

***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 Ms. Carrie Hetzel  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 471 Knight Way  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City La Canada State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 91011-2725

County Los Angeles County

Telephone (818) 952-8340 Fax (818) 952-8337

Web site/URL https://www.pycougars.net/ E-mail chetzel@lcsd.net

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\* Mrs. Wendy Sinnette E-mail wsinnette@lcsd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name La Canada Unified School District Tel. (818) 952-8300

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. Kaitzer Puglia  
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 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                  | 5          | 4            | 9           |
| K                     | 33         | 26           | 59          |
| 1                     | 49         | 36           | 85          |
| 2                     | 55         | 46           | 101         |
| 3                     | 50         | 43           | 93          |
| 4                     | 57         | 52           | 109         |
| 5                     | 58         | 60           | 118         |
| 6                     | 60         | 55           | 115         |
| 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> | 367        | 322          | 689         |

\*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):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 32.3 % Asian
  - 0.3 % Black or African American
  - 12.9 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 41 % White
  - 13.3 % 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: 1%

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   | 1             |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 7             |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 8             |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019   | 689           |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.01          |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 1             |

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

Armenian, Cantonese, German, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin (Putonghua), Arabic, Spanish, French, Thai, Hebrew, Russian, Portuguese, Polish, Filipino, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Vietnamese, Greek, Japanese, Marathi, Telugu

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %

Total number students who qualify: 26

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %

55 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>13</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>2</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>3</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3

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.  | 32                     |
| 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.   | 20                     |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 3                      |

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

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

| <b>Required Information</b> | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance    | 96%       | 97%       | 98%       | 97%       | 98%       |
| High school graduation rate | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        |

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
 Yes  No

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

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

Paradise Canyon Elementary School's staff, parents, and community are dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing learning environment in which every child is valued and given the opportunity to reach and expand his/her potential, thrive academically, socially, and emotionally and become a productive, responsible, and compassionate member of society.

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.

Paradise Canyon Elementary School (PCY) started the year with all students engaged in distance learning on an AM/PM schedule due to LA County COVID-19 restrictions. The AM/PM classes were created by dividing each class into two groups. In November, Kindergarten through 2nd grade students who wished to engage in hybrid in-person learning returned to campus in their AM and PM classrooms. In mid-February, 3rd graders returned to engage in hybrid instruction, and in the first week of March, 4th through 6th graders returned back to campus for hybrid instruction. Some students chose distance learning for the remainder of the year. Currently about 75% of PCY students are on campus, engaged in a hybrid schedule model of instruction, and 25% are engaged in distance learning and will finish the school year as distance learners.

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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Paradise Canyon Elementary (PCY), nestled against the Angeles National Forest in La Cañada, California, is acknowledged for its beauty and park-like environment, welcoming all visitors, residents and guests, with open arms and friendly smiles. Established in 1949 as a small neighborhood school, it has grown significantly and is currently educating over 700 students each year.

Paradise Canyon is one of three elementary schools in La Cañada Unified School District (LCUSD) about 15 miles north of Los Angeles. LCUSD's three elementary schools feed into La Cañada High School which houses all of our 7-12th grade students. The highly educated community we serve strives for a rigorous educational program which promotes advancement not only in academics, but also in arts, sports and social engagement. Parents, serving as close partners to teachers and staff, nurture students' social-emotional development and take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education. Many of our families have both parents working outside of the home, yet they still make time to volunteer at their child's school.

PCY proudly educates over 700 students with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Speaking over 25 different languages, our students and families feel at home at Paradise Canyon, where we celebrate everyone's unique culture and differences in a positive learning environment. Our playground and fields are parks for our students after school hours and on weekends, and our students and families are often back on campus in the evening for either school or community events.

Identifying and focusing on student needs, academically, emotionally, physically, and socially, is a priority for our students and staff. Teacher collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and targeted use of technology contribute to high student achievement. Lessons are designed based on California State Common Core Standards and formative data disaggregated and analyzed using technology. Strengths among colleagues are honored; ideas are shared to benefit student learning. PCY builds ways to develop positive character traits and self-esteem in our students.

PCY has dedicated time, effort, and resources to developing a model program in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). All PCY students visit the Tech lab each week to participate in a technology-infused curriculum aligned with the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards. PCY hosts STEAM nights to give students and families opportunities to come together and experience hands-on learning. The presentations are coordinated and run by parents, local scientists and artists, and La Canada High School Science and Robotics clubs. Over 40 different curricula, including coding, Lego Robotics, 3 D-Design, are taught at all grade levels throughout the school year. Lessons and activities vary in rigor, depth, and complexity based on grade levels.

Besides a challenging and meaningful academic and STEM curriculum, students benefit from regular classes in art, music, drama, library media, and daily physical education. Enrichment opportunities abound, including Spanish for students in grades three through six and various after-school programs, including but not limited to chess club and the school's choir program.

Parents, teachers, and students are committed to keeping traditions alive at Paradise Canyon. Famous among these traditions are various art and musical performances, student choir, lunch on the lawn, family talent show, book fairs, Red Ribbon Week, intramural sports, PTA Reflection programs, etc. Students and families look forward to overnight camps for fifth and sixth graders, International Night, Variety Show, Math Night, Science Week, Science Fair, Innovation Convention, after school enrichment classes, Family Fun Night, Kindness Week, Global Play Day, and on-going community service projects. We celebrate various cultures and recognize their contributions in month-long observations, such as African American History Month, Women in History Month, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, National Hispanic Heritage Month, and Native American Heritage Month. School pride and spirit resonate worldwide on regularly scheduled Spirit Days spearheaded by the Student Council at regularly scheduled award assemblies. Also at these assemblies, parents and family members are invited to share in celebration and acknowledgment of excellence in citizenship and the academic achievement of their student.

Serving our students and families in a way that meets their comprehensive needs is a priority for PCY. Recognizing the strong desire for many families to return to campus for in-person learning, we applied for a waiver and were able to reopen our campus as early as mid-November for our youngest learners (K-2) and welcome back all of our 3rd - 6th grade students for an in-person hybrid learning model by March 8. We also recognized early the need for some families to remain in distance learning and committed to provide a strong distance instructional experience to them via a Virtual Learning Academy implemented at the start of the 2020-21 school year.

The PCY staff takes pride in making the LCUSD's mission statement a reality on a daily basis: We are a "professional learning community dedicated to personal growth and academic excellence" and work closely with our families to ensure our students succeed not only academically but also personally, always striving to reach their full potential.



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

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

Paradise Canyon Elementary School’s curriculum includes intense study of core content areas (English, math, science, and social studies) and visual and performing arts, technology, and physical education. An optional Spanish language program is integrated into the instructional day for grades 3-6. Instruction in all content areas is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and teachers use common pacing guides to ensure quality and consistency of instruction in all classrooms.

English/Language Arts encompasses reading, writing, and language conventions. Reading foundations are laid in Kindergarten, where small group instruction occurs both in-person and in break-out rooms due to distance learning. Kindergarten students use the Reach for Reading program by Cengage Learning which supports beginning-level reading skills. First through fifth graders participate in guided reading instruction, using Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s Journeys materials. Sixth graders use Collections by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, which helps them prepare for middle school rigor. Students also participate in core literature units that delve into character development topics and help connect to other subject areas.

Paradise Canyon implements an Early Bird/ Late Bird schedule in grades 1-3 to enhance small group reading instruction. This schedule was not available this year due to distance learning and pandemic health and safety protocols which were in place. We use Fountas and Pinnell to assess student reading levels and to inform instruction. Targeted reading intervention instruction is provided to students in grade K-3 using the Sonday Reading System.

Paradise Canyon uses McGraw Hill’s Everyday Mathematics 4 program for students in grades K-5 and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s Math in Focus in grade 6. Various modalities enhance learning through manipulatives, math centers, math games, and cross-curricular connections to develop “real-life” problem solvers. With its spiraling approach, students review previously taught material and build upon those concepts to understand new ones. Beginning in Kindergarten, students practice basic foundational skills by integrating them during routine activities. Music and games are used to teach counting, pattern building, math facts, and problem-solving. Reviewing and reteaching are emphasized to ensure student comprehension and achievement. In grades 4-6 Red Bird Math program is used to support advanced learners. PCY utilizes several digital math programs to support instruction (IXL Math, Dreambox, Prodigy, Brainpop, etc.). Project-based learning allows for differentiation of instruction.

Paradise Canyon uses Cengage Learning’s National Geographic: Exploring Science for grades K and 1 and STEMscopes by Accelerate Learning for grades 2-6. Due to distance learning, teachers are using the digital component of the science program this year. Through simulations, students watch science concepts come alive and use the hands-on kits to complete lab assignments. The PCY Science Lab Program engages students with a wide array of interactive and hands-on learning activities. Whether it is Kindergarteners making their own mini tornadoes or 6th graders learning and growing bacteria (which was especially relevant during this time of COVID-19), our learners thrive with these real-world applications.

Paradise Canyon uses Reflections by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in all grade levels and will soon begin piloting new materials for social studies adoption. Students experience curriculum beginning with the recognition of our small community in the primary grades. In upper grades, students focus on state history in fourth, U.S. history in fifth, and ancient civilizations in sixth. Field trips have been virtual this year due to Covid -19 safety concerns but have followed the science and social studies curriculum. Our partnerships with local institutions remain, and we shifted to virtual field trips with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the Chumash Cultural Center, and the California missions proximal to PCY.

Our highly trained teachers creatively integrate standards into their daily classroom instruction through consistent use of best practices: questioning strategies, critical thinking, discussion, modeling, visual support, checks for understanding, project-based learning, hands-on experiences, and continuous feedback. To ensure high-quality, rigorous instruction during distance learning, PCY teachers have received intense ongoing technology training and support from the technology department.

Paradise Canyon teachers consistently utilize assessment data to drive instruction. The school year usually begins with analyzing the previous school year's state and diagnostic assessment results. This year we only utilized diagnostic assessments in the absence of state test results. Students not meeting grade-level standards are identified using multiple measures, and differentiated instruction is planned for all learners.

Assessing student learning is accomplished through formative and summative assessments administered each trimester. Examples of formative assessments include exit tickets, projects, independent classwork, and FIAB/IABs. Summative assessments include chapter and unit tests, common assessments, and cumulative projects. Based on assessment results, instruction is realigned to meet the needs of students. Teachers engage in collaborative dialogue to evaluate student performance on common assessments. Common assessments administered each trimester are submitted to the principal for monitoring school-wide, grade level, and individual student performance. In addition, the common assessment results are uploaded to the district-wide assessment online tool, Illuminate, for district-wide results analysis.

LCUSD's fall and spring diagnostic assessments measure individual student growth and mastery in reading, writing, and math. Additional assessments include Fountas and Pinnell (K-2) and the Accelerated Reader diagnostic tests (grades 1-6) to measure mastery of specific reading skills. Teachers consistently communicate assessment results with parents to keep them informed.

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

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

Paradise Canyon's preschool program is an early education program that focuses on pre-academic, social-emotional, language, motor, sensory integration, and learning-to-learn skills for students with and without disabilities. It serves students between the ages of three and five years old and is designed to give children a strong foundation in all areas before they enter Kindergarten. The class has a high staff-to-student ratio and is taught by a highly qualified special education teacher. It incorporates several research-based curricula, including the Creative Curriculum, the Carolina Curriculum, the Unique Learning System, and Handwriting Without Tears. Research shows that students with disabilities benefit greatly from exposure to and interactions with neurotypical students who do not have disabilities. In order to create inclusive opportunities for our students with special needs, PCY preschool accepts a limited number of students who do not have disabilities so that they can serve as typical peer models for our students who have disabilities. This program was also made available to LCUSD staff, who welcomed the opportunity to enroll their children in a strong program prior to Kindergarten.

This year was particularly challenging due to difficulties with access to campus and mask-wearing for our young learners. During school closures, the students accessed the curriculum online via Zoom. When individual high-needs students were allowed to come to campus, our students with IEPs were the first ones invited to come to campus for their individual services while general education students continued to access instruction through distance learning for the remainder of the day. Once the entire class was allowed back on campus, the program changed again and resumed in an AM/PM format to meet site protocols for COVID-19. Some students had to be strategically placed outdoors or separated in different classrooms due to aversions to mask-wearing protocols mandated by the county. Students transitioning out of the preschool class are better prepared for Kindergarten and primary grades due to the preschool class's readiness skills.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Students in all grade levels engage in Art and Music instruction once per week for 30-45 minutes. In grades K-6, lessons are aligned with the core curriculum and enhance students' understanding of the academic content being taught. Every grade showcases a content-specific performance for families; for example, first graders present a show that reflects one of their science units, while fifth graders perform a short musical tying to their American History standards. To accommodate the school's current operating schedule, Art and

Music specialists have been providing asynchronous virtual lessons once per week with the opportunity for students to participate in two additional lessons from the specialists at the other two elementary sites. Our Art and Music programs allow students to build confidence and to experience success beyond academics.

Students in all grade levels receive daily 30-minute Physical Education lessons. To accommodate the school's current operating schedule, Physical Education (PE) teachers provide lessons virtually, using synchronous and asynchronous models. Our PE teacher requires that students keep a daily log to document their physical activity and assign simple assignments to build students' knowledge in various sports and games.

Paradise Canyon offers a 45-minute weekly enrichment program for GATE students. Students are given opportunities for authentic, real-life problem solving, service learning, communication skills both oral and written, higher-order/analytical thinking skills, and collaboration with peers during synchronous lessons. Additionally, students are invited to participate in monthly GATE Gatherings, during which they listen to guest speakers and participate in project-based and service-based learning. Students can enroll in Math Olympiad--an after-school math competition team. This program challenges students who love math and allows them to compete with students across the nation.

Optional Spanish language instruction is offered at PCY in grades 3-6. Typically, Spanish class is provided in-person once or twice per week during the instructional day. This year, students receive synchronous, virtual instruction for 30-45 minutes once or twice per week. Lessons are also recorded for those who are unable to join the class. Sixth-grade students who wish to take Spanish 2 in 7th grade receive an additional hour of instruction once per week, preparing them for Spanish 2 upon entering 7th grade.

PCY's instructional program also incorporates technology. PCY is a Common Sense Media certified school, and Digital Citizenship classes are taught to all grade levels. Computer literacy skills are taught along with other units such as graphic design, coding, and keyboarding. Due to distance learning, this instruction is provided asynchronously. Our 1:1 chrome book program in the upper grades is very successful. In the primary grades, teachers utilize Chromebook carts to support teaching and learning. Teachers use various technology platforms and tools to enhance and remediate learning, especially for English Learners, students with special needs, and Gifted and Talented students.

Character education stands at the forefront in PCY's counseling program. Kindergarten through 3rd grade students learn Kelso's Choices and Kelso's Traits - curriculum which teaches conflict resolution. Students gain a strong foundation of conflict resolution strategies and positive character traits to help them in the upper elementary grades.

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

In support of student achievement, academic interventions are put in place for students performing below grade level through our Student Study Team (SST) process. Once a student is referred, a team of teachers, Special Education professionals, administrators, and support staff meet with the parents to recommend resources and strategies to move their child towards independent learning and success. When students require academic support through an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), our resource specialists provide instruction that meets their academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.

According to the 2018-2019 CAASPP results, 44% of students with disabilities met or exceeded ELA standards, compared to their general education peers who met and exceeded the standards at 87.45%. This shows a 43.45 percentage point gap between them and their general education peers. To close this gap, teachers ensure that students with disabilities have the same access to general education curriculum and materials, maintain an appropriate pace with the curriculum as their typical peers, and participate in the Resource Specialist Program (RSP) as determined by each student's IEP team. Teachers use the Sonday Reading System to assist students who are demonstrating significant difficulty in the area of reading. In Special Day Classes (SDC), teachers

use the Unique Learning System (ULS) to assist students who demonstrate significant learning challenges.

In math, 52% of PCY's special education students met or exceeded standards compared to 85.87% of general education peers. There was a 33.87 percentage point gap between their performance and that of their general education peers. RSP teachers provide students with disabilities with targeted individual or small group instruction determined by the students' IEP Teams to close the gap. Students also have access to Dreambox and iXL online programs.

The 2018-2019 CAASPP results indicate that 45.83% of the English Learners (ELs) have met and exceeded the ELA standards compared to their general education peers. In math, 62.50% of ELs have met or exceeded the standards compared to their general education peers. To close the gap, ELs receive Designated English Language Development (ELD) support through individual and/or small group instruction before or after an EL's synchronous instructional day. ELD teachers communicate and regularly collaborate with classroom teachers to ensure ELs receive the support they need in developing English language skills and abilities required to be successful during their regular class instruction.

During the distance learning model, ELD teachers and paraprofessionals implement a schedule for virtual, synchronous learning. Students are grouped according to their English language needs by grade level and are one-on-one or in small groups. ELD teachers also provide individual and small group weekly activities to promote social, emotional wellness. Student Study Team (SST) meetings are initiated if an English Learner requires additional social-emotional and/or academic support. Resources and strategies to support English Learners are discussed during monthly ELD meetings, and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) are created and put in place to support ELs.

There is one foster student at PCY. The Student Study Team meets regularly to ensure the students' academic and social emotional needs are being met. There are no migrant or homeless students at PCY.

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

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

When Paradise Canyon Elementary School went into a sudden school facility closure during the spring of 2020, students had already established relationships with their teachers. The challenge at that time was to transform our face-to-face instruction into a distance learning model for our students. As we started the new school year in August of 2020, the bigger challenge was to establish relationships without having met the students in person. Every member of the PCY staff played a role to ensure students were provided with a positive and supportive learning environment.

PCY paraprofessionals joined teachers' virtual classrooms to provide one-on-one academic support in breakout rooms. The PCY counselor provided lunch bunch groups and classroom lessons focused on social emotional strategies. The school's science lab aide provided students with hands-on Science lessons by sending home supplies for each student to facilitate in-home labs. Students were able to engage in lab work as they made tornadoes, Kaleidoscopes, and dissected owl pellets.

As a school with a lot of spirit, PCY worked hard to keep it alive with virtual school-wide assemblies, weekly announcements, student-led flag salutes, school-wide read alouds, projects, and donation drives. The principal also met with teachers in each grade level weekly to discuss ways to increase student engagement. Teachers and the principal made phone calls, sent emails, and scheduled additional Zoom meetings to reach out to every student and make them feel cared for by the school staff. The staff's efforts paid off according to the Panorama Survey results from December 2020. It indicated that 85% of students reported putting more effort into their school work and 98% reported doing well academically.

PCY teachers provided engaging lessons which gave students a reason to join their Zoom sessions each day. Scavenger hunts, pet parades, and dress-up days were just a few of the activities that students looked forward to everyday. Establishing a positive learning environment with explicit norms and expectations helped teachers focus on student engagement and receive and provide meaningful feedback. Developing healthy, productive teacher-student relationships helped students feel safe in their virtual learning environment. Our teachers put a renewed emphasis on effective and timely communication. Teachers fostered increased communication with their students through various platforms (i.e., Zoom conferences, Google Classroom, Seesaw, Padlet, etc.). Students developed a sense of belonging and closeness to their teachers and classmates, making a seamless transition back to school with in-person learning.

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

PCY ensures that family and community members are engaged in our students' education and overall success. We have always had a strong connection between school and home; however, we needed to think creatively to keep this connection strong given the restrictions due to COVID-19. Before the 2020-21 school year, parents were invited to participate in Reopening Committee Meetings. These meetings were a chance for district and site leadership, parents, and staff members to listen to one another and understand each other's unique concerns about getting our students back to in-person learning. The District also engaged in town hall meetings to communicate, inform, and explain decision-making rationales. From the beginning, the goal was to be as transparent as possible in a time of so many unknowns. Parents were also invited to attend Parent Outreach Listening Sessions throughout the school year and had the opportunity to discuss distance learning successes and concerns, allowing PCY staff to adjust instruction to better meet the needs of our students.

Since the Spring, all meetings have been held via Zoom, and parent and teacher attendance has increased for PCY PTA meetings. Our PTA, as well as Korean and Armenian Outreach groups, were unable to host their annual fundraisers due to gathering restrictions. However, they still managed to provide funds for teacher training and resources.

During the school closures in the Spring, PCY offered biweekly digital newsletters to parents. Our teachers

communicated with families by sharing their academic plans via weekly emails. They also encouraged parents to join their Google or SeeSaw Classrooms to stay connected. Weekly read-alouds, staff videos, virtual assemblies, and activities with the principal helped students stay connected and reminded them how much they were missed.

Paradise Canyon has been able to successfully maintain mutually beneficial community partnerships. PCY is fortunate to have JPL a few miles away, with many PCY parents working as employees. We have had the unique opportunity to hear from guest speakers who have worked on popular projects, such as the Mars Rover. They brought prototypes to campus for students to examine and explore. One of our parents worked on the most recent Mars Landing and was able to conduct virtual assemblies before and during the landing, explaining the intricate science and engineering processes to students. We continue to work with Stanford's Challenge Success program and offer parent outreach on topics ranging from navigating remote learning to finding best-fit colleges. Our Eagle Scouts and Gold Award Girl Scouts continue to add value to our campus with different service projects and mentoring activities.

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

At Paradise Canyon, we hold our grade level and site representatives in high esteem. They facilitate consistent communication as our staff makes decisions as a team with one common goal, and that is always to do what is best for students. The one goal drives all other goals, initiatives, actions, and services determined by the PCY staff. Working collaboratively with a unified purpose ensures teacher and staff buy-in and their effective implementation. At the start of this school year, all teachers were asked to state their preferences for providing virtual or hybrid instruction and those preferences were accommodated as well as their desires to instruct from their classrooms or their homes. They were also surveyed on their needs concerning personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplied with the necessary resources to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing. Teacher morale is key to student success; therefore, we make sure our teachers feel valued and respected, and their voices and perspectives are heard and taken into account when making decisions which impact them.

To ensure teacher and student success during virtual instruction, the Educational Services department registered all PCY staff to take courses, webinars, and workshops with the International Society for Technology Education (ISTE). Individual training sessions have been provided to those who preferred private time with the instructional technology specialist to lower teachers' anxiety and increase their confidence. Clear communication has been provided throughout the year by the site and district administration to inform and involve all teachers in the changes happening at the local and state levels.

The district recognizes the importance of professional development (PD) for our teachers; therefore, a carefully designed PD plan is implemented each school year. Teacher participation is essential. Our PD plan has focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and Instructional Technology during the past few years. This year's teacher survey results indicated that teachers wanted support in providing virtual instruction. Along with the Educational Services Department, the district's Technology Department designed and implemented a PD plan to support our teachers in providing the most rigorous Distance Learning experience for our students. Due to Covid-19 safety protocols, all training was provided virtually during teachers' work hours, staff meetings, or individual appointments with the instructional technology specialists. Our principal attended Distance Learning training and shared successful practices at staff meetings. Teachers consistently shared their successful practices to build capacity in their colleagues and to celebrate their ingenuity in designing lessons and experiences for their students.

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

Paradise Canyon employs a coaching style leadership model with the staff and students focusing on each person's individual strengths. The PCY principal builds strong teams who communicate and thrive in this environment. There is one administrator at Paradise Canyon and many staff members and students who contribute to its success. The principal has been in the field of education for decades and has served in schools with diverse populations. This experience has equipped her with a holistic perspective. She works

closely with the other two elementary school principals in the District and is learning from them and sharing her knowledge in order to benefit the La Canada Unified School District students and staff.

Decisions are made through the lens of doing what is best for students. The principal at PCY promotes student's growth through leadership positions in the classroom and for the school. Student jobs in the classroom and Student Council positions for the school teach leadership and teamwork, communication and collaboration skills. 76% of parents feel that the PCY school experience has improved their child's confidence. This approach is also used with staff and colleagues, building capacity for each of them. The principal regularly meets with the grade-level teacher leaders at the site and makes decisions based on their input. In a recent Panorama survey, 97% of staff members replied favorably regarding feeling a significant level of trust between them and their principal.

The principal spends a great amount of time listening to her students', families', and staff's needs and concerns and responds to them in a caring fashion. She builds relationships with students and their families by being visible on campus and promptly responding to their phone calls and emails.

During this ever changing year of COVID-19, the principal and PCY staff got to work using all the resources available at the site to support struggling students. Staff members took on new roles this year to support students as reading intervention and virtual classroom aides. When LADPH permitted educational pods, the principal immediately established a plan to bring back to campus special needs students and soon after the K-2 students. She has worked patiently with families who have requested classroom placement changes (i.e., virtual to hybrid and vice versa) to ensure student achievement and success. She also communicated with his staff and families frequently to inform and involve them in the changes that develop weekly concerning COVID-19 protocols at the state and local levels.

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

Paradise Canyon's diverse students speak 25 different languages at their homes. They bring with them unique cultural backgrounds and perspectives which enrich our school culture. Our staff welcomes all students and provides opportunities for them to share their cultural experiences with the school community (i.e., Multicultural Night, parent guest speakers, etc.). We encourage our families to share their experiences and cultural traditions in our classrooms when applicable to the curriculum. For example, this year our 6th graders learned first hand about the Sikh community from our families. Our recent Panorama survey indicated that 90% of families felt that PCY cared and supported their child's unique needs and backgrounds. Acknowledging and valuing each student starts with pronouncing their names correctly and including them in all classroom and school activities and experiences. The Panorama survey revealed that 84% of students felt that their teachers respected their views in the classroom.

Getting to know students through different activities (i.e., teacher surveys, family-based projects, etc.) and understanding what is important in their lives affords the staff close connections and makes teaching and learning more impactful. Providing extra resources and services when needed and communicating with families regularly regarding students' needs ensures equity and guides students toward success. Students see themselves as part of the class and feel safe to contribute. Our teachers present reading selections that represent students from various backgrounds in order that they may see themselves in the stories and feel valued and respected. 90% of students feel teachers are respectful to them, according to survey data.

PCY's staff come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and contribute generously to making the school an inclusive place for all students. The staff has been trained in culturally responsive and sustainable education and will continue to benefit from the DEI initiative's implementation over the next three years. The principal uses staff meetings to discuss DEI topics and invites staff to participate in book clubs and podcasts to increase their knowledge.

Additionally, she provides resources and materials for classroom use and encourages teachers to attend webinars and trainings. The school's library has invested in diverse literature pieces, which are read aloud by the librarian and checked out by students.

Teachers bring current events to life in their classrooms to inform their students and develop a strong sense of civic responsibility. Teachers discuss these events in factual, age-appropriate language, which helps raise student awareness of local and global issues and become more empathetic and responsible citizens.



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

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PCY's counseling program has been instrumental in supporting our students during this difficult time. Coming from a Korean background, our counselor has served as a role model for our Korean American students. He has been providing services both in-person and asynchronously throughout the school facility closure due to COVID -19. Using "counselor's corner" Google classroom, he provided lessons for teachers and students to access whenever they needed. These lessons addressed caring for one's mental health, introduced coping strategies, and provided fun activities which fostered connectedness within the school community. He has made home visits, helped students organize their study spaces at home, and supported them with executive functioning skills. Students and their families have appreciated his personal approach and welcomed him into their homes.

As students returned to campus to engage in hybrid learning, outdoor counseling lessons were provided, following established safety protocols so that students could actively participate. Online groups were created to support students who were struggling due to a lack of social interaction.

In primary grades, students were introduced to Kelso's Choices curriculum, which supported them with the necessary skills to solve problems and promoted a healthy school climate.

Our counselor has done a remarkable job teaching character education lessons to PCY students. He has been flexible with them choosing to engage in person or meeting via zoom sessions, accommodating both distance and in-person learners. His use of puppets has helped to make the lessons more fun and interactive. Our counselor has used different voices for these puppets to keep all students engaged in social emotional learning. After all the lessons, the students are able to list all of the concepts they have learned (responsibility, fairness, caring, respect, etc.). These learning opportunities have been incredibly helpful in developing good social skills and dealing with students' emotions and problems.

The counselor has led lunch bunch sessions all year. He has developed a social group at each grade level, designed to introduce new students to current students. In small groups students talk about making friends and ask questions to get to know each other. He leads them in playing games. These interactions create ways for students to build relationships with each other. The practice has been essential in helping students feel connected to their peers.

The PCY students and staff are fortunate to have such a strong counseling program which supports character development and social emotional learning, allowing all students to reach their full potential.