

***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 [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

Official School Name Chinese Immersion School at DeAvila  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1250 Waller Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City San Francisco State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94117-2919

County City and County of San Francisco

Telephone (415) 241-6325 Fax (415) 241-6540

Web site/URL  
<https://www.sfusd.edu/school/chinese-immersion-school-cis-de-avila> E-mail cheongw@sfusd.edu

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. Vincent Matthews E-mail matthewsv@sfusd.edu  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name San Francisco Unified School District Tel. (415) 241-6000

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Ms. Gabriela Lopez  
(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 (per district designation):
- 64 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 13 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 12 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 89 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)  
 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	33	32	65
1	24	42	66
2	25	40	65
3	27	39	66
4	33	26	59
5	32	31	63
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>	174	210	384

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 66.7 % Asian
  - 1.6 % Black or African American
  - 2.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.3 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 7.7 % White
  - 21 % 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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	384
(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):

Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, German, Vietnamese, French, Portuguese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 27 %  
105 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 34 %

Total number students who qualify: 129

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %

16 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>2</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5

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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

<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.

CIS develops the whole child by providing a collaborative and inclusive learning environment where our diverse students are bi-literate and succeed academically, socially and emotionally.

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.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic year, CIS implemented Distance Learning (DL) as directed by San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) in August 2020. Teachers taught and students learned remotely five days a week via the Zoom platform. A combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction is provided daily and students have full access to a comprehensive program beyond the core curriculum. In addition to reading/ELA, math, science and social studies, students also had PE/health/nutrition, arts, gardening, our own creation of STREAM (combining STEAM and library, technology, media) and Cantonese language learning because we are a Cantonese Chinese immersion school. To provide additional support to students, teachers held office hours and tutoring weekly. They also hosted weekly social gathering events to build classroom community. All school events, meetings and parent conferences were conducted virtually. In the spring 2021, CIS will reopen with a 5 day in-person learning for students who choose to return and simultaneously, serve those students who remain in DL. The opening will begin with K-2nd, followed by grades 3-5 students a week later.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

---

Situated in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood, Chinese Immersion School @ DeAvila (CIS) was established in 2009 in response to parents who advocated for a Cantonese Chinese immersion program where students thrive in learning two languages concurrently with lifelong learning. We believe in educating the whole child which means we focus on developing students' academic as well as social emotional skills. We offer inquiry-based learning, the arts, music and outdoor gardening so students receive a well-rounded education. Instruction is rigorous, student centered, and accommodates students' learning styles and needs. We foster students' creativity and voice by offering many opportunities for them to showcase their talents and work. We pride ourselves in building a safe, equitable and inclusive learning environment for every student to succeed with a caring staff and parent community.

We are a midsize school that enjoys an active and vibrant community where many close relationships are formed among students, teachers and families. Our families come from all parts of the city of San Francisco, and you can hear different languages spoken. Students talk with their teachers sharing their interests; teachers engage with parents and with each other talking about school events, programs and matters involving students. Students learn in a bright and joyful setting; student work is displayed throughout the hallways and numerous colorful murals, mosaics and artworks surround the school entrances, yards and walls.

At the core, it is the CIS community that truly makes our school a special place for all the students, staff and families. Our PTA helps to fundraise to provide supplemental staffing and resources so that students participate in a stellar arts program, outdoor education and many school events including the annual SF Chinese New Year Parade, Reflection Arts Night, STEAM Faire and Winter and Spring Shows. These events build the school community and allow students the chance to showcase their accomplishments and be proud of who they are. Teachers work above and beyond their duties to support many activities because we want to provide a well-rounded education for the students. Our parent volunteer program averages 12,000 hours annually and our PTA membership is at almost 100%. It is common to hear teachers chatting with students and parents on a first name basis since we really get to know one another well like family. Our experienced and permanent staff also contributes to the stability of the school; most of our teachers' children are students at CIS. When there is a need, people respond and work together to problem solve. "Together we achieve" is our credo; we always band together, rise and do what we can to take care of the students.

One of the unique programs offered to all CIS students is STEAM. Here at CIS, we have a designated STEAM lab along with an instructor dedicated to teach STEAM. The STEAM teacher taught students computer science: coding, computer science skills, typing and digital citizenship. Working closely with our classroom teachers, the STEAM teacher helped facilitate engineering challenges as well as training students on how to demonstrate their learning through different programs and apps. More importantly, the program helps imbue our students to approach learning with a spirit of joyful creation and experimentation. As San Francisco and the Silicon Valley have both been at the forefront of technological innovation in this country, our STEAM program has continued to prepare our students with the knowledge, skills and habits of mind to prepare them for the future as we teach to the 21st century 4Cs: communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. The STEAM teacher has also helped provide technical assistance and modeled the use of technology in the classroom to build teacher capacity so that they can better integrate technology into their daily instruction. This year our school transitioned from STEAM to STREAM, integrating reading in STEAM to transform our library instruction. Students receive DL STREAM weekly from the STREAM teacher and a consultant to assist in delivering the traditional STEAM content. We plan to develop our own K-5 scope and sequence STREAM curriculum as part of the school's continuous improvement efforts and to further advance students' cross curricular instruction.

Although COVID-19 has limited our ability to provide in-person instruction and shifted us to remote learning, it created an opportunity for us to build resilience and reinvent ourselves. We are "stronger together" and this is the essence of CIS - we make it work for our students no matter what.

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

---

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

At CIS, we teach so that every student is growing and learning the essential concepts and skills of the Core Curriculum. Teachers collaborate with the content specialists and support teachers to adapt the instructional materials, engage students and optimize learning. Teachers utilize various best practices such as front-loading, visualization and thematic instruction to achieve best learning outcomes. As an immersion school, we also integrate content with language learning so students deepen their proficiency in both Cantonese and English.

We guide students to set goals for their learning and have them show their achievement through drawings, writings, videos, slide decks, models and oral presentations. In this way, students develop critical thinking, creativity and agency.

For Reading/ELA, CIS teachers follow the Readers and Writers Workshop model developed by Lucy Calkins. In order to implement this over DL, teachers presented new concepts over mini-lessons on Google Slides. Teachers then assigned writing tasks either on SeeSaw or Google Classroom so students had the opportunity to apply what they have learned. Teachers then left feedback to support the students' comprehension of these skills.

Teachers also took advantage of the breakout room function on Zoom to assist students with their writing. Breakout rooms were used for partnerships, small groups, as well as one-on-one interactions. Our young writers learned to display their writing over Zoom so teachers and their peers could ask questions and provide real-time feedback.

For reading students had access to a variety of online texts both within their zone of proximal development and beyond using RAZKids, myON and Hoopla. With these resources, students were able to build on their reading fluency with leveled books as well as use the audio functions of these resources to further their reading comprehension of more difficult texts. Teachers also used Zoom breakout rooms for small group discussions about texts they had read.

This year we continued to assess our students using online running records in order to monitor student progress and inform instruction. Teachers used data gleaned from the assessments and modified their groupings and instruction to strategically address specific student needs. We also leveraged the literacy specialist to provide small group or one-on-one interventions to those with the greatest need.

For mathematics, CIS uses the SFUSD Math Core Curriculum which is designed to develop students' mathematical thinking. Students are encouraged to represent and solve a problem in various ways as well as justify their reasoning; the goal is not just getting the right answer. Teachers encourage students to have a growth mindset to learning, to take risks and embrace mistakes as learning opportunities. Students engage in mental math, math talks, and the Three Read Protocol to build their number sense, reasoning and problem solving skills on word problems. Teachers played Jeopardy, What's Missing? and Zirkle to keep math learning lively and engaging over DL. We also distributed math materials to students so they can continue using manipulatives to support their understanding of place value, fractions and number sense at home.

To gauge students' learning progress and plan next steps, teachers rely on data from the two interim math milestones as well as from formative assessments to create skills-based group support and 1-1 tutoring. Teachers offer study hall, tutoring and office hours to answer student questions during DL.

We teach inquiry-based science using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)-based Amplify curriculum supplemented with Mystery Science and FOSS. Students develop skills on how to observe, pose questions, identify problems and design solutions to real life dilemmas, learning process and content skills simultaneously. Students read, write, investigate and present their findings in teacher-facilitated science discussions.



During DL, teachers have organized synchronous virtual field trips to learn more about the topics connected to their respective units of study. With PTA support, we sponsor an annual STEAM Faire where students investigate a science problem of their choice and present their findings to their fellow peers and parent audience.

Much of the K-5 social studies curriculum focuses on learning about the past and the world around them. In K-2, students start learning about themselves and their families, then extending outwards to their community, country and world. Students create model community places populated by community helpers as well as create art projects related to important holidays celebrated by people around the globe.

In grades 3-5, students study history at both the local and national level. Grade 3 studies Native American tribes as well as local Bay Area history. Fourth graders study the immigration movement in America and the California missions. Fifth graders study the European colonization of California as well as the beginning of democracy in our country.

This year, with the rise of racial tensions and the need to answer to the calls of greater social equality, our school made a commitment to anti-racist practices. We taught lessons about individual perspectives and empathy to raise awareness of how our personal and societal actions impact others. Also, as a school dedicated to the teaching of the Chinese language, we also teach about the rich history and cultural traditions of China and its people.

**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:**

Because we believe in developing a well-rounded child, our School Site Council (SSC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) have invested in all students receiving robust curricular programs for a more comprehensive school programming. They are described below.

In addition to the Amplify science instruction, students participate in outdoor garden education where they study plants/earth science, weather elements and ecology; all are NGSS-based instructions that complement the classroom science lessons. All of these concepts come to life for the students when they are in the garden. The gardening teacher also teaches about environmental sustainability and helps students see their connection to the natural world as future stewards of this planet. Classroom teachers plan with the gardening teacher and co-teach units in which the gardening teacher speaks in English and the classroom teacher reinforces in Cantonese. The students respond fluidly between the two languages, enriching their content knowledge and language skills.

Similarly, we contract local artists to teach the performing arts to complete the three strands of arts education, in addition to the district supported visual arts, general music and music instrumentals. Our K-2 students study movement through dance, the 3rd grade studies African drumming, the 4th grade takes physical theater, architecture and the 5th grade engages in musical theater or textile art. All this leads to our hallmark school event, the annual Winter Show when the stage is completely transformed into a specific theme staged by our 50-plus member parent volunteer crew. Every single student performs on stage and is celebrated by our caring, loving and upbeat CIS community. Despite DL, parents created the 1st virtual Winter Show receiving lots of praise.

CIS' PE program is provided by both a PE specialist and the classroom teachers. The PE specialist models lessons, provides PDs and supports teachers in delivering age appropriate activities. The goal is for students to be healthy and be active in mind, body and spirit. Students build agility, flexibility and endurance all the

while having fun. To celebrate our healthy body and minds, we end our school year with a schoolwide healthy lifestyle day.

At CIS we believe strongly in supporting each student to achieve his/her own potential and we implement Coach Wooden's Pyramic of Success in which teachers teach and model the character traits such as hard work, determination, team spirit and confidence so the student can reach his/her personal best. On a monthly basis, students from every single class are celebrated in our schoolwide "Phoenix All Stars" celebration until all students are recognized. Parents are invited to the event and it has become a hallmark in CIS' traditions to help our students succeed.

All of these courses have been coordinated between the classroom teachers and artists and taught virtually during DL so students continue to receive a full program despite the COVID-19 challenges.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

To meet the needs of our struggling students, CIS implements the MTSS-tiered system to support students in the classroom at tier 1, incorporate specialist intervention at tier 2 and if needed, recommend for assessment for potential IEP qualification at tier 3. At tier 1, teachers will adapt the curriculum, set individual learning objectives, do small group instruction or 1-1, or try alternative approaches to engage the students. If more is needed, the school will call for a Student Success Team (SST) in which the parents are invited to discuss possible next action steps. Our nurse/counselor, literacy intervention teacher and SEL teacher are also involved in assisting teacher and student with initial push-in or pull-out sessions and support. We hold monthly Student Assistance Program (SAP) team meetings composed of the nurse/counselor, literacy specialist, psychologist, resource specialist (RSP), SEL teacher, speech pathologist and the principal to discuss our focal students. If progress is still minimal, then the team may call for further assessment and see if the student may qualify for a 504 or an IEP.

At CIS, we know that there is a range for student abilities in a classroom and our instruction is flexible and open to have students learn and meet grade level expectations and beyond. Within a lesson, teachers differentiate the instruction by asking different level questions as well as designing activities and homework to challenge students who are ready for more. Teachers collaborate with the parents and support the students by providing additional materials at the student's level and engaging the students in projects appropriate to their abilities.

Our English Language Learners (ELLs), most of whom are native Chinese speakers, play a valuable role as Cantonese language models for our non-Cantonese speaking students. During DL, to strengthen students' speaking, reading and writing skills, teachers used sentence frames and talk moves to have students practice extending their ideas and learning in how to engage in dialogue. Teachers also utilized the Zoom breakout rooms to conduct small group language practice. We have a literacy intervention program in which the literacy specialist provides 1-1 and small group instruction to struggling students using a combination of online books (F&P, myON, and/or RAZKids) to support students at their current instructional reading level. Assessments such as running records, ELPAC and Reading Inventory are used to gauge student growth and adjust instruction.

For special education students, we have a half-time Resource Specialist Program (RSP) teacher and a full-time paraprofessional who serve our RSP students. As the case manager, the RSP teacher meets with the classroom teachers weekly to discuss the student's performance in the classroom, behavior needs and modifies the instruction/assignments so the student can access the learning material. The RSP will also push-in as needed to facilitate engagement with the student and model for the classroom teacher. In addition, she coordinates with the parents addressing their needs and provides resources for the parents to try at home. This has become very important and useful

during DL with parents supervising their children from home. For higher needs students, teachers, the RSP teacher and parents work as a team to reinforce skills learned and manage behaviors so that students are supported both at home and at school.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

Guided by our school's core values to create a safe and supportive learning environment that is inclusive to all learners in the classroom, K-5 teachers steadily work to build relationships with students, create a sense of belonging and facilitate connectedness to support students' academic, social and emotional growth. At CIS, students engage in academic conversations in various ways. Examples include quick writes and close reading. All of these practices allow students to reflect and develop critical thinking skills, supporting a culture of fairness and academic rigor for all. Students also work in small or cooperative learning groups facilitated by the teacher; the goal is to have students actively engaged so they are empowered to lead their own learning.

Central to helping our students develop SEL skills, CIS values student voice. It is important for every student to feel seen and heard as a member of a diverse school community. In the classroom, students are listened to, respected, and valued for what they say. During DL, students across grade levels practiced SEL skills such as learning to express themselves with I-statements, responding to peers with constructive feedback, exploring identity, sharing stories of challenge and resilience, exercising leadership skills using the assertive voice, and engaging in school projects with agency and self-advocacy. Classroom conversations are led by students' interests, passions, and issues that are important and personally relevant to them.

For struggling students in DL, teachers responded across grade levels setting up intentionally targeted support time within their teaching schedule to check in and regularly connect with students. In a recent climate survey of CIS students in grades 3-5, 76% of students reported feeling safe at Zoom school and 76% of students reported feeling like they belong in their classroom and school community. While student engagement levels continue to vary during DL, our message to students and the school community is: CIS cares about your learning, social emotional health, and well-being.

CIS continues to work in partnership with students to establish a positive school climate and learning environment that is centered on a whole child approach addressing the strengths, needs, and interests of students as they engage in learning.

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

Despite the pandemic, CIS emerged as an even stronger school community because of the close partnership between our families, teachers and school staff. Under the leadership of the School Site Council (SSC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the principal, we continued to gather information and feedback virtually from the various groups from their meeting, made decisions and acted to meet the needs of students and parents'. For example, the SSC solicited input from the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) on how best to use the budget to support our ELLs and sent out a community survey for parents to share how we are doing as a school and what their needs are. The SSC and PTA also held joint town hall meetings annually to discuss the school budget and next year school plans. It is an interconnected system in which everyone works towards the common goal of providing whatever is best for our students.

Similarly, our PTA and the school collaborate tirelessly to engage our families so we continue to stay connected during the pandemic year. Through our parent talent pool, most of the important school events have been transformed onto the virtual platform. Examples of parent-led family and community engagement events include Reflections Art Night, Chinese New Year Parade, Annual Spring Gala Fundraiser and the Healthy Lifestyles Day at the end of the school year. Parent and student participation in these events have been stable compared to in-person last year, showing that the CIS community spirit is alive.

To keep our parents informed, our PTA communication team coordinates and sends a weekly parent reminder in ParentDB and in WeChat (primarily for our ELL parents). Contributors include various PTA committees and the principal. Each publication is translated into Chinese by parent volunteers for our

mainly Chinese speaking parents. In addition, our room parents work closely with the classroom teachers in sending out important information regarding the classrooms. Membership in both ParentDB and WeChat are almost at 100%.

To broaden our network of partnerships and support our students' DL experience, this year we partnered with two high schools to tutor our students and facilitate social groups after school hours under the PTA's supervision. It grew out of a response to parents' need to bridge the gap between the lack of peer social interaction due to DL. The program is highly successful with a student waiting list. In addition, the school collaborates with our local BYMCA and Park and Rec to provide enrichment and academic learning programs for families who experience hardship with DL.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

As a school community, we value our teachers and want to ensure they have the support to do their best teaching possible. CIS strives to be a progressive school, a school that is responsive to the students and families we serve at a given time.

Practicing a student focused, Equity Centered Professional Learning Community (ECPLC), teachers support each other by sharing expertise and help to develop capacity. In our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) composed of grade level representatives, the specialists and the principal meet monthly to develop PDs, review student data, discuss issues and plan next steps to improve student learning. Parallel to the ILT, our School Climate Committee (SCC) meets monthly to discuss the status of school culture, SEL needs and propose ideas to improve our school climate.

Since distance learning last spring, teachers have been steadily working to build their own capacities, expertise, and skills to lead, develop, and implement SEL initiatives in the classroom. The experience of distance learning challenges the way teachers evaluate and approach their own teaching practices. With a schoolwide focus on SEL and equity, distance learning has transformed the classroom into a dynamic process of continuous learning and improvement encouraging teachers to let go of what is not working and explore new ways to approach lesson planning, present content, respond to behaviors, and address the shifting needs of students while also keeping them engaged during distance learning. Promoting student SEL and equity starts by recognizing the needs of educators and staff to feel supported and valued. With the SCC monitoring school culture and recognizing the needs of teachers, the priority to support teacher self-care and well-being during staff PD meetings became a routine practice during distance learning and it was an opportunity for teachers to be self-aware of their own needs and identify and work from their own strengths, using school climate and survey data to guide and inform the development and growth of best teaching practices.

To support our teachers, we provide several resources to help them succeed. This includes dedicated time for teacher collaboration during the monthly staff meetings, site PDs, weekly ECPLCs, teacher release time and compensating teachers for additional hours of work completed. In addition, our PTA supports funding for teachers to attend off-site PDs, coordinates teacher appreciation events throughout the school year, and reimburses teachers for additional learning materials. To alleviate teachers from performing tasks that may take away precious planning time for instruction, the office staff coordinates our support staff and parent volunteers to do some of the work such as collating student materials and distributing them to student families during DL. Also, the itinerant teachers contribute to this effort by pulling together resources to supplement the teachers' work.

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

CIS is all about shared leadership, doing it "with" our stakeholders, teachers, parents and students. We model "Together We Achieve." Following a shared leadership model, teachers are invited to participate in leadership roles and contribute their feedback on schoolwide decisions with the principal. We model shared decision making as much as we can, take ownership and hold each other accountable for implementing the decisions we make. All teachers have an opportunity to influence change and make improvements in the school when they engage in and contribute to professional discussions focused on shared practices and

goals. We are one team focused on building capacity to lead and develop a sustainable system to ensure that students are accessing an equitable education in a safe, healthy, supportive learning environment, with students achieving the highest outcomes.

The team approach to leadership is an essential piece to the success of CIS' smooth operation of the school, keeping important programs running and continuing to build relationships during DL. Teachers take active roles either leading or participating in various committees and perform the functions they are charged with to support the school. The ILT and the ECPLC are two examples of teacher-led and co-facilitated platforms on joint leadership. During ILT, support staff such as the literacy specialist, SEL teacher, nurse/counselor and the principal participate and share relevant information from the other grades to keep everyone connected and informed. School staff also participate as members on the SSC and PTA boards. They serve as liaisons between the teachers and the parents offering their insights.

During COVID, the principal implemented several strategies and structures to ensure the successful operation of the school and to continue building relationships with the school community. To bring the school together each day, school begins with the principal's morning greetings virtually. About 30% of the students attend regularly and staff appear as guest speakers to do a mini-lesson or talk about a topic related to SEL, healthy habits and PE. We feature student talents and celebrate spirit day, Phoenix All Stars and student birthdays (with the principal sending a personalized birthday greeting to each student) to continue some of the school's traditions. The master schedule includes the classroom schedules, other curricular instruction, meetings, etc., and was created for transparency and access, especially for the itinerant and support staff. To connect and keep the teachers and parents informed and updated, the principal writes a weekly newsletter and sends parent reminders. As we transition to in-person learning this spring, a CIS School Reopening Manual was created as the go-to resource so that all school personnel have the same information and work as a coherent team.

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

In our continuous improvement effort to serve our school community and in light of the tensions in racism and social events, we have equipped our staff with resources and strategies to raise awareness in culturally responsive instruction and anti-racist practices. The school purchased for every teacher copies of Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* or Ibram Kendi's *How To Be An Antiracist* book to further their knowledge and practice strategies to support their instruction. We provided anti-racist PDs focused on understanding implicit bias, microaggression and disruption strategies. Time and space were devoted to establishing a safe and supportive environment for staff to have conversations in small groups, sharing their own experiences with microaggressions and how they were affected. Staff worked on strategies to practice via scenarios pertaining to microaggressions that are prevalent in the classrooms and at schools. In addition, as an inclusive school, teachers respect each student's cultural background and, identities and encourage the students to share their stories. We also teach students to challenge stereotypes based on race, gender, and class as well as teach them how to be allies to those who experience bullying and injustice.

In responding to the current events, we have communicated to all the stakeholders, our students and families, that our stance is "At CIS, we support anti-racism. We will work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Strengths come from embracing diversity and all that our different perspectives and backgrounds bring to our community." Teachers used classroom times to hold check-ins, teach lessons on inclusion, diversity, race and facilitated restorative conversations with students who needed the support. Parents received resources on how to engage their students in ways to talk about equity and racism. Staff responded to parents' requests in holding meetings with them and/or their students. Our SSC and PTA have also worked together to support parent discussions.

We continue to support our students, staff and families to ensure an equitable education for all students by providing the space and time to listen to their concerns, show empathy and suggest next steps. Teachers are encouraged to embed their instruction through a culturally responsive and anti-racist lens. Our SEL teacher and counselor facilitate teacher check-ins and assist in family outreach to ensure the safety and health in our school community.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

The single most effective practice we did this year was a responsive PD format in developing our teachers' capacity to implement and nurture SEL consistently across all grade levels to boost students' academic success. As the research clearly shows, SEL leads to positive academic growth. The tools that we acquired helped us develop close relationships with our students and build community within our virtual classrooms during this most unusual year.

Unlike previous PDs which can be one size fits all or superficial in depth, our SEL PDs were very much connected to the work the teachers do daily and catered to specific situations that concerned our students and teachers. We sent a core team of teachers to attend an SEL institute in the summer and they led PDs on implementing daily check-ins in the classrooms. The check-ins became a schoolwide practice in every single classroom. Students felt they had a safe space to express their emotions and explained why. These check-ins also provided teachers invaluable insights into their students' lives during this year of the pandemic.

The timely, action-oriented PDs targeted at teachers' needs/requests honed the teachers' abilities to incorporate SEL; teachers were able to better understand the interconnectedness of academics with SEL and got to know their students more deeply. Through the SEL teacher's coaching, facilitation and coordination, teachers were able to see the what, how and why in SEL instruction. The collaboration work focused on grade level needs. For example, K-1 designed and facilitated a parent workshop to exchange ideas on how to support children at home during DL. Many parents expressed gratitude in having this workshop as they have struggled with the challenges of juggling work, home life and their child's schooling. Second grade worked on identifying and managing emotions, 3rd grade worked on providing peer review/feedback, 4th grade focused on building an assertive voice and the 5th grade worked on how the pandemic has affected students' lives.

To gauge progress, we developed three data collection tools: a staff survey, a grades 3-5 student survey and a student engagement observation tool. Survey results showed that the modeling and coaching were effective and a need for developing case management skills. The student survey results indicated needs to develop choice and support student voice. We will use the observation tool in 2021-2022 when we have more opportunities to observe students in-person over DL. Other important data points came from noticing students talking more about their feelings, reaching out for help and parents commenting on the students' prosocial behaviors and peer interactions as a result of the teacher-facilitated social zoom sessions.