication, and collaboration of students, was commonly observed throughout the school. This practice encourages students to listen more and to better understand each other's ideas and perspectives. Open to students nominated by their teachers for demonstrating potential leadership qualities, many of our future leaders participate in our school's Peer Assistance Leadership (PAL). This program helps students build social-emotional skills while spreading kindness and acceptance through lunchtime and school-wide activities. Academically, students have been involved in many collaborative projects. Together they have performed group STEM challenges, built ancient civilization game boards, fabricated machines based on Rube Goldberg's ideas, moved Sphero robots through mazes, coded Ozobots to travel across sight words, designed garden irrigation systems, created digital problem-solving breakout platforms for math, and participated in classroom esports competitions. Each of these programs has been advanced to play an important role in creating a culture of kindness and acceptance while providing differentiation for our students with diverse learning needs.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. **Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**.

De Portola's curriculum is grounded in the California Common Core Standards and Frameworks for each core subject area. Benchmark Advance is the English language arts and Designated English Language Development (dELD) curriculum. The science curriculum is Amplify Science California Edition for Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). California myWorld is the curriculum for history and social science. California GO Math! is the adopted curriculum for grades 3-6 and California Math Expressions is the kindergarten through 2nd grade curriculum. As a relatively older math adoption, adaptations are made to ensure instruction is relevant with equity and access for all students.

Learning standards are addressed through grade-level pacing plans and a backwards planning approach. Districtwide pacing plans keep schools on target in addressing grade-level standards yet allow teachers autonomy in choosing how to deliver this instruction to their students. Our teachers meet as a staff and as individual grade levels to analyze data and adjust instruction accordingly. Flex days are built into our pacing plans, and teachers capitalize on those days to implement both intervention and enrichment strategies to engage all learners. Through targeted differentiated instructional practices, students are pushed to grow at their individual levels. While all students receive rigorous instruction within an evidence-based, scientifically researched core curriculum, one size does not fit all. By tightly focusing on best instructional practices and strategies, teachers cognitively plan for engaging and rigorous lessons. Teachers clarify the purpose and learning goal for each lesson and provide opportunities for frequent classroom discussion, allowing students to learn from each other. Teachers continually provide individual and whole group feedback to move student learning forward. Students also take advantage of opportunities to be self-directed learners through choice, self-reflection, and personalized learning.

To support the high-quality classroom instruction, our teachers use diagnostic, formative, and summative data to help match academic interventions aligned to students' needs. Interventions are implemented for students who are working below and above the standard. Student groupings, hands-on opportunities, chunking information into shorter steps or targets, and more practice with what was learned are some of the strategies used to support learners. Teachers implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), targeting interventions for students, monitoring their progress and evaluating their own instructional effectiveness. Some examples include small group instruction, the concrete-representational-abstract progression, guided practice, corrective feedback, and teacher think-alouds. Students working above the standard are tasked with higher cognitive learning such as creating and evaluating. An example from the upper grades is our students who have mastered math content who create and code digital breakout puzzles using Google forms. Once complete, the breakout is then used as a review for their classmates. An example in the primary grades for our above-level readers is using reader's theater, literature circles, or student-driven research on a passion project.

I-Ready is the common assessment for both reading and math, kindergarten-6th grade. This data is used for data team cycles when teachers collaboratively examine data and create action plans for each student including MTSS. Each trimester teachers return to the data inquiry cycle. Ongoing teacher formative assessments align with the curricula and the California Common Core Standards, simplifying the task of establishing clear learning goals for students. Teachers' immediate feedback promotes student autonomy and accountability for their learning. Teachers use ongoing formative assessments to interpret student progress and respond to learning needs by adapting instruction. These assessments include district and teacher-created rubrics, Acadience Reading, unit assessments, observational anecdotal notes, and lesson exit tickets.

To meet the needs of distance and hybrid learners, multiple adaptations were made. Students were each provided Chromebooks for use at home or at school, and to ensure equity, families without internet access were provided WiFi hotspots. Teams of district teachers, including six de Portola teachers, developed grade-level, subject-area Google slide lesson decks that were then personalized by individual teachers. Seesaw, Google Classroom, and other digital platforms already being used in classrooms were relied on even more to create dynamic and engaging learning environments. Teachers adapted schedules and resources for

synchronous and asynchronous learning. Flipped classrooms were developed with teacher-created videos and lessons for asynchronous learning time. Asynchronous, content-rich, and engaging HyperDoc choice boards were designed and continue to be refined. While available before, teachers and students relied even more on online access to all core curriculum textbooks and materials. Assessments in each subject were converted to digital form. Also, the use of the Zoom platform for distance learning made space for continued student collaboration. Finally, Zoom office hours were offered for students and families to receive individualized teacher support daily.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Complementing the learning of the core curriculum, we participate in a multitude of interdisciplinary activities. In the arts, all students participate in Art Masters, a program providing presentations and student-created projects connecting master artists and their works with a cultural context. Our annual Chalk Fest showcases class-created murals created to combine a larger "quilt." These reinforce themes from the classroom in history, literature, and math. Students, parents, and professional artists from the community join in the design process. An onsite kiln allows teachers to continuously reinforce the curriculum through the fabrication of 3-D projects. Numerous after-school activities including the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)-sponsored Reflections competition with categories in visual and fine arts. Origami, Young Rembrandts; choral music; and visual arts are other offerings.

During school hours, students participate in the production of plays, musicals, and singing performances tied to grade-level curriculum. Students in 4th-6th grade have weekly pull-out performing arts classes with a specialized teacher or the choice to play a musical instrument. During distance learning, our performing arts specialists shifted to virtual classes, continuing to offer these opportunities. We also partner with local secondary schools for opportunities to attend student theater productions. A team of our students produces a monthly news show called Patriot Kids News, through which they write, produce, and act. These shows are viewed by the entire school. Our older students also have the opportunity to participate in a yearly talent show performed for the student body.

Maintaining an active, healthy student body is an important focus of de Portola. All students receive 100 minutes of physical education (P.E.) instruction weekly, 50 of those minutes with a specialist emphasizing the importance of teamwork and participation. Our P.E. specialists have adapted their programs to incorporate lessons students can participate in via Zoom on a weekly basis for distance learning. Physical education and healthy living instruction are also woven into the daily fabric of the school with students participating in walking field trips to local trails, an annual jog-a-thon, and a year-end staff vs. student softball game. Our community garden promotes healthy living and nutrition while students get their hands dirty. In our current model, brain breaks are incorporated, often using GoNoodle, to keep students active.

De Portola is devoted to developing a rich technology program. We provide a 1:1 student to Chromebook ratio throughout the school. Teachers have been trained in numerous applications, including Google Suite, Zoom, Epic, ST Math, Raz-Kids, Flipgrid, and Seesaw, among others. Teachers often incorporate student-created green screen video productions, virtual reality field trips and virtual manipulatives into their core curriculum lessons. Our school is a leader in incorporating VEX Robotics, Spheros, and Ozobots into the curriculum while hosting after-school clubs and district competitions. Several teachers host a lunchtime Coding Club through which students can explore and learn to code. All students have access to our dedicated STEAM Lab, and all 3rd-6th graders do so by participating annually in our districtwide STEAM Expo/Competition.

De Portola staff works to develop the whole student through our social and emotional learning (SEL) program. Second Step promotes the development, safety and well-being of our students. We recently added the recognition of World Health Month to our calendar, with our PAL program helping focus the school on the importance of emotional health.

3. **Academic Supports**:

Achieving equity and closing the achievement gap is paramount in our school's track record of success. Our staff meets regularly as a professional learning community and as grade-level teams to analyze assessment data in order to guide our instruction. Our data sources include Acadience Reading for reading and phonemic awareness, i-Ready for reading and math domains, trimester writing performance tasks, and the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) for annual standardized testing data. All of these assessments reveal student achievement in tiers, spotlighting students most at-risk and those above grade level. We use this data to target instruction for these subgroups. With students in the red (at-risk) tier, both formal and informal interventions are in place to support their needs. All teachers use differentiated small group instruction in their classrooms, utilizing resources such as our instructional coach, intervention guides, and student-driven growth goals. Our most at-risk students participate in Tier II intervention classes in a small group setting with a specialized teacher.

Specialized academic instruction is curated and delivered for our designated GATE students, which account for 10% of our population. As a GATE magnet school, we retain designated GATE classes in grades 3-6, taught by GATE-certified teachers. Sandra Kaplan's Depth and Complexity prompts are employed across content areas. These enhance students' ability to think critically and develop deeper and more complex conceptual understandings of content. Project-based learning and solicitation of community experts are utilized to build in student choice and voice. The Socratic method of questioning and exploration of content is used in all subject areas. Each grade level explores its own set of overarching universal themes such as systems, change, or power, which allow students to connect ideas across all disciplines. Students are also given opportunities to explore passions during Genius Hour. They select a topic of interest and complete an in-depth study of the topic that is then presented to authentic audiences through various formats.

Students with disabilities who have individualized educational plans (IEP) account for approximately 12% of our school population. Most recent assessment results for the 2020-21 school year indicate that the number of students at or above grade level in this subgroup has grown from 57% to 68%, while our most at-risk students in this subgroup decreased from 12% to 8%. To best support students on IEPs, students are clustered into classes by grade level for push-in support or for pull-out Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI). In addition to the services they receive, general education teachers continue to differentiate instruction, provide accommodations, and make modifications as necessary to support student growth. Regular communication and progress reports keep families informed and students accountable.

Our English language learner (ELL) population comprises 6% of the student population, and recent data shows their achievement gap is narrowing. This year's 2020-21 i-Ready data shows our at or above grade level ELL population subgroup has grown from 21% to 43%, while our at-risk ELL subgroup has shrunk from 18% to 14%. During daily dELD instruction that targets our ELL population, guided language acquisition and design strategies like vocabulary cards and pictorial input charts, total physical response, and peer collaboration are utilized. A focus on growth goals and mindsets helps hold students accountable for their own measurable goals and aids in closing the achievement gap.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

De Portola teachers and administration are dedicated to engaging students academically, socially, and emotionally from their first day on campus. We strive to create a motivating environment where students feel supported and are encouraged to continue challenging themselves. Teachers have made it a priority to continue to seek out and attend staff development on engagement strategies including EduProtocols, engagement specific technology training, and math engagement strategies. It is the belief of the staff that learning and engagement happens when students are active and working collaboratively, when their hands are dirty, and when they have choice in their academic journey. Our school has active student-led groups including PAL and Student Council, who work together to encourage students to engage in school activities including dress-up days, new student support, fundraisers, and lunchtime activities. Teachers work to create many hands-on, project-based lessons and labs to build interest, including a Mesopotamian Fair, passion/expert projects, robotics, Colonial Day, walk-through history simulations, science labs, breakout box lessons, and Socratic seminars, to name just a few. De Portola has also been a leader in creating flexible-seating classrooms to create the best learning environment possible for all students.

In the past year, to adapt to the transition to distance learning and eventually a hybrid model for most students, teachers have had to double-down on their ability to engage students in a difficult learning environment. Building in choice and the use of collaborative technology programs, including Google Classroom, Seesaw, Flipgrid, and others, have helped in this transition. Teachers have been able to utilize digital manipulatives in math and have performed digital science labs to maintain a hands-on feeling. Despite being separated from their peers, collaboration has continued to be a priority through the use of breakout rooms in Zoom to keep students connected and learning from each other. Classes have gone on virtual "field trips" to such places as Mission San Juan Capistrano, the California State Capitol in Sacramento, Museum of the American Revolution, the Redwood National Forest, and local art museums. This time has also been more important than ever to focus on building a positive classroom culture so that students feel welcome and connected. Teachers achieve this through morning meetings, time built in for their classes to just chat, virtual playgroups several times a week in kindergarten, and special digital events such as an Easter egg hunt in lower grades or the classic egg drop challenge in upper grades.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

De Portola is devoted to the idea of parents and community as our partners. We do not operate in autonomy separated from these groups. We welcome their input and appreciate the help they provide in the education of our students. De Portola depends on the support of our parents and the relationships we have been lucky enough to create with our community partners.

Parents have multiple opportunities to be involved with our school, including participation in our active PTA, membership on the School Site Council (SSC), and volunteering in classrooms. Our PTA offers multiple family night celebrations and learning opportunities. Keeping parents engaged and informed requires clear communication about all things related to our school, not just individual classrooms. This occurs in multiple ways, including the principal's weekly Patriot Report to all families and individual teacher updates using platforms such as ClassDojo and the Remind application. The school and individual teachers maintain a social media presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to promote the exciting learning opportunities in which their children are engaged.

De Portola has partnered with multiple community organizations and leaders to promote engagement and a sense of giving. These include a partnership with Guide Dogs of America, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Pennies for Patients fundraiser, a local homeless shelter for a blanket and coat collection, and South County Food Bank to collect food and other essentials for those in need. Other partners include Boy Scouts of America, University of California, Irvine's world-renowned esports program, Orange County Department of Education, the local Elks and Kiwanis Clubs, Southwest Airlines' Adopt-a-Pilot program, the city of Mission Viejo, and the Orange County Sheriff.

During the Covid shutdown and our initial move to distance learning (and eventually a hybrid model), parent engagement and communication has been more important than ever. All stakeholders (administration/teachers/parents) have had to come together in new ways for our students' continued success and growth. De Portola teachers and staff started the academic year before students even arrived with a drive-through book distribution. Online welcome back meetings with parents and students helped individual teachers alleviate fears and establish expectations for the coming school year. Early in the year teachers also held individual goal-setting conferences with each student and their parents to address student needs. Our PTA and SSC have shifted from in-person to virtual meetings to maintain family and teacher engagement, and this has actually led to an increase in parent and teacher attendance at meetings. During this time, we have also strengthened our partnership with Mission Viejo Public Library to continue to provide rich resources for our students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

De Portola staff members are highly involved in professional development, which includes both paid and volunteer opportunities, such as teacher-led training at our site, mentor coaching cycles, and an instructional coach on site who is available for demonstration lessons, observations, and interventions. We sponsor teacher attendance to local and national-level education conferences including California Association for the Gifted (CAG), National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), Computer Using Educators (CUE), California Teachers Association (CTA), PAL, and Get Your Teach On. Attendees return to share their takeaways with our staff. A plethora of district-level professional development is available to us as well, including Mighty Mondays (a sample platter of new educational technologies) and Saturday Summits (training with a lens on equity and innovation). This year's superintendent's "pep rally" included a seminar for all staff on mathematical mindsets with speaker Dr. Jo Boaler of Stanford University and youcubed.

Teacher leadership is showcased through mentoring by way of new teacher induction and through leveraging the talents of individual teacher leaders. On site, we have several representatives who are Seesaw Ambassadors, ClassDojo Mentors, and Google Certified Educators. These teachers serve as on-the-spot learning hubs for our staff. This was paramount in last year's unexpected transition to distance learning. We rose to the task of becoming virtual teachers within a week's notice. Our staff banded together like never before, creating digital content and sharing it across grade levels. After the spring 2020 trimester of at-home learning, our district formed a virtual learning committee of teachers to create the next trimester's standards-based content by grade level. Four of our teachers joined this committee and worked tirelessly to create a baseline district-wide model for pacing, curriculum, and norms. By leveling the playing field, we have been able to achieve equity through our instructional model across the district.

Teachers are also invited to create and deliver professional development. Learning from our colleagues creates buy in and an enthusiastic professional learning community. Our administrator attends professional development often, so he too is in the loop with current best practices in the classroom. The opportunities we are given are relevant, current, and provide options to individualize or personalize. The impact of this approach on our capacity as teachers is that we feel heard and valued. Our feedback is taken seriously, and positive change is immediate. We are a passionate community of educators looking to grow. As a staff, we maintain a growth mindset, which trickles down into our classrooms and to our students.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at de Portola is a shared responsibility, which allows all teachers and staff to continue to grow and strengthen educational practices. A collaborative model is used to gain input and create a clear vision for teaching and learning. All teachers serve on one of five focus groups (STEAM integration, community engagement, student leadership, school culture, and social emotional learning) that work to identify, coordinate, and fund school improvements. Administration employs an open door policy to allow a free exchange of ideas and feedback throughout any given day.

Our school's leadership team, composed of the principal, five teachers, and the instructional coach, gives input for the content of staff meetings and helps to generate, implement, and disseminate policy. The team

works together to identify areas needing improvement, focusing on student achievement data, trends, and patterns. Subgroups of students are focused upon, ensuring equity in educational practices. The team employs the use of instructional rounds to identify specific strategies being used in classrooms and how these strategies affect student achievement.

An additional shared leadership approach is the involvement of a variety of groups and resources, including the School Site Council (SSC). The participation of our school community allows the school to hear the voice of our parents. Ideas shared at SSC are respected and used to help form policies. Administration, teachers, staff, parents, and interested community members are welcome. The SSC creates and monitors the school's plan for student achievement (SPSA), and then members work together to evaluate the school's progress toward the identified goals. The SSC also monitors funds identified to benefit certain groups of students.

De Portola teachers have implemented a practice to invite parents to attend goal setting parent-teacher conferences during the eighth week of school each year. Teachers work with parents to examine data and to review goals set by the students. Teachers value the input of the parents in reinforcing these goals, and by collaborating with the teachers, the parents become important instructional leaders for their children.

Leadership is also shared amongst students through the Student Council and PAL programs. Students who participate in these activities are able to share ideas for school improvement as well as develop their own leadership skills with formally trained teacher advisors.

To keep the school safe and functioning during COVID-19, administration and staff have implemented state, county, and district health policies related to COVID-19, including devoting sections of each staff meeting to this topic. While these meetings have transitioned to a virtual format rather than being in person, staff input and questions are able to be addressed in a timely manner.

5. **Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

De Portola prides itself on culturally responsive teaching and pedagogical practices. We believe tackling social inequities begins with us. Culturally responsive teaching and learning creates a sense of belonging, community, empathy, and awareness among our staff and students. We encourage our students to uphold their cultural identities by exposing multiple perspectives, honoring their diverse backgrounds and prior knowledge, and building bridges to make their learning relevant.

Some examples of addressing our school community's diverse needs include highlighting different heritage months in the classrooms. When students see amazing and influential people who look like them being honored, receiving Nobel prizes, shattering glass ceilings, and breaking civil rights barriers, they not only gain confidence in their own abilities and achievements, but they have a better sense of empathy and respect for culture not matching their own. For example, March is Women's History Month, and a number of our upper-grade classes have spotlighted an influential woman each day of the month with a quick biography video and mini-lesson to start each day. For Black History Month, individual students in a class chose their favorite civil rights hero and created a "living museum" while researching and writing a first-person narrative of their life. Other classes focused on innovation and excellence of Black Americans. In October, a class wrote persuasive letters either defending Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples' Day after researching both sides of history. Sixth grade classes study ancient civilizations and religions, and those classes invite and interview representatives from many different religions to build inclusivity and exposure.

We have a significant Iranian-American population, and learning about Nowruz, or Persian New Year, helps our students feel a sense of belonging while educating our non-Persian students about

a new holiday. Class decorations and celebrations acknowledge Lunar New Year or Holi to promote cultural awareness, acceptance, and respect of our students' backgrounds.

Our staff has a sharing culture across grade levels, and schoolwide, when relevant. There have been a slew of recent current events and social movements in our country. We anticipate our students' questions and curiosities and connect those right back to their learning. One class live-streamed the presidential inauguration and created "The Road" poems inspired by poet Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb." Another class followed the recent Texas energy crisis and created a collaborative writing task addressing energy failures using scientific arguments. Project-based learning is incorporated whenever possible to allow students the voice to create a driving question, along with research in the community to find a solution. Community members are invited to share their expertise or lend an interview.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Relationships before rigor—high quality relationships make rigor and relevance possible. We believed it before COVID-19 and even more desperately now. Many have heard, "Students don't care what you know until they know that you care," but it couldn't be more true than it has been this year. Our students have experienced something no other generation has walked through, and our staff finds themselves "reading the room" daily to assess our students' emotional well-being. Often, we find ourselves being the hope for the day a child may not otherwise feel. Frankly, it is humbling. As our staff linked arms like never before, we found ourselves growing in new ways.

As adults, we too needed to have a growth mindset with ourselves and with each other. Our students had always been encouraged to employ a mindset of flexibility. Celebrating "aha's" or "I never thought of it that way" had always been the expectation. Walking into any room on campus, one would hear teachers celebrating a growth mindset moment as a child celebrated with comments like "I don't get this, yet" or "Hey, I see the answer now...my brain just grew." However, it has now become a must for the adults to be okay with having a growth mindset too. Checking in with our cohorts to guide, help, or readjust our best practices happened both professionally and on the fly. Pivoting became our new normal. Teachers felt safe reaching out to each other to adjust educational plans, share a recently learned inspiration, or to ask for feedback. Because no one had a protocol for teaching during a pandemic, we fell back on what had always made sense—simply caring about kids. This is the heart of de Portola. We, as a staff, care about each other and our practice, but ultimately the "client," our students, is our focus. Each one of them is worthy of our best, pandemic or no pandemic.