

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 541 West 22nd Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Upland State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 91784-8914

County San Bernardino

Telephone (909) 949-7830 Fax (909) 949-7837

Web site/URL https://ve-uusd-ca.schoolloop.com/ E-mail rachael\_emery@upland.k12.ca.us

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Lynn Carmen Day E-mail lcarmenday@upland.k12.ca.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Upland Unified School District Tel. (909) 985-1864

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Wes Fifield  
(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**

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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

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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):
- 10 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 14 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	47	49	96
1	25	34	59
2	48	54	102
3	49	46	95
4	37	42	79
5	48	29	77
6	49	26	75
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>	303	280	583

\*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
  - 14.8 % Asian
  - 2.6 % Black or African American
  - 32.3 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 47.6 % White
  - 2.7 % 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: 4%

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	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	23
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	604
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Farsi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %  
19 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 196

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

72 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>14</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</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: 2

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.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
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.	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 24:1

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	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.

<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.

Every student will achieve one year of academic growth in a safe and supportive environment. We exist to help students learn and become good citizens.

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.

Valencia began school in August 2020 in the full distance learning model. Students were divided into am and pm cohorts. Each cohort receives 2.5 hours of synchronous instruction with the teacher four days a week and, based on grade level, between 30 and 90 minutes of daily asynchronous learning. PE instruction is also live one day a week, which ensures students are receiving live instruction five days a week. Small focused groups of cohort of students were brought onto campus from October 2020 until March 2021. Grade levels switched to a hybrid blended learning model, with some families continuing with full distance, on the following dates: Transitional Kindergarten February 25, Kindergarten March 4, Grades 1-3 March 16, and Grades 4-6 March 23.

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**

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Valencia Elementary is nestled up against the San Gabriel Mountains in an established neighborhood in the northern part of Upland in Southern California. Many of Valencia's teachers went through the Upland Unified School District as students themselves, and now their own children attend Upland schools. These deep-rooted Upland traditions make for a tight-knit community.

Valencia serves transitional kindergarten (TK) through grade six with approximately 600 students. The student population is composed of 47.6% White, 32.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 14.8% Asian, 2.5% African American, and 2.7% other races. Thirty-four percent of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 3% are English Learners, and 12% are students with disabilities. Due to high expectations, rigor, and high test scores, Valencia is a highly sought-after school for intra- and inter-district transfer students. Valencia is the only school in the district to offer extended-day kindergarten, which provides extra instructional time to build strong foundational skills and sets students up for academic success.

Valencia's mission statement drives all decisions. It states, "Every student will achieve one year of academic growth in literacy and numeracy provided in a safe, equitable, supportive, and welcoming learning environment. We exist to help students learn, grow, and become good citizens." The statement reflects the core belief that all students, no matter their academic level, deserve focused instruction to achieve academic growth and to support emotional well-being.

To accomplish this, staff members work collaboratively to adopt evidence-based strategies to assure equitable access to quality teaching and learning. This continuity over time results in consistent, high-quality learning experiences for all students, which helps ensure that competencies build over time instead of stagnating or slipping backward. These schoolwide evidence-based practices are implemented with rigor and fidelity.

Although academic achievement is a top priority, Valencia realizes the importance of developing the whole child. This is accomplished through creating a positive environment where students can develop and grow. The Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) program sets the tone by focusing on explicitly teaching the SOARR (Safety, Organization, Appreciation, Respect, and Responsibility) expectations, and rewarding students with Eagle Bucks, which can be redeemed at the SOARR Store. The Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) volunteer regularly while interacting with and supporting students in the classroom, at recess, and lunch.

To create a safe play environment to support healthy, active kids, Valencia was innovative in adopting Peaceful Playgrounds. Peaceful Playgrounds is a researched-based program that trains staff and students on conflict resolution, teaches clear game rules and expectations, and utilizes proper equipment with distinct game designs painted on the blacktop. In the transition to a hybrid model of in-person instruction, teachers have adapted the painted playground for fun, socially distant play.

Valencia also teaches students leadership and the importance of giving back to the community. Upper-grade students are encouraged to run for student council, which manages school spirit days, annual fundraising, and community outreach. Fundraising monies have gone toward Coins for Cancer and Upland Animal Shelter. Additionally, Upland families in need have been provided with holiday food baskets and gifts.

To nurture high expectations and student curiosity, Valencia sponsors several afterschool programs, including Chess Club, Science Club, and a theater workshop. Valencia's PTA sponsors academic, anti-bullying, and fine arts assemblies in addition to the fall social, movie nights, talent show, family dine-outs, and biannual book fairs.

COVID-19 closed Valencia on Friday, March 13, 2020, and Valencia resumed teaching online from home on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. Valencia provided a Chromebook, and a hotspot if necessary, for every student. Administration supported teachers in setting up Google Classrooms and hyperdocs. The Valencia website was updated to provide clear communication regarding virtual curriculum and assignments.

Valencia held “Grab and Go’s” to distribute classroom materials and meals.

Staff went above and beyond during the transition to ensure attendance and engagement remained strong. Teachers became competent in troubleshooting technical issues for families on the spot. Administration and classified staff regularly reached out to families to offer support, and teacher/parent conferences, parent informational meetings, and later in the fall, Back-to-School Night were all conducted online.

For the 2020-2021 school year, the schedule was created with an AM/PM learning model so that students would have live instruction five days a week. The smaller class sizes for more individualized instruction is an added benefit of this model.

As evidenced by its history and its quick adaptation to distance learning, Valencia is a school that believes it can collectively accomplish great things, and because of this collective belief, the staff makes a positive difference in the lives of students. It is what John Hattie calls in his work, *Visible Learning*, Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE), or the collective belief of the staff in their ability to positively affect students. CTE has been found to be strongly, positively correlated with student achievement with an effect size of 1.57. Valencia’s CTE has proven most powerful to the school’s continued ability to successfully educate and support students.



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

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

The driving factor of Valencia’s success is Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE). One example of the power of CTE at Valencia is the ongoing collaboration among staff members. Each week, grade level teams collaborate to build instructional knowledge, share best practices, and use data to drive instruction. This ensures that their curriculum and instructional practices are rigorous, differentiated, and engaging for all students. Teachers are committed to teach the district-adopted curriculum with fidelity, and instruction is standards-based according to district-identified priority standards.

Every student is given a reading and math universal diagnostic assessment three times a year using i-Ready, which provides teachers with academic achievement levels, suggested groupings, lessons, and learning plans for each student. To make sense of this data, teachers meet twice a year to make data-driven decisions, plan for instruction, and share best practices.

Valencia has maintained one-to-one computers for all students. School closed on March 13, 2020 and by March 17, all teachers created Google Classrooms. Teachers provided live instruction over Google Meet or Zoom, and lessons were adapted for the virtual environment with technology programs such as: Google Apps for Education, SeeSaw, and Screencastify.

The ELA curriculums of Wonders by McGraw Hill (grades K-5) and StudySync (grade 6) provide research-based lessons using complex texts and collaborative conversations. The schoolwide use of the RACES (Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain, Summarize) writing strategy contributes to Valencia’s students being strong writers. Using assessment data, teachers differentiate lessons, provide small-group instruction using guided reading practices and leveled texts, utilize close-reading strategies, provide direct instruction on phonics, and facilitate phonemic awareness activities. During distance learning, the use of breakout rooms proved invaluable for small-group instruction.

In math, the district-adopted curriculum Go Math by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt utilizes the 5E instructional model—Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate—to support mathematical understanding. This aligns with the instructional practices of our DNA Math training which fosters inquiry, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, number sense, and justification of mathematical thinking. Students use manipulatives and white boards to support conceptual understanding, and this continues in distance learning as resources are sent home. As with ELA, assessment data is used to inform whole-group and small-group instruction. Again, breakout rooms have allowed these practices to continue.

This year, synchronous learning is devoted to ELA and math priority standards, with science and social studies being incorporated into reading and writing and taught during asynchronous time. In science, Valencia teachers use the highly engaging videos and hands-on activities from Mystery Science.

In all subject areas, formative and summative assessments inform instruction. During distance learning, teachers engaged students in all subject areas using Google Forms, Pear Deck, and FlipGrid in order to assess mastery and adjust instruction in real time. In ELA and math, the online platforms from the adopted curriculums provide standards-aligned digital assignments and assessments including daily exit tickets, independent practice, and unit assessments.

#### **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:**

Valencia believes in a balanced-enriching curriculum supporting the whole child, which includes: art, music, physical education, technology, and other curricular areas to engage students in learning. These opportunities are delivered as part of the core curriculum, as stand alone lessons, and as additional programs.

Throughout the year, teachers integrate into the core curriculum a variety of project-based learning opportunities for students in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM). For example, kindergarteners host an evening winter musical performance, second graders incorporate art with writing, third graders investigate career options, and sixth graders attend outdoor science camp. Because all students have a Chromebook, they learn to be proficient using Google Apps for Education to communicate and collaborate.

Upland Unified supports Valencia with dedicated music and band teachers for all grade levels. The choral teacher provides weekly instruction which culminates in an end-of-the-year musical performance. The band teacher works with students twice a week in grades four through six beginning with music theory. Over 60% of fifth and sixth grade students chose to participate in the band to learn to play an instrument.

Valencia also has a dedicated physical education teacher who instructs students in first through sixth grade twice a week. During the year of distance learning, live physical education instruction continued online.

This year, the library technician continues weekly library visits with students virtually by posting read-alouds to their Google Classrooms. Further, students have access to the school library both physically with a weekly drive-through check-out system called Destiny Discover, and virtually with ebooks using Sora.

Sharing in the collective belief of providing students with enrichment opportunities, the Valencia community hosts a number of schoolwide events. All teachers, students, and staff are invited to audition and perform in the annual Valencia talent show. The winner of Valencia's annual spelling bee moves on to district and possibly county and national level spelling bees.

To promote health and nutrition, Valencia students designed, built, and planted a school garden in which they can now visit, work, and soon harvest the fruits (and vegetables) of their labors. In Valencia's yearly Fun Run, students raise money for the school while emphasizing the importance of being physically fit. Additionally, Valencia's site health tech monitors students as they run or walk laps in a weekly Mileage Club. To encourage healthy living, all students participate in the Harvest of the Month program in which a different fresh fruit or vegetable is delivered each month for students to learn about, taste, and expand their palates.

Valencia's PTA provides assemblies featuring topics such as hands-on STEAM, Dairy Council, Aquarium of the Pacific, and "The Science Guy." During the "The Imagination Machine" assembly, students' written stories are adapted and acted out on stage. Valencia students participate in the annual "Kindness Week" challenges in which acts of kindness are highlighted. During Red Ribbon Week, conversations with students center around being a better, healthier, and more productive person.

It is with a community approach that Valencia is able to integrate art, music, physical education, technology, and other enrichment opportunities into instruction so that students are more connected and engaged in their learning.

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

Valencia staff's collective belief in their ability to positively influence student outcomes, including those who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged, is evident by the use of data to monitor students for mastery of the content standards to inform and differentiate instruction.

Students performing above grade level are identified through a district Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) assessment. These students are continuously challenged with rigorous instruction that incorporates Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and Depth and Complexity Icons.

When a student falls below grade level, teachers utilize small-group instruction to focus on identified learning gaps. For example, during ELA, teachers target students' needs with Wonders Guided Readers, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, and direct phonics instruction. Another example of differentiated instruction is providing choice for students during their Daily 3 (math by myself, math writing and math with someone) math rotations. During small-group instruction teachers may utilize Go Math lessons, manipulatives, supplemental resources, or computer programs.

The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team monitors students and meets with teachers to offer support and suggestions for interventions for any student who is two or more grade levels below in reading or math. In addition to differentiated classroom support, these students regularly meet with a reading support teacher. As another layer of support, students are provided individual help from the high school's National Honors Society students at Homework Club.

On the state assessment, Valencia's students with disabilities subgroup is performing 10 or more percentage points below in math and reading. To address this, the special education team regularly partners with school staff to provide additional support for students based on Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The Resource Specialist Program (RSP) teacher ensures that students are receiving scaffolded instruction to meet grade level standards in the least restrictive environment.

Valencia has two Special Day Classes (SDC) that provide Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) in a smaller classroom setting for students with mild to moderate disabilities. These students are mainstreamed as much as possible into general education classrooms to afford them the opportunity to engage socially and academically with typically developing peers. Per their IEPs, students are provided with related services such as speech and language, occupational therapy, adaptive physical education, and physical therapy.

English Language Learners (ELLs) are identified and classified through the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). ELL students are provided with integrated and designated supports in the classroom. They are monitored through Ellevation, which is a management platform that organizes ELL data and supports the monitoring of student progress to English proficiency. To support ELL students, teachers have access to evidence-based strategies in Ellevation in addition to the English Language Development (ELD) resources from the adopted core curriculums.

Valencia has a very small population of migrant, foster, and homeless students. They are supported with the district's Healthy Start program, whose goal is to strengthen and help stabilize families struggling with food insecurity, clothing, shelter, health care, or other circumstances that prevent a child's ability to succeed in school. Upland Unified has also partnered with Care Solace, which links students and families in need to community-based care providers. At Valencia, no child is left behind.

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

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

Valencia regularly embeds practices that recognize and celebrate positive behaviors to consistently provide an environment for student engagement that supports academic, social, and emotional growth.

Valencia has received county PBIS Silver Recognition for its approach to developing a positive culture and climate. Staff have been trained in positive interventions, restorative practices, and behavior specific praise. With staff input, Valencia developed school-wide behavior expectations (SOARR) that are continuously taught and reinforced. Students earn Eagle Bucks for exhibiting these behaviors which can be redeemed at the SOARR Store for tangible prizes. During distance learning in lieu of Valencia’s SOARR Store, Valencia teachers hold weekly Eagle Buck raffles for students to win a Mystery Bag.

Teachers recognize students who are excelling academically or behaviorally during monthly Eagle Awards assemblies. This is an opportunity for staff, students, and families to come together to celebrate excellence and growth. During distance learning, these assemblies have been virtual videos where teachers record themselves presenting the awards to their students. Principal’s Award recipients are further recognized with a certificate and gift card mailed home.

Among students, one of the most popular recognitions is the daily “shout-out” from the principal. Staff members submit names of students to be acknowledged during the Daily Message for exhibiting a SOARR expectation. To increase engagement during distance learning, Valencia encouraged students to participate in virtual spirit days and grade-level competitions. Families are asked to share pictures of participation on Valencia’s social media account. These pictures are turned into videos that are shared with the school in Friday’s Daily Message.

Valencia’s adopted Second Step curriculum addresses social-emotional needs of students. Weekly lessons are taught on topics such as self-esteem, respect, goal-setting, and positive interactions with peers. The school PBIS team reviews data monthly to identify students who may need additional support as well as identify areas of the campus where behavior expectations may need to be reviewed and retaught.

Valencia incentivizes attendance with rewards such as Valencia’s Superhero Attendance Program where students earned pieces of a poster each day for perfect class attendance and received class rewards such as dance parties, pizza parties, and additional recess time. Valencia also recognizes individual students who have maintained perfect attendance for each month at Valencia’s Eagle Awards Ceremonies, and at the end of the year distributes medals to students who have maintained perfect attendance.

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

Valencia has a history of strong community support, beginning with Valencia’s Parent Teacher Association (PTA) involvement. Family engagement is a priority of the PTA. It sponsors activities such as monthly movie nights, annual talent show, and an annual fall social, which is a popular and well-attended night out for families to socialize and enjoy food vendors and carnival games. Additionally, the PTA partners with local restaurants once a month for family dine-out night fundraisers.

Valencia welcomes family participation. Parent volunteers are often found helping around campus in a variety of ways. In an effort to include father figures on campus, Valencia runs the Watch D.O.G.S. program in which students’ fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other male figures volunteer in classrooms, at recess, and at lunch as positive role models.

Valencia partners with outside groups. A local police department hosts an annual “Hero” kick-off assembly to teach students to recognize and stop bullying behaviors on campus. The local Kiwanis Club volunteers at Valencia events and hosts a track club for fourth through sixth grade students. Valencia has also partnered with a local college to plan, build, and operate a school community garden, and hosted a family engagement

garden day for families to help build and plant the garden. Additionally, to connect Valencia to Upland High School and encourage college and career readiness, Valencia alumni who are high school seniors are invited to walk through campus in their caps and gowns.

Valencia worked diligently during COVID-19 to continue to communicate and engage with families to maintain its positive school climate. Foundational to this effort was an Upland Unified School District partnership with telecommunication companies to provide free internet access to families in need. Support for the school community continued by distributing meals for those affected by meal instability. The administration sent out weekly communication to families and daily video messages to students and as well as monthly virtual Eagle Assemblies. Valencia also engages families by regularly updating the website, the school hub website for all virtual resources, and social media pages. Additionally, Valencia partnered with the National Honor Society to provide virtual tutoring by high school students twice a week.

It is with ongoing communication and engagement that Valencia fosters community involvement by making community members feel a valued part of the educational process.

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

Valencia creates an environment in which all staff feel valued and supported as they have on-going opportunities to share and collaborate. Weekly professional learning opportunities, grade-level team meetings, and vertical articulation center on district goals and site needs to support student success. This achieves continuity and establishes a working relationship amongst staff at all grade levels.

Valencia works hard to create an environment that fosters CTE. Valencia collectively established meeting norms for all site meetings that promote respect and positivity, as outlined in Valencia's social contract of ACEs (Agreements for Creating Excellence). In addition, all staff have access to a Google website where all site meeting agendas, notes, correspondences, forms, and schedules are posted. This consistent communication tool has proven invaluable during distance learning as it supports staff feeling connected and informed.

Valencia's professional culture of growth and community centers around the idea that the best learning is from each other. During weekly grade-level collaboration meetings, teachers look at data, plan, collaborate, and share best practices to support each other in meeting the needs of their students. Each staff meeting begins with a teacher sharing a strategy or best practice, which has proven to be a favorite time among staff. Additionally, many teachers are instructional specialists in the areas of Write from the Beginning and Beyond, Thinking Maps, DNA Math, and Restorative Practices. The specialists grow in their own craft and share their knowledge with colleagues during staff meetings or grade-level team meetings in order to support each other in adopting effective practices in their classrooms.

As a part of the professional culture, many teachers serve in a leadership role at either the district or site level where they sit on committees that make decisions regarding student achievement and well being. At the site level, committees include MTSS, PBIS, Leadership, and School Site Council. To build capacity and promote leadership, administration has encouraged teachers to take on facilitator roles for these committees. Additionally, Valencia representation on district committees is vital, as teachers provide a voice for Valencia and act as liaison bringing information back to share out with staff.

Teachers were supported in the transition from full-distance learning to a hybrid model of instruction through involvement in the decision-making process with the site leadership team regarding organizational decisions. Safety protocols were thoroughly reviewed with teachers and teachers were provided with release time to prepare lessons and classrooms for the return of students. Professional learning time was devoted to sharing ideas and lessons that would create a welcoming and supportive environment for students.

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

At Valencia, leadership plays a vital role in the success of all students and staff. The belief that all students at Valencia should be safe, connected, and engaged academically drives all decision making at the

administrative level. School leadership consists of the principal, teacher on special assignment (TOSA), committee leaders, and leadership teams.

Valencia's principal acknowledges that strong relationships with staff and families are the foundation from which successful policies and programs ensue. The principal and TOSA are accessible for the school community through a physical presence, open-door policy, consistent communication in weekly messages to families, and daily announcements to students. Further, communication between administration and staff is a priority, as evidenced by the weekly Eagle Express newsletters, regular committee meetings, and transparency in messaging.

Valencia's principal is a strong instructional leader. The principal visits classrooms weekly and collects observational data which she uses to plan relevant professional learning. After each visit, feedback is provided to the individual teacher regarding application to further their professional growth. During the closure, the principal continued to visit all virtual classrooms regularly to ensure that the instruction provided maintains the academic rigor consistent with Valencia's philosophy for student achievement.

Valencia's principal maintains flexibility in determining what services and resources will best meet the needs of the unique student body and community each school year. For instance, in acknowledgement of the parents' desire to reopen Valencia from distance learning to in-person instruction at the soonest possible date, the principal welcomed the idea of making Valencia one of two pilot schools to lead the way in reopening, knowing that because of CTE the staff would rise to challenge.

Valencia's TOSA is a teacher leader with a role to support all stakeholders. The TOSA monitors data, supports professional learning, and offers extra support to teachers with technology, student engagement, and family communication. The TOSA oversees the School Site Council, English Learners, 504 Plans, and the school's online presence, and sits on all committees.

In leading instruction, the principal and TOSA are also supported by Valencia's School Site Council and English Learner Advisory Committee consisting of staff and community members who provide critical feedback on the direction of schoolwide goals. These committees provide guidance on how Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) money is spent to support student academic achievement. The principal and PTA also work closely to decide how PTA funds can best support academic achievement.

School leadership continues to demonstrate a shared commitment with all stakeholders to making the best decision for students.

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

Valencia's collective efficacy means the staff approaches everything from an equity lens, providing strong first instruction to all students and differentiating learning activities to meet the needs of all students. Valencia's mission statement emphasizes academic growth "in a safe, equitable, supportive, and welcoming learning environment." Students and staff strive to practice respect in all areas. Respect was identified as a core value by staff, and it is referenced as a norm at every meeting. It is also one of the five SOARR expectations taught and reinforced among students.

Valencia teachers provide an on-going culturally relevant instruction through adopted curriculum and supplemental resources. Scholastic News was purchased by the site for students in grades one through six. It provides current events through non-fiction articles at students' reading levels. Teachers also use Newsela which provides content from the real world, about people and topics to which students can relate that is engaging, representative, and culturally responsive. Newsela presents the material at students' individual instructional reading levels. Teachers also study multicultural units that incorporate culturally sensitive literature from their anthologies. This year Valencia students were challenged to participate in a districtwide Black History Animation

competition in which they were to study a famous figure and use animation to tell his or her story.

Many teachers also incorporate morning meetings from Restorative Practices. Morning meetings have a number of benefits, such as building relationships, striving to be respectful to all, and providing an opportunity for equitable dialogue and decision making for all students.

In March 2020 when Valencia quickly transitioned to distance learning, there was a need to maintain continuity and connection with students. The daily announcements morphed into a daily video message from the principal. It was during this time that Project Wisdom messages were incorporated into the Daily Message. The Project Wisdom messages have monthly themes that highlight acceptance, kindness, integrity, and other values, as well as quotes and lessons from famous figures of all ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds. The messages align with national holidays as well as monthly recognitions like Black History Month. Many teachers incorporate this Daily Message into their curriculum to help instill the importance of the message. The message ends with, “Make it a great day or not, the choice is yours.” This phrase helps the students understand the power of their choices.

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

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Valencia teachers have always had a can-do, “together we can make a difference” attitude. The challenges of the March 2020 closure put that attitude to the test. Staff responded by embracing the challenge, and demonstrated the power of Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE)—the staff’s belief in their ability to positively impact students. CTE positively correlates with student achievement and is the one practice that has been the most instrumental in Valencia’s ability to successfully educate and support its students.

Teachers collaborated to learn to use a variety of technological resources for distance learning. All teachers were up and running with Google Classrooms for asynchronous assignments and instructing through Zoom within four days of the closure. Valencia teachers created a Google Classroom to share ideas and tips in this new platform. As a site, the staff decided to restructure and hold weekly staff meetings, providing an opportunity for all to stay informed, share, learn new strategies, and support each other.

Support staff also believe that their role is vital to students’ success and engagement. Paraprofessionals stepped in with academic support by meeting with students in small groups or individually to provide practice with essential skills. They also led small cohorts on campus for targeted student groups. Noon aides provided socialization for students by leading daily Lunch Bunch groups, which allowed students to virtually eat lunch, play games, and visit with classmates. In addition, the librarian posted read-alouds, the health technician posted yoga videos, and the principal posted weekly videos of all staff holding signs of encouragement, funny messages, or sing-alongs in all Google Classrooms.

Throughout the closure, staff strived to sustain regular practices to help students feel connected to school. The principal posted virtual daily messages in all Google Classrooms for students, staff, and families, including thought-provoking messages for character-building and social-emotional competences from Project Wisdom.

Valencia staff is proud of how they have worked together collectively to make a difference for students and families. CTE has led to shared leadership and teamwork of the staff since March 2020. John Hattie (2016) notes, “When teachers believe that together, they are capable of developing students’ critical thinking skills, creativity, and mastery of complex content, it happens! ... [T]hey can positively influence student outcomes, including those who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged.” Valencia’s Collective Teacher Efficacy has proven most instrumental to the school’s continued ability to successfully educate and support students.