

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

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

School Mailing Address 110 South Rowell Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Manhattan Beach State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 90266-6962

County Los Angeles County

Telephone (310) 798-6223 Fax (310) 303-3839

Web site/URL https://pennekampschool.org/ E-mail kgerger@mbusd.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. John Bowes E-mail jbowes@mbusd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Manhattan Beach Unified School District Tel. (310) 318-7345

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 Jennifer Fenton  
(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 7 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	7	11	18
K	36	26	62
1	46	31	77
2	42	34	76
3	35	31	66
4	36	27	63
5	44	34	78
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>	246	194	440

\*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
  - 20.5 % Asian
  - 0.2 % Black or African American
  - 11.6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.9 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 48.4 % White
  - 18.4 % 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: 13%

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	28
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	33
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	61
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	480
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Arabic, Cantonese, Farsi (Persian), French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin (Putonghua), Other non-English, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %  
18 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 3 %

Total number students who qualify: 13

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %

88 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>7</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>5</u> Deafness                | <u>2</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>31</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>48</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>3</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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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

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

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

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

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

A collaborative professional learning community committed to providing ALL students with social, emotional, and academic support needed for them to thrive as productive lifelong learners.

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.

Pennekamp Elementary began in a distance learning format in March 2020 and continued as we opened for the 2020-2021 school year. In December, school opened for TK-2nd grades one day a week for two weeks with the intention of increasing days throughout the following weeks. All schools were closed again through January due to a spike in Covid-19 cases. In February, students in TK-2nd grades returned to hybrid in-person learning attending two days a week in the morning and two days a week virtually in the afternoon swapping days with the alternate group. After a week of two days on campus, the school moved to an AM/PM model where half of the student body attended a session in the morning and the other half attended a session in the afternoon with asynchronous work assigned during non-campus time. This model included four days on campus (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and one day (Wednesday) as a distance learning day meeting with teachers online and doing asynchronous work. In March, 3rd-5th grade students returned to school in the same AM/PM model four days a week as listed above. Beginning April 19th, all students will return five days a week for four and a half hours of instruction in the morning. In addition, teachers have strategically grouped students so that 25% of their class will remain on campus for lunch and afternoon intensive intervention. Each group will remain on campus one afternoon a week. The fifth afternoon is planned for teacher collaboration. The goal for this staggered hybrid model was to start small and expand on-campus days while ensuring safety protocols were manageable to keep all students and staff safe.

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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Pennekamp Elementary School is one of five elementary schools in the Manhattan Beach Unified School District. Manhattan Beach is a small, beachside community of approximately 36,000 residents, located about three miles south of Los Angeles International Airport. Pennekamp serves 440 students in transitional kindergarten through 5th grade. The school campus has colorful murals, hundreds of California native plants and flowers, and an organic student vegetable garden. Aurelia Pennekamp first opened its doors in 1955 and at that time it was known as Curtis Street School. Over sixty years later, Pennekamp's traditions of academic excellence and strong levels of spirit and pride still shine brightly.

Pennekamp's strengths are best reflected in the attitude and performance of students, staff, and parents/guardians. On any given day of a non Covid-19 year, it is not unusual to find dozens of volunteers on campus. Each year, Pennekamp volunteers log in an excess of 30,000 hours of service to the school. Parents sponsor and lead enrichment programs such as Young at Art, Growing Great, Grades of Green, and other activities on campus, as well as volunteer in classrooms, the library and science lab. The Pennekamp PTA and School Site Council/Wellness Council are highly active and supportive entities that generously provide resources to enhance the quality of the educational programs for the students. The school plan fulfills our school wide goal to provide rigorous and supportive learning opportunities, as well as targeted goal areas for student improvement, which is aligned to our district LCAP goals.

The school community values education and sets high expectations for students and staff. Dedicated teachers demonstrate concern for the progress of each student. To maximize effectiveness of Pennekamp's instructional program, teachers engage in peer coaching, departmentalized teaching, weekly grade-level planning, and a Balanced Literacy Framework to support individualized reading instruction. Teamwork is an integral component of our program, and we have forged responses to intervention at Pennekamp to ensure every child receives the just right instruction to meet their needs. Parents, staff, and students collaborate to create a child-centered environment where everyone knows he/she is valued as a contributing member of the community.

Pennekamp staff incorporate two unique programs in their curriculum; MindUp along with our Mindful practices to support the social emotional health of our students, and Personalized Learning to support the academics in Reading, Writing and Math. Our first practice to support social emotional well-being, has changed our morning routine at Pennekamp. Our students participate in a weekly Mindful Morning assembly where a mindful quote is presented and students are asked to share what the quote means to them. Students have also been introduced to Every Dragon ROARS where five behavior expectations are used to guide our Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) framework at Pennekamp. Conversations with students about behavior are centered around being Respectful, On Task, Accountable, Responsible and Safe (ROARS). Spirit Assemblies are held where students are recognized over the course of the year in each of these 5 behavioral expectations. Daily, our staff recognizes students for specific positive behaviors whether on campus or through distance learning. On the instructional side, our teachers have been working to provide all Pennekamp students with data driven planning and instruction to meet each child at their level and grow their literacy and math skills. With the use of Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessment, our teachers are able to identify students instructional and independent reading levels to support behaviors and practices that will grow their literacy skills that will shape their ability to apply and synthesize both fiction and non-fiction text. In the area of Math, our teachers have engaged in Cognitively Guided Instruction to help students make deeper connections to math practices and concepts that will strengthen their understanding and ability to explain their thinking and problem solving skills.

Pennekamp teachers, students and families adapted to Covid-19 closures and worked hard to address the many related challenges that have been presented during this unprecedented time. From being in school on Friday, March 13, 2020 to immediately beginning distance learning on March 16, 2020, teachers adapted amazingly and to all appearances seamlessly. It was a tremendous amount of work for teachers to switch from in-person teaching to distance learning. Each grade level team met and planned together in order to ensure uninterrupted teaching and learning. Teachers immediately began using Zoom to connect with their classes. Transitional Kindergarten through 1st grade teachers used SeeSaw and 2nd-5th grade teachers used



Google Classroom as their platform of communicating, posting work and providing feedback to students. Many of the online programs available to teachers and students were investigated deeper and assigned to support the teaching occurring virtually. Although Covid-19 has presented many restrictions of allowing parents on campus, they have remained involved in planning, providing and participating in classroom and school-wide activities to support students.

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

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

Pennekamp's goal is to provide personalized learning to support student growth in Reading, Writing and Math. Our teachers strive to provide all students with data driven planning and instruction to meet each child at their level and to grow their literacy and math skills.

All course content and instruction is structured around the California State Standards. Our district has worked hard to provide teachers with sample schedules, curriculum maps, scope and sequences and multiple resource to develop strong course content for students at the elementary level in both language arts and math. Flexibility for grade level teams to pull from multiple platforms is encouraged to create a well-balanced delivery of the standards. In language arts, a balanced literary schedule of the number of minutes for interactive writing, word work, read aloud/shared readings/grand conversations/core literature, Reader's and Writer's workshop is the guide for the amount of minutes required weekly. Teachers utilize Lucy Calkins' Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Units of Study to teach reading, writing and phonics. For math, teacher curriculum includes Every Day Math for K-1 and Go Math for 2nd-5th, as well as Eureka Math as an additional resource. Our fifth grade uses Eureka math curriculum the most in order to prepare for the middle school.

Instructional approaches are the driving components of delivering instruction, engaging students, reaching struggling students and enriching experiences as well. Utilizing the instructional approach from the Reader's Writer's College, teachers begin with a teaching point, teach a mini lesson, and allow students to practice what they have learned within a selected text or in their own writing to master concepts. This method of instruction has been perfected by teachers over years. It has been a paradigm shift of teachers making choices and telling students what they will learn, to students making choices and practicing and applying the skill from the lesson. Teachers utilize mentor sentences pulled from familiar text to teach grammar rules or figurative language elements. This method allows students to work at their level making observations, identifying components of grammar and analyzing the impact before writing their own version. In math, teachers engage in Cognitively Guided Instruction, which is also student centered. This instructional approach provides students an opportunity to share ideas, ask smart questions, and engage their thinking with the goal of uncovering and expanding their mathematical knowledge. Teachers present word problems and guide students through the CGI process. Students are then provided a similar word problem with three different number sets ranging in difficulty of which they can self-select. Students solve the problem using different math strategies, and explain their thinking. Number talks are also a common instructional practice in classrooms to help students build number sense.

Teachers embed science and social studies into the language arts and math curriculum. Teachers in 3rd-5th grades also use STEMscopes to teach the Next Generation Science Standards. They are trained to explore the large range of resources, including 5E lessons activities, interventions, extensions, STEMscopedia, leveled literacy, videos, picture vocabulary, assessments, graphic organizers, and lesson-flow maps. Students attend science lab weekly as well.

Formative and summative assessments drive instruction at Pennekamp Elementary. Teachers utilize a number of formative assessments including observing students, anecdotal notes, exit tickets, quick writes, checking for understanding throughout the day, a quick running record and more. Teachers are in tune with all students in their class and connect to parents and support staff when they observe a particular need of a student. In Student Study Team meetings, teachers are asked to bring examples of formative and summative assessments gathered for that student. These methods are a driving force of personalizing learning for students. Summative assessments include pre and post reading and writing assessments from the Reader's and Writer's workshop units of study. The pretests are utilized to guide teacher planning of instruction and the post assessment are used as data to analyze student growth. Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessments are utilized by our teachers to identify student instructional and independent reading levels and to support behaviors and practices that will grow their literacy skills and will shape their ability to apply and synthesize both fiction and non-fiction text. Renaissance Learning assessments are online common district language arts and math assessments given to students in all grade levels across our five elementary sites.

The move to online learning slightly impacted teaching and learning in our classes. Teachers continued to use the same content, instructional strategies, and assessments only adapting them to the online format. Through Zoom, teachers continued to teach and assess whole class, in small groups, and also 1:1 using breakout rooms. The differences noted this year were the depth at which content could be covered and the frequency upon which assessments could occur. Overall, teachers continued where they left off in person and strong teaching and learning continued.

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

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Pennekamp teachers, staff and parents all assist in delivering experiences in other curricular areas including visual and performing arts, music, physical education, and character building. We believe that student experiences in these areas are what make our students well-rounded and skillful. There are many rich opportunities provided to students on campus which have also been adapted for distance learning when possible.

For visual and performing arts, each grade participates in activities which include visual art projects, different types of dancing, stage production and performances. Each grade learns one of these skills, which are then showcased in a culminating display or performance. “Three Piggy Opera” for kindergarteners is a musical comedy where all students audition and play a part singing a solo in the play performed for the community. “Only One You” is a project for our first graders where they are taught through literature and art that they are special and can make a difference in the world culminating in the creation of zen rock garden. “Character Counts” for second grade is also a musical adapted from fairytales where students share through song the importance of having a strong, positive character. “Folk Dancing” for third grade is one experience that supports the social studies curriculum. Similar in fourth grade, line dancing and photography are long term projects, as well as the “Gold Dust or Bust Performance” where students participate in set building, and perform for the community. Fifth graders experience learning about important people in history and performing as if they were those characters, as well as participate in many hands on art projects that take them back in time such as weaving their own cloth. Students take months throughout the year to prepare and perform and they love and look forward to every grade level experience.

Young at Art is another program that supports our art curriculum. Six lessons a year that showcase a different artist are brought to all students across campus. All art work is displayed during Open House for families to enjoy.

Weekly music classes are a requirement for 3rd-5th graders. The third grade experience includes trying band, choir, and strings classes each for a third of the year. Students are then asked to select one of the three to continue for weekly instruction in fourth and fifth grades. This is critical to ensure that love of music is imparted to our students. All music classes perform multiple times throughout the year for the community.

Each elementary site has a P.E. teacher who provides all physical education required minutes. This is one area that has been a challenge while on distance learning due to cohort restrictions, but we adapted and delivered PE online.

All staff also teach our PBIS “Every Dragon ROARS” daily through all interactions with students. This is a strong motivator for our students and has changed the overall behaviors and feeling at school to a positive and encouraging one. Many stakeholders say that Pennekamp feels like a big smile when coming to campus.

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

At Pennekamp, instruction, interventions and assessments are tailored to meet the diverse and individual needs of various student populations to ensure continued growth. First and foremost, we pride ourselves on the personalized learning focus for every student in every classroom daily. Through modified individual or group instruction, on-going formative and summative assessments, opportunities for student choice, activities tailored to different learning styles, differentiation takes place. Teachers have shifted to being the facilitators of instruction, while setting high expectations for students to become problem solvers and critical thinkers. The nature of our Reader's and Writer's workshop instruction in language arts and our Cognitively Guided Instruction approach in math lend themselves to this natural differentiation. Students are active participants in their learning making choices and setting goals with the teacher supporting, conferencing and guiding along the way. Small group targeted instruction and 1:1 support are commonly seen in our classrooms.

Our team considers all students our students and focuses on interventions to support and extend learning. Teachers know their students and collaborate with grade level team members and specialists for additional ideas when needed. It is common to see our school psychologist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, and behavior therapist in classrooms observing and providing feedback and strategies to teachers to help with individual student needs. Informal response to intervention to target speech and OT goals are provided to attempt to assist students before being referred to special education. Our reading specialists, utilizes classroom reading assessments to identify general education students in the lowest band and works with groups from every grade level in three cycles a year. Groups are fluid based on growth and need. Instructional assistants assigned to individual or groups of students also step in to support in the classroom. During virtual learning, breakout rooms are utilized for these interventions and supports.

Assessments inform teachers about the knowledge base and performance of students as well as help students understand how they are doing. Moving into virtual learning, teachers quickly adapted and found ways to assess and gather data. Formative assessments in the form of exit tickets and video assessments helped teachers adjust instruction and improve student engagement and motivation. Teachers shifted to providing ongoing feedback rather than just grading at the end of a unit. We also utilized Renaissance STAR computer adaptive assessments for reading and math to measure student achievement, plan instruction, and track progress toward learning targets and standards.

Our most impacted subgroup is our special education students. Our SPED team and our teachers work closely to ensure that goals are being targeted in the classroom and reinforced in our learning center. A push in model has proven effective where accommodations and scaffolding of instruction are applied directly in the classroom. Parents also support with home programs for continuity of learning. Student schedules are also adjusted to optimize the time allotted for support and to avoid zoom fatigue during virtual learning. Our focus is to increase our students' skills in order to ultimately exit them from Special Education.

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

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

Pennekamp Elementary continues to engage, motivate and provide students with a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth. Teachers apply five personal learning elements, which have proven to impact students in positive ways. Teachers intentionally take steps to learn about their learners and act on what they know. Teachers provide voice and choice where the perspectives, opinions, and preferences of students are invited, respected, and considered and learners are given options regarding the ways in which they engage in their learning. Teachers are flexible with student grouping and classroom space. Teachers use student learning information to make specific decisions about student growth related to an instructional standard. Teachers incorporate technology tools and technology-based practices into daily classroom routines to include collaborative work, communication, software/app based activities and Internet-based activities. These five personalized learning strategies are effective in increasing student achievement and engagement.

Another motivation for students is our PBIS initiative “Every Dragon ROARS.” We celebrate students who demonstrate being Respectful, On Task, Accountable, Responsible and Safe. Staff recognize students for specific targeted behaviors. A student may receive a ROARS card for being “On Task” while participating in a number talk. The recognition of positive student behaviors has had a tremendous impact on student focus and initiative even in this virtual environment. Students are proud to receive ROARS cards and collect and display them at school and home. We also celebrate students at monthly virtual assemblies run by our 5th grade ambassadors. Students cheer each other on and are proud of their classmates who are a Dragon who ROARS!

Other opportunities are provided to enhance learning experiences and promote social and emotional growth. Mystery readers, teachers and the principal Zoom to read bedtime stories to promote the love of reading. Our PTA provides virtual field trip experiences and invites guest authors to share books and about becoming a writer. Students compete in the science fair or PTA art competition. Drive through parades were hosted before students returned to campus. Ways to give back are encouraged. Our American Heart Association rally was a success passing our goal, which led to mystery balloons popped over the principal’s head at a virtually assembly. Virtual Fun Fridays with the principal to share jokes and play games or having lunch with the teacher are also loved by students. All activities have been adapted to maintain student engagement during school closures and remote learning.

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

Pennekamp Elementary School is committed to maintaining strong partnerships with parents and the community. Parents collaborate with teachers to support the education of their children at home and at school whether in person or virtually. When allowed in a traditional year, parents volunteer in the classrooms, science lab, library, playground, Young at Art, Growing Great, and within all aspects of our learning community. It is not unusual to find dozens of parent volunteers on campus at any given time. Parents also donate many hours to fundraising. Parents are valued partners in our Pennekamp community.

Our active and vibrant Parent Teacher Association organizes activities and programs to enrich the educational program. PTA volunteers log over 30,000 hours per year. Parents also participate in our School Site Council/Social Emotional Wellness Committee, GATE Advisory Committee, Safety Committee, and the Manhattan Beach Education Foundation. Due to Covid-19, the challenge has been to find ways to continue the strength of this work. Many families have experienced work, family, and/or health hardships that prevented them for participating fully this year.

Our PTA Board has not let that stop us. We continue to find ways for families to participate and keep our school spirit thriving. Opportunities such as a virtual Book Fair for families to go online to order books to be delivered to their homes, as well as a system for checking out books from our school library are available. A shoe drive is being held for families to drop off gently worn shoes that will go to micro enterprise vendors in

needy countries. Dragon Dinners are held where our school partners with local restaurants and part of the proceeds paid by our families are donated back to the school. We host virtual family nights on Fridays including Pajama Bingo, Parent Trivia Night, Kids Cooking and Baking, and Dance-a-thons. A Pennekamp virtual calming room was created for families to take a mindful moment working through activities that are updated weekly. Guest speakers from the community are recruited to present on relevant and timely topics for parents during these unprecedented times and we also strive to locate, share and connect parents to events that are happening around town.

We have also made connections with the parent community and businesses to assist during Covid-19 times. Parents have volunteered resources and expertise to assist with classroom spacing designs, donated sanitizing supplies, and much more for which we are grateful.

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

At Pennekamp, all stakeholders are involved in creating an environment where teachers and staff feel valued and supported. From administration to the parent community, it has been all hands in to support with these efforts. When we first learned about the transition to distance learning, many opportunities for professional development were created and provided for teachers. Sessions on Zoom, SeeSaw, Google Classroom and PLP, all major tools, were offered multiple times. Additional sessions on Screencastify, Online Teaching Best Practices, Elementary Instruction in a Virtual Environment, and many more were also available. As teachers requested topics, we worked to provide them creating a bank of PD resources. We also focused on gathering a variety of virtual resources for the programs teachers normally used in the classroom for Reader's and Writer's workshop, Eureka math, and Stemsscopes.

We advocated for collaboration days for teachers to work as a team to plan, create resources and attend PD sessions. Online virtual teaching was a shift that was seamless for some and a learning curve for others. It was time consuming and challenging at times not only to be teaching virtually, but also working on a computer when not with students. Supporting teachers by providing opportunities to take a break, rest their eyes, stretch and stand, and ultimately to remember to take care of self was key to keeping our teachers healthy and motivated. We allowed for these opportunities in staff meetings and during professional development sessions.

Parents were encouraged to reach out to teachers and help when possible, and to send emails of support and encouragement. The parent community created moments throughout distance learning where students would recognize teachers for a job well done with displays of encouragement in Zoom, cards and gifts created by students that were collected from families and delivered to school, a delivered lunch periodically and much more.

As a school, we honored any teacher requests for additional resources needed to deliver instruction more effectively online, including purchases of hardware and software. We also provided professional development funds for conferences teachers were interested in attending also providing substitutes. Now that we are in-person, we have outfitted classrooms with sets of tools where students have their own set to avoid sharing for safety reasons. Our main objective was to fill our teachers' buckets in many ways to build their capacity and to provide all tools needed to be successful in their efforts.

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

As the principal and sole administrator of Pennekamp Elementary, my leadership philosophy is to create an environment for all stakeholders that fosters a love for learning and to lead by example. Providing encouragement to staff to hold high standards and expectations for all students at all times and to provide supports necessary for them to achieve their personalized goals is important as well. I also believe that social emotional learning for students and the wellness of staff are critical to a successful school.

For support, grade level chairs make up our leadership team. One teacher from each grade and one special education teacher meet with me monthly to discuss school business, address issues related to campus, plan for upcoming events, dissect data and plan for teacher and school needs.

Pennekamp has an active PTA Board consisting of 15 parents who also meet monthly to discuss school business, community concerns and programs and resources. The insight provided to me is a tremendous help in being an effective principal. Each board member also oversees committees who are responsible for different events, activities and fundraising. The Board is an asset in communicating the needs of the community and spreading a positive word and answering questions on all aspects of our school.

As Pennekamp's principal, I connect with district and site administrators regarding policies, programs and resources that focus on student achievement. As an elementary team, district cabinet members and fellow elementary principals from four other sites across the district meet biweekly to discuss all aspects of elementary schools as they relate to overall district initiatives, business services, human resources, educational services and student services. These meetings have been extremely valuable as we have moved to distance learning and now back to in-person hybrid learning. Having a close connection to all administrators across the district has helped me to guide Pennekamp in the right direction. Our elementary principals also meet biweekly as job-alikes to share successes, challenges, and ideas. We work hard to create and equal experience for all elementary students in the district while each keeping our own unique characteristics of our schools.

It has been a unique time for administrators supporting staff through the changes brought on by Covid-19. Our skills in managing new parameters of social distancing, counseling stakeholders, providing health care support, and continuous encouragement of staff to stay focused, motivated and healthy have been required to support our community.

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

Culturally responsive teaching and learning has become extremely relevant. Our district created a goal to focus on equity, diversity, social justice and inclusion. A committee was created to support this goal with the mission of creating a "Culture of Care." Staff participated in a cultural competence survey and interviews of staff, students, parents and community members are currently being conducted to gather data as an audit of district and site processes and practices impacting all schools to guide future initiatives.

All staff is an integral part of ensuring equity, cultural awareness, and respect in our classrooms and school. Through literature, classroom activities and Socratic seminars, teachers help students make connections to all of these areas. A focus to bring new literature into our classrooms for teachers to share with students has been a top priority. Some titles include *The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander, *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o, and *Indian Shoes* by Cynthia Smith. All are amazing stories that connect students with the characters and teaches them about colourism, self-esteem, grit, passion, perseverance, history and so much more. Gathering and sharing resources provided by our own parent community and a focus on the work surrounding DEI is also present in our work. Under the umbrella of teaching students how to be kind and respectful, we reinforce messages around celebrating diversity and teach students how to **STAND UP** against hate. We, as a school, teach and pledge to "Speak out, Talk, Ask, Not allow, Denounce, Unite and engage, and Protect" around the topic of inclusion.

As a school, the diverse backgrounds of students, families and staff are celebrated. In connection to our curriculum, holidays and current events, activities to teach and celebrate different student backgrounds are provided. Parents often volunteer to do projects, read stories, or share a dance/song from their heritage. Our students are exposed to and understand the beauty that each culture brings.

Our school addresses current events and social movements that have a direct impact on our students, their families, and our communities through education, communication and resources.

Keeping our focus of creating a culture of care is at the forefront and is vital for our school community to grow and understand the increasing injustices that we see happening. We recognize our responsibility to actively oppose racism and discrimination, and guide this work with our stakeholders. This includes understanding what racism, discrimination and injustices occur within our own system.



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

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Since school closures began in March 2020, Pennekamp has focused on the social emotional well-being of students, staff and families. We believe that in order for students to learn, teachers to teach effectively, and families to be able to support at home, social emotional wellness had to be the top focus. Social emotional supports that already existed were adapted to the virtual world and new ideas were developed.

Our PBIS initiative “Every Dragon ROARS” was introduced four years ago changing the culture of the school and impacted students in such a positive, motivating way. We believed it to be important to continue to celebrate students in the virtual environment. Electronic ROARS cards earned were emailed to parents so that the entire family could celebrate together. Our monthly assemblies became virtual where classes would join together to watch in their spirit shirts. We continued our mindfulness messages where students were invited to email their thoughts to their teacher or principal. These were also sent home for families to watch together. We continued familiar class projects organizing supplies for parents to pick up for students to do virtually with the teacher. Principal visits to virtual classrooms to say good morning or to participate in lessons were a common event. We celebrated our 5th graders at the end of the 2020 year with a drive-through graduation and created memory books for each of them.

We hoped that 2020-2021 would begin on campus, but it did not. We saw the mental well-being of students, parents, and teachers begin to waver. We welcomed families back to the 2020-2021 school year with a dragon mask delivered to all family homes encouraging them to stay safe. We organized monthly scavenger hunts and book walks that would bring families out to walk the neighborhood. Encouraging personal and professional growth through readings, workshops and guest speakers were offered and welcomed by stakeholders. Guest speakers were invited to speak to relevant and timely topics. Our most recent speaker was a licensed clinical social worker from the community who presented, “Social Emotional Wellness During Covid-19” addressing the impacts on students and how parents can support at home. We provided literature to teachers including the book, *Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive* by Marc Brackett, which promotes permission to feel and identifying emotions during these uncertain times. Providing resources and support was our goal.