

***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) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 10862 Bloomfield Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Los Alamitos State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 90720-2598

County Orange County

Telephone (714) 816-3300 Fax (714) 816-3315

Web site/URL https://lae.losal.org/ E-mail gwillems@losal.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Andrew Pulver E-mail apulver@losal.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Los Alamitos Unified School District Tel. (562) 799-4700

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Maryls Davidson  
(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):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 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	3	8	11
K	71	58	129
1	62	51	113
2	56	63	119
3	71	53	124
4	63	62	125
5	55	63	118
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>	381	358	739

\*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
  - 17.7 % Asian
  - 2.9 % Black or African American
  - 38.6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1.4 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 28.5 % White
  - 10.9 % 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	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	9
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	719
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Spanish, Tamil, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %  
54 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 30 %

Total number students who qualify: 219

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %  
99 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>27</u> Autism                 | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>28</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</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: 4
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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	34
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	50
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 25:1

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%	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. 2001

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

All students learn in a safe, supportive, challenging environment that empowers them to become life-long learners, productive and responsible citizens with positive character traits.

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.

LAE has operated in two models during the 2020-2021 school year. The academic year was scheduled to start on August 10th, 2020. This date was pushed back three weeks to August 31st, 2020 as Los Alamitos Unified School District had applied for a waiver through the State of California to open in a hybrid model (morning and afternoon cohorts of in-person instruction). By delaying the start of the year, we hoped to receive the waiver and be able to offer in-person instruction. The waiver was approved but until LAE had opened August 31st, 2020 in a 100% online program. On September 8th, 2020 LAE opened for hybrid instruction but offered our community the option of a 100% virtual program called LosAl@home. LAE had approximately 40% of its students stay 100% online at LosAl@home and 60% of students return to a hybrid model. As of April 1st, 2021 LAE, is still offering these two programs and has not returned to a traditional school setting.

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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August 31st was the first day back to school at Los Alamitos Elementary (LAE), and despite the pandemic, the campus was buzzing from a safe social distance. Our staff had rallied together to disperse much needed laptops, school supplies and learning materials to be handed out in a drive through in front of our school. It is a tradition at LAE where our committed staff is determined to reach every child. We have come together in one of the most difficult times to make sure that all students begin the virtual school year with all that they need. When our students returned to campus in September, our staff was ready with all safety precautions in place, PPE materials, and procedures for sanitizing and disinfecting. We welcomed our students to campus and let our eyes light up our masked faces. This is the culture at LAE.

With a reputation for providing rigorous and engaging academic instruction, LAE is ranked in the top 5 Title 1 schools in Orange County, our staff has dedicated their work to closing the achievement gap for all students, even in a pandemic. LAE is located within the Los Alamitos Unified School District but also serves students from surrounding school districts of Hawaiian Gardens, Cypress, Lakewood and Long Beach. LAE is ranked in the top 15% of the most diverse schools in California.

The heart of LAE's mission centers on social/emotional health, rigorous curriculum, high expectations for all, skillful staff members, social responsibility, family/community partnerships, and innovation. LAE is the hub for our regional program for children with Autism (4%) and has 14% of the student body receiving IEP services. Kids Korner, an on-site before and after school childcare facility, provides nurturing care for our students. LAE shares its campus with the Child Development Center that services students ages 3-5 in a pre-school program. All of LAE's students have opportunities to extend their learning by enrolling in after school classes through our partnership with the Los Alamitos Education Foundation and Youth Center of Los Alamitos. A wide range of enrichment classes including Foreign Language, Sign Language, Martial Arts Physical Education/Fitness, and Art are available to all students.

LAE has made significant growth over the last four years in academic proficiency. LAE has increased its proficiency on the CAASPP by 72 points in the last four years. In 2018-2019, LAE was ranked #39 in ELA and #32 in Math out of the 467 elementary schools in Orange County. LAE is ranked in the top 5 Title 1 Public Schools for academic performance in both ELA and Math.

Pride evolves from LAE's outstanding traditions, achievements, and school culture. LAE is a central part of the community providing support for families including parent education, free breakfast and lunch, and mental health support. Our staff is highly trained in Cognitively Guided Instruction in math, Thinking Maps, Depth and Complexity Prompts, Readers and Writers Workshop, and ST math from the MIND Research Institute. LAE has a fifth grade Leadership Club which provides training in leadership, communication skills, team building and social responsibility. This program is open to all students in fifth grade and provides specific and purposeful training that develop attitudes and behaviors that support a physically and emotionally safe school environment. LAE also has a mentor program in which older students are matched with younger peers. LAE is also working with the Orange County Department of Education and is in its second year of implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) builds our community by hosting an array of family events. LAE also has a fundraising group, Friends of LAE that hosts fundraisers based on healthy lifestyles (Fit-A-Thon), promoting reading (Reading Challenge), and Backyard Bash (Community Dinner and Auction).

LAE's staff, parents, and community work harmoniously to nurture the growth of our students. Together we provide a strong foundation to support the academic and social emotional health of our students, allowing them to grow and develop the necessary skills needed to be successful in a 21st century global society. LAE has grown in all areas in the last four years but has come together during the COVID-19 pandemic to ignite unlimited possibilities for all of our students. With the dedicated community working together our students are not just succeeding during the pandemic, they are thriving.

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

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

LAE has developed a comprehensive rigorous curriculum to challenge every child to develop their potential. The Next Generation Science Standards, Common Core State Standards, district signature practices and schoolwide expectations help to shape our curriculum and instruction. Thoughtfully calculated and crafted instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies is balanced with fine arts, physical education, technology and character education, including opportunities to develop responsibility, self-discipline and positive self-esteem.

LAE offers a wide variety of culturally diverse literature focusing on our universal theme of relationships. LAE's curriculum is complimented by research-based strategies including Depth and Complexity icons, Shared Inquiry, Reader's and Writer's workshop, Thinking Maps and the Daily Five. Students are given opportunities to think on a deeper level and engage with the text. LAE also uses Jr. Great Books. Students in all grades are trained in Socratic seminar and learn to use textual evidence to defend their thinking. Reading Plus is a program used to individualize student reading levels, fluency and comprehension. The program is designed to address specific learning deficiencies while giving students additional practice. Teachers monitor and adjust the program as needed for those students who are struggling. The data highlights the areas to target during intervention and small groups.

The writing focus at LAE is on creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Teachers use a variety of strategies to support writing with a purpose. LAE has trained staff on the Lucy Caulkins Writer's Workshop model. Writing prompts are aligned to literature, science, social studies, non-fiction, and fictional pieces. The Writer's Workshop model and research based best practices are implemented in all classrooms to support the development of writing. This model presents an opportunity for a continual cycle of feedback from both the teacher and student peers. Differentiated approaches allows students choice and flexibility in writing.

LAE utilizes Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), an educational philosophy built on over thirty years of research (Fennema and Carpenter, 1996) and is applied to the content areas of mathematics. It focuses on problem solving through a variety of 14 problem types and infinite solution strategies. Teachers focus on student learning in order to make instructional decisions. For students, CGI has opened a world of mathematical thinking and number sense. Students develop personal strategies such as direct modeling, counting on and derived facts to solve mathematical word problems. Students present their thinking to the class and both peers and the classroom teacher asks questions to expand on the thinking. The objective of CGI is to help children to see multiple perspectives and approaches to problem solving. The "share out" at the end of each lesson promotes metacognition of mathematical reasoning, peer coaching and collaboration. These high impact strategies lead to increased student achievement (Hattie, 2010). This hands-on conceptual development is supported by the District Math TOSA for professional development, Instructional Networking, and articulation with adjacent grade levels to calibrate instruction.

Social Studies is used to enhance the student's capabilities to understand their world by bringing the curriculum to life. Wax Museum is where students get the opportunity to study historical figures from the past or present. Students dress up and present their biography to the school and parent community. Fourth grade students travel to Sacramento to learn about California, its history, and culture. During the school wide speech contest, students choose a topic that is currently affecting society. Students are encouraged to share their interpretation of the mark on history.

In Science LAE emphasizes inquiry-based learning with the NGSS Standards STEM and Engineering Design. Science is a hands-on project-based learning approach. Students explore topics and formulate opinions based on the data and information they research. In our annual STEAM Fair, projects are used to provide a real-life connection. In 5th grade, students participate in Outdoor Science School attending a week-long study of the abiotic and biotic natural world.

Assessment is a continual cycle. LAE teachers successfully continue to analyze data, allowing our practices



to evolve, so that we can continue to help every student to excel. Our goal is to achieve proficiency and beyond for all students. Three benchmark assessments are given to all students in both language arts and math. Teachers utilize formative and summative assessments to drive instruction. Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments are given to all students multiple times each year. Progress is monitored for each individual. State testing data are used to examine overall performance.

COVID-19 brought many changes to the normal instructional activities at LAE. Students in Los Alamitos Unified School District were given two choices over the summer, to return in a 100% virtual environment or a hybrid in-person environment. We have focused almost all of our efforts, in both models, on the ELA and Math standards that have made our LAE TIGERS excel academically over the last four years. For any quarantined student, our staff live streamed for at home study. Students were given computers and assisted with hot spot internet access when needed. Our teachers have worked tirelessly to ensure that in ELA and Math our students will not suffer from this pandemic and are fully prepared for the next grade level.

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

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

The Los Alamitos Unified School District's Child Development Centers are recognized throughout Orange County for providing high quality educational and developmentally appropriate opportunities for children ages three to five years of age. The Los Alamitos Child Development Center will provide an educational and nurturing experience where students will thrive in a caring, respectful and encouraging environment to develop foundational skills to become lifelong learners.

The comprehensive approach includes: 1) Use of the California Preschool Curriculum Framework to develop kindergarten readiness skills, a love of learning, and encourage a sense of wonder for all students; 2) Ongoing assessments (DRDP, CLASS, ECERS) to ensure individual development and provide enjoyable healthy, secure and nurturing environment; 3) Learn from a dedicated, responsive, knowledgeable and skilled teaching staff who meets the developmental needs of students; and 4) Build strong family and community relationships to foster responsible citizens.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Mental health and social-emotional functioning is a priority at LAE. Students across campus at all grade levels have access to social, emotional, and behavioral supports through consultation with families and teachers; and direct services, such as individual and group counseling and social groups. LAE partners with Jewish Family and Child Services to bring an additional therapist on site each year to hold counseling groups targeting self-regulation, coping, family stressors, grief, social skills, etc. The district contracts with Care Solace, a free and online community health service that gives students, parents, and staff a "one stop" web resource to support mental health. Annual training is provided to staff regarding crisis intervention.

Being a title 1 school, LAE relies on partnerships to connect our students to areas outside of traditional academics that support life-long learning. LAE partners with the Pacific Symphony and their 'Class Act' program that highlights famous composers. Students engage in lessons, take a field trip to the symphony and hear and feel the symphony up close. For many of our students, this is the first time they have ever seen a live professional performance in a concert hall. FIBO Art teaches students the power of art while learning about famous artists. The Global Education Foundation teaches students about Chinese culture and celebrations. This partnership also gives LAE families a chance to visit China and tour their schools. LAE has been working to setup a sister school in China with this program.

Music education is vital to all students at LAE. Students receive instruction in recorders, ukulele, and piano keyboard. Students are taught to read notes and play chords. 4th and 5th grade students have the opportunity to join an after-school choir. Music is used to learn history, with Native American and pioneer music, folk music and spirituals, as well as in the context of Black History. Music is a subject area that

supports all other areas, from the “core” subjects of ELA and math, through to social studies, science, art and PE.

LAE takes pride in Physical Fitness and Healthy Lifestyles. LAE’s started the Fit-A-Thon and it has been a tradition for fourteen years. It is a month-long focus on fitness and healthy lifestyles that teaches our students the benefits of staying drug free, eating healthy, and staying active.

LAE’s MakerSpace (STEAM Lab) focuses on the five areas of STEAM education including science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. MakerSpace is rooted in the philosophy of project-based learning, giving students the opportunity to explore math and science standards in a non-traditional classroom environment.

The Los Alamitos Educational Foundation (LAEF) runs after-school enrichment programs and a summer institute that gives our students the ability to take classes that include STEM classes (such as robotics, LEGO engineering, and computer coding), art, languages (Mandarin, Spanish and American Sign Language), music, drama, musical theater, sports/fitness, dance, cooking, jiu-jitsu, karate and more. This partnership keeps students learning all year.

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

LAE, along with the Los Alamitos Unified School District, uses common instructional practices that have been proven through research to lead to higher levels of academic performance and achievement. At the beginning of the year, teachers and administrators analyze the CAASPP and District Benchmark data. Intensive interventions are quickly implemented to fill in gaps in learning and academic achievement based on these findings. Within the first two weeks of school, teachers meet with the previous year’s teacher to see what strategies did and did not work for students that were not proficient and develop a plan to move them to proficiency. Three times a year, teachers use Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments and benchmarks to ensure that adequate progress is being made by students. This information is used for our reading lab, before/after school interventions, and targeted instruction. During the day teachers work with students by pulling targeted intervention and strategy groups to ensure comprehension and differentiate instruction to meet student needs.

At LAE, we maintain a curriculum that is rigorous, follows a strict pacing guide, and applies best practices. Analysis of LAE’s achievement is ongoing. To close the achievement gap LAE needed to ensure the students had the academic vocabulary to understand the questions being presented to them on District Benchmarks and the CAASPP exam. A plan was installed in grades TK-5 that uses common core-based language to help build students ability to understand the language of the assessments. LAE started a program called “Tiger Time” where intervention teachers push into classrooms to support academic learning, which allows the teacher to work on specific targeted instruction in areas of need. Teachers create and run strategy groups to address specific standards in areas of need. Students at LAE are continually being assessed and retaught based on informal and formal assessments.

After school intervention is offered for students in third through fifth grade in ELA and Math. This intervention is targeted instruction based on the Common Core Standards. Students are identified based on their CAASPP results and District Benchmarks. For each grade level, these assessments are matched to standards. The five most missed standards become the basis of LAE’s intervention. Pre-tests and post-tests were given for each standard to chart progress and monitor mastery.

LAE believes in full inclusion for special day class students. Students in the Regional Autism Program (RAP) have access to the core curriculum. Teachers use highly structured lessons that incorporate the District Signature Practices of Depth and Complexity, CGI, and Thinking Maps.

The RAP teachers focus on reader's and writers' workshop and using the workshop model in their classrooms. RAP students participate in MakerSpace (STEAM Lab), Art, Media Center, Field Trips, Music and PE with their general education grade level peers. Small, specialized instruction ensures students have the skills needed to be socially and emotionally ready for middle school, while having the academic readiness skills necessary to be successful in life.

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

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

Imagine a school where everybody knows your name! Dr. James Comer says “no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” We take this to heart at LAE. Students and parents feel part of the school family. It is important for us to have engagement not just involvement. Being connected and engaged at school is a winning combination.

Over the last four years, we have created a foundation for students to work hard and learn the value of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. In partnership with the school district and the Orange County Department of Education, LAE has implemented Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Each day one student is celebrated as the “A For the Day” for doing an outstanding job at LAE. Daily recognitions are announced by the principal for students who have represented one or more of the “5 A’s”: Academics, Attitude, Acceptance, Ambition, and Accountability. Students can be nominated by their own teachers or by any other adult on campus. Celebrations continue throughout the year at our weekly flag ceremonies as we recognize students with monthly awards that celebrate character traits. In addition, “Spirit Stick” keychain tags are given out to recognize students for demonstrating positive character traits. Spirit Sticks are collectable patches that go on a student’s backpack indicating “I’ve done something extraordinary.” Some examples of what students can earn are Positive Attitude, 100%, I Make Good Choices, Homework Hero, I’m A Helper, and many more. Principal Spirit Sticks are reserved for the Principal to award those who set great examples for others. We are so proud of our LAE Tigers!

Mindful activities happen each day. Every class has a toolbox of mindfulness and breathing exercises to give students techniques to monitor their focus and stress levels. In addition, we utilize daily classroom restorative circles. We are committed to building positive classrooms.

Prior to COVID 19 restrictions, LAE promoted positive school connections with Camp LAE, a wonderful family/community/friend building overnight campout on the fields of LAE. Families pitch tents, our local boy scout troop joins us for campfire fun, and we share stories under the stars. A special breakfast is waiting for us all in the morning. In addition, we create a safe environment during Halloween with our Trunk or Treat event, held in our parking lot each year. Our annual Fit A Thon and Reading Challenge keep our students both physically and academically fit.

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

Parents have become our partners as we continue to build our school culture as an integral part of our success. Parents, grandparents, older brothers and sisters, as well as former LAE students are encouraged to volunteer and become a part of the campus culture. LAE also makes connections and supports the local business and senior citizen communities in its attendance boundaries. Students perform at the local senior center, participate in community events such as the Los Alamitos Winter Wonderland, collect candy during Halloween to send to our troops overseas, and host a “Soup-er Bowl” during the Super Bowl where last year we donated over 3,000 canned food items to our local youth shelter.

Local Businesses have also played a critical role in supporting LAE during the pandemic. Several businesses donated large quantities of hand sanitizer to help ensure our students and staff were safe. A local sign company donated six banners welcoming our students back to school when we returned for in-person hybrid instruction. Additionally, a company that makes canopies donated 8 large foldable canopies in order to provide shade and/or a dry place for students during student arrival and dismissal.

LAE has two very strong and dedicated parent organizations, our PTA and our Friends of LAE (FLAE). The PTA supports the vision of LAE by helping to build opportunities for parent education, community building, and student support. In addition to sponsoring camp LAE, Trunk or Treat, movie nights, and our school carnival, the PTA also provides parent education such as “Parenting through the Pandemic”, March Math Madness, and Technology. Together with PTA, LAE is stronger. We work together to provide all that

we can for our students and families.

Communication is critical for our school success. LAE utilizes ParentSquare where parents can get information texted or e-mailed to them. Each community member receives weekly Newsletters and important information via ParentSquare. Our weekly Newsletter is a compilation of photos and stories from the week at school. We feature instructional activities as well as highlight celebrations of individual students. The newsletter is sent electronically each Sunday evening at 7:00 p.m. LAE also utilizes automated phone message notifications, Instagram and Twitter. If there is an emergency, parents are notified via the Remind App. Whether it is via email, social media, or direct auto dialers for home, LAE makes communication a priority for all stakeholders.

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

We share a vision of high achievement for all students. To achieve this, we rethink and reflect on current practices and research, examine school structures, and challenge long standing traditions to ensure maximal learning. Content standards apply to everyone, even those who in the past may not have been held to high standards or those who may have a history of low academic performance. We set and reset goals for achievement and believe that no bar is ever too high. Data driven instruction moves struggling and high achieving students from good to great and great to extraordinary. Data guides what we teach and how we teach.

In fall planning, the Principal meets with each teacher to set goals for students, and at Spring review we discuss whether or not our goals have been met as we analyze benchmark data and review interventions. Students learn differently so we fill our “toolbox” with multiple strategies so instruction can be differentiated and purposely focused. These research-based strategies are part of creating a professional culture on campus with our staff.

Professional Development is always a focus of LAE and Los Alamitos Unified School District. The District has a five-year comprehensive professional development plan for all new teachers. Teachers are trained for up to 10 days, spending several days of training in each signature practice. All teachers are trained in CGI, Depth and Complexity and Thinking Maps, Reading and Writers workshop. Professional development is abundant to ensure that district signature practices are aligned with common core and all teachers have the tools needed to implement the signature practices in a meaningful way. Every teacher participates in Instructional Networking twice a year where they are given time to observe their colleagues conduct instruction in the areas of ELA or Math.

Since the start of COVID-19, LAE has utilized monthly Zoom meetings to bring the staff together. Our staff zoom meetings are targeted at developing community and lifting the spirits of our staff during these difficult times. We play kahoot, award prizes and have virtual staff happy hours. In addition to taking steps to ensure the mental well being of staff at LAE, LAE has focused on ensuring that teachers were properly trained for the new school year, both in hybrid learning and the virtual learning environments. This included two-days of technology training at the beginning of the year, step by step guides on how to run virtual learning sessions, and giving two additional days for grade level teams to create curriculum.

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

In order to maximize leadership opportunities, you must minimize the time spent managing. By putting the right people on the bus, we are able to keep the school running in a safe, orderly and efficient manner so that teachers can go about the important business of educating children to reach their highest potential. The Principal is a focused instructional leader, visiting classrooms daily, offering feedback and giving time for reflection. There is an open-door policy where appointments are not needed by parents, staff, students, or community members to meet with the principal about issues affecting students, the community, or the school. There is a leadership team on campus that consists of grade level representatives and special education staff. This team meets bimonthly to guide the practices at LAE. Input from stakeholders is vital to the success of our school. Our Principal meets with parent representatives from PTA, School Site Council, District Advisory and Operations Steering Committee. In addition, the Principal hosts a “Coffee with the

Principal” informal meeting several times a year to allow for parents to learn about LAE and to have a forum to ask questions. These meetings are held both in person and via zoom during the Pandemic.

Students play a critical role in shaping the decisions made at LAE. At LAE we have a 4th and 5th grade leadership team (Student Government) with over 60 members. LAE underwent major changes to the behavioral expectations plan for the classroom, recess, and lunch. The Student Government created a survey, distributed the survey to students electronically, analyzed student responses, and summarized the student desires for the new behavior expectations to the school’s Staff Leadership Team.

LAE closed on March 13th, 2020 as a result of the pandemic. After two days of professional development, LAE was delivering high quality instruction in a virtual academy. This required an enormous effort by parents, the district office, administration and staff to be able to have all of our students with technology, internet, and the needed supplies to be successful. We re-opened in August in a distance learning model and transitioned to in person learning one week later. Students had the opportunity to learn in person in a hybrid model or remain at home via LosAl@home distance learning. The entire community had to accommodate new learning schedules, new hours and new at home asynchronous expectations. The staff at LAE was available nearly 24/7 to help families make these adjustments. Our dedicated staff went above and beyond to ensure that all needs were being met.

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

LAE is in the top 15% of the most diverse schools in the State of California. This is something that is celebrated and ingrained in the culture of LAE. Culturally responsive teaching and learning goes beyond activities but rather focuses on the heart of inclusion, understanding, compassion and acceptance of all cultures. LAE has a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion site representative that works with the District Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) to integrate diversity curriculum into our lessons and classrooms. Staff is offered opportunities to learn and grow with our district TOSA. We align our goals with the diversity, equity and inclusion standards set by the State. We are committed to creating a campus that celebrates all cultures. We partner with the Global Education Foundation to bring international learning to our campus. LAE hosts abilities awareness activities to help bring our partnership with the regional program for Autism to all classrooms. Monthly celebrations include but are not limited to Black History Month, Women’s History month and Ability Awareness. LAE is leading the way on creating an inclusive, diverse campus that celebrates all religions and ethnicities.

At LAE, we have many families in need. We often find ourselves as a liaison for services and problems in the community. These issues could be poverty, loss of job (especially during COVID-19), mental health, and lack of food and/or proper housing. Recently the Principal of LAE was driving home and saw a family, (mom, son, daughter) on the corner begging for money. When the Principal approached the mother, she said with everything the school and district had already done for them they didn’t want to ask for more help. LAE partners with “211,” a number that parents can text for assistance with food, medical, housing and job resources. As a result, this family was able to secure safe housing and assistance to support the children with food and clothing. Thanks to these efforts this family no longer had to live out of their car. In addition, the district contracts with Care Solace, a free and online community health service that gives students, parents, and staff a "one stop" web resource to assist in finding drug treatment and mental health related resources. We realize that many of our families need assistance with technology, so we provide computers and hot spots for those without any internet service.

Annual training is provided to staff regarding crisis intervention, to ensure students receive immediate mental health intervention when they are in crisis and to ensure all educators on campus respond safely and compassionately. LAE is the place to be and we are surely better together.



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

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Learning to read and ultimately reading to learn is an attainable goal for every student at LAE. A Reading Lab was created on campus to provide a safety net for any student who needed additional support to achieve this goal. In our Reading lab, tier I and II intervention programs are evidence based. The lab follows the Reading Foundations based on Fountas and Pinnell and align with the classroom's foundational skills. Specific and purposeful instruction is conducted in small groups to allow for a double dose of skills that scaffold and teach explicitly so that students can move towards grade level proficiency. LAE's Reading Specialist works closely with classroom teachers and other school specialists to provide the most targeted, individualized, and differentiated instruction to students.

LAE utilizes classroom data, grade level benchmarks, and Fountas and Pinnell reading benchmark assessments to find the most at need students for the Reading Lab. Students who qualify are given a pre-assessment that becomes the driving force for instruction. The Reading Lab at LAE runs three eight-week sessions. On average, LAE's program services 70 plus students a day. LAE focus heavily on Kindergarten and first grade because statistics show that early intervention is key to closing the achievement gap. As a result of the success of our early intervention, less than one percent of our students who attend Learning Lab are third graders.

Reading Lab provides a solid foundation in phonological awareness, letter knowledge, letter/sound relationships, spelling patterns, high frequency word study, Shared and Guided reading. LAE's teaching is direct, explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic. Teachers use a multisensory approach, utilizing visualization, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies to meet the needs of all types of learners. The groups are flexible and dynamic which allows for instructional modifications based on observation and on demand needs.

COVID-19 forced significant changes to meet the needs of LAE's struggling readers. With a shift to 100% virtual students or 2 daily cohorts of students, our program had to change not only it's focus but how we deliver instruction. LAE narrowed the focus of Learning Lab to phonological foundational skills and spelling patterns for first and second grade, no longer servicing Kindergarten students. Intervention sessions focus on phonological awareness, letter knowledge, letter/sound relationships, and spelling patterns. Working only on foundation phonic skills and spelling patterns has statically moved students forward faster than anticipated. All 32 students, instead of the normal 70, that attended Reading Lab improved their percentages on the phonics assessments and classroom reading assessment levels during session 1 allowing student reading success during unprecedented times.