

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 4401 Tallman Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Troy State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48085-4825

County Oakland County

Telephone (248) 823-3300 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://leonard.troy.k12.mi.us/ E-mail EDetmer@troy.k12.mi.us

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Richard Machesky E-mail rmachesky@troy.k12.mi.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Troy School District Tel. (248) 823-4000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Karl Schmidt
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 12 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 3 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 19 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	33	31	64
1	37	30	67
2	42	34	76
3	35	33	68
4	38	37	75
5	47	32	79
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
Total Students	232	197	429

*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
 - 42 % Asian
 - 6 % Black or African American
 - 1.3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.7 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 50 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 3%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	440
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

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

Kannada, Mandarin, Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese, Telugu, Gujarati, Romanian, Polish, German, Urdu, Spanish, Saurashtre, Portuguese, Russian, Konkani, Bengali, Albanian, Phusto, Tigre, Malayalam, Punjabi, Somali

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 24 %
104 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 10 %

Total number students who qualify: 41

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
30 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>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>15</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</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.

	Number of Staff
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.	16
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	9

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 24:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	97%	96%	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.

Post-Secondary Status	
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.

The purpose of Leonard Elementary is to ensure learning for all members of our community.

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.

During this current 2020-2021 school year, Leonard has been mostly operating in a hybrid model. We started the school year virtually, with all students attending classes on-line. At the end of September 2020, we began to transition students whose families wanted to be in-seat back into our building, at which time we began our hybrid instructional model. Our hybrid model provides parents the opportunities to elect whether or not they would like their children to attend school in-person or virtually. In December, we did have to revert back to virtual learning as we prioritized the health and safety of our community. In the middle of January, we returned again to the hybrid model, which we are anticipating to maintain for the remainder of the school year.

In our hybrid model, our in-seat students attend school five days a week, from 9:20 am - 3:00 pm. Our virtual students log into their teacher's live stream, participating in the same instruction as our in-seat students from 9:20 - 2:45. A classroom teacher maintains her sense of community by simultaneously teaching her in-seat and virtual students. In January and April parents were given additional opportunities to elect to have their children return to in-seat instruction. During the last two months of school, we will have approximately 66% of our students learning in-seat and 34% learning virtually.

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

The Troy School District decides on an annual basis whether or not to open enrollment to students outside the district. In recent years, school of choice enrollment was allowed for siblings of students already enrolled. In the upcoming school year, our district is opening up enrollment for a limited number of students in grades Kindergarten and first (at the elementary level) and students will be chosen to attend through a lottery.

PART III - SUMMARY

Leonard Elementary School is situated in the heart of one of the neighborhoods we service. Our attendance area is wide enough to need seven busses, yet we have a significant number of students who walk to school on a daily basis as well. Leonard is truly the center of our community, not only physically, but symbolically as well. On nights and weekends, families come to enjoy our playgrounds and walk on our track. Before the pandemic, there were school events at least monthly, where the community gathered to share in family fun. It is not uncommon to see former students, now middle schoolers or high schoolers, ride their bikes through our parking lots with friends, or walk together in the back of the school. Leonard has been, and continues to be, a second home for many families. Not only is our building important to the families in our community, but the families are really the essence of our school as well. Our students and their families are people who value education and who prioritize having strong relationships with the school. Teachers and parents communicate frequently to provide the best education for each and every child. Our home-school partnerships are an essential component to our success.

At Leonard, it is our mission to ensure learning for all members of our school community. We believe that a strong character education program is the foundation for all other learning. We live by our core values of respect, responsibility, integrity, perseverance, and kindness. We spend time intentionally teaching these core values in our classrooms, the cafeteria, on the playground, and in our hallways. We believe that it is our responsibility as educators to model, teach, and reinforce the character traits that nurture empathy. We have several programs in our school that embody these beliefs. One is our Kids with Character club, a student leadership organization, in which children are nominated by their peers for their consistent display of our core values. This group of students in grades 3-5 meet regularly to plan and implement ideas that make our school a better place. In addition, our Peer to Peer (P2P) program is integrated throughout our building. While its origins are in the autism community, our P2P program started with one classroom, one teacher, and one student. This concept of celebrating the strengths in ourselves and others and leaning on our neighbors to help us with our challenges proved to be so successful that first year, that the program gradually grew. Now, we have classrooms across the building that have integrated the theory into everyday practice. Students set personal goals, make plans to achieve those goals, help each other on the journey, and celebrate when victories are achieved. The supportive environments provide students a safe place to take risks, try new things, and see themselves as successful individuals.

The staff here at Leonard are experts at literacy. We value the power of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in all parts of our day. We believe in the importance of teaching all children to be critical consumers of information and expert communicators of their thoughts. Instructionally, all children are met at their level and are challenged to achieve more. Through the workshop approach to literacy instruction, children participate in a rigorous and relevant curriculum that includes authentic reading and writing. Teachers work with children in a whole group setting, in small groups, and individually to best meet everyone's needs.

We action our character education, literacy, and critical thinking in meaningful mathematics, social studies, and science learning throughout the day. We nurture curiosity and offer students the opportunities to explore real-world problems. Learning across the content areas is authentic, student-centered, and appropriately challenging. For example, after researching water pollution during an integrated science and literacy unit, one third grade class started a composting program. They raised funds to purchase the necessary equipment and created the designated area on our school property. Then, they educated their peers by presenting in classrooms across the building. In the cafeteria, they helped students learn what could be composted and stood near the exits to help students learn the routine. Daily, students emptied the composting bins into the outdoor spaces and cleaned the buckets. Within a matter of weeks, our entire school community was on board. Leonard students not only know they can make a difference in this world, but they also do...each and every day!

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Here at Leonard, we value the essential need for each student to have a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Our teaching is grounded in the standards, rooted in deep pedagogical research, and aligned with highly effective educational philosophies. We believe in a child-centered approach to education, where each student develops agency in his/her/their learning path. Deep learning opportunities are created in every subject area, and students practice making their thinking visible in all parts of our day.

Our curriculum, instructional approaches, and assessments are adopted at the district level. Our literacy instruction follows the workshop model. We utilize the Lucy Calkins Units of Study from Teacher’s College in reading and writing in all grades. Our kindergarten, first, and second grades also implement the phonics units. We value the workshop model because it allows for students to have voice and choice in their learning. It honors the teachers as professionals and their abilities to provide responsive instruction to the whole group, small groups, and individual students based on need. This ability to differentiate reading and writing on a daily basis allows teachers to provide meaningful feedback that students need right at their instructional levels. We formally assess our readers at least three times a year utilizing the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS). We also progress monitor our students utilizing running records as needed between formal assessments. Our writers are assessed using the Lucy Calkins Writing Pathways rubrics at least twice a year. After scoring a writing sample, teachers thin-slice the student work and form instructional groups in response to the data. Our Tier One math curriculum is Houghton Mifflin Math Expressions. Students are assessed formally biannually using a district-created benchmark assessment. Unit tests, quizzes, and progress checks are completed as more formative assessments to guide our instruction. Our district has recently adopted the Cereal City science curriculum, which focuses on a phenomenon-based approach to learning scientific concepts. Our district is in the process of adopting/revising our social studies curriculum. Because we have not been able to find a published resource that matches our educational philosophies, the district is creating our own curriculum for grades K-5 based on the standards. The Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-Step) is the standardized, summative test in which students in grades 3-5 participate.

A strong Tier One curriculum is the foundation of our promise that every student receives a quality education. For those students that require more support, we do practice a multi-tier system of support (MTSS). We utilize Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) with any student who is not yet meeting grade level expectations in reading. Classroom teachers provide intense interventions four to five days a week to these designated students. Our literacy instruction is also highly influenced by Reading Recovery, which is part of our third tier of intervention. Students who are identified as needing extra support in math receive Math Recovery, which is administered in both a Tier Two and a Tier Three setting, depending on student need. If our MTSS team determines that a student is not making expected progress after the faithful implementation of documented interventions, only then will we refer a child for a special education evaluation.

Because of the unique nature of this school year, we have had to make adaptations while still holding true to the instructional philosophies we value. Throughout distance learning and even into our hybrid model this year, we continue to implement our literacy workshops and our MTSS approach to intervention. The dramatic increase of the use of technology in our classrooms has provided some unexpected positive outcomes. We have incorporated instructional videos that have been shared by the staff developers from Teacher’s College. In order to increase students’ access to texts, we have purchased subscriptions to online libraries, such as Literacy Footprints and Epic. In order to assess our students, we have learned how to manipulate technology to share our BAS materials with students virtually. Technology has also afforded us the opportunity to give assessments through our learning management platform and create digital portfolios of students’ work as they submit assignments electronically.

As part of our instructional approach, we continually use data to inform our instruction. Classroom teachers use daily progress checks to adjust instruction for the needs of individual students. After each testing window, grade level teachers collaborate with the MTSS team to review data and form intervention groups. Progress monitoring data is collected and reviewed every two-four weeks to determine if the interventions

are effective. In addition, a student's data becomes a part of his/her story, which helps inform decisions about special education or advanced grade placement. At the building level, school-wide data is analyzed at the end of every testing window to look for patterns of strength and weakness in our instructional delivery.

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:

Here at Leonard Elementary, we have always valued educating the whole child. Not only are our core academic areas important, but we excel in providing children with high quality experiences in visual arts, physical education, general music, instrumental music, media, and character education. In previous years, kindergarten through fifth grade students participated in one, 45-minute class in art, physical education, media, and vocal music each week. The fifth day was rotational, where children had an additional class of one of the previously mentioned courses on Friday. Fifth graders participated in instrumental music classes during the school day in two, 30-minute sessions each week. Our character education lessons were woven into daily classroom activities. We also held monthly whole-school multi-age lessons where children were assigned to a "Family Circle" that hosted children from all grades in one space as we learned about our core values and how to incorporate them in daily life.

Like all things, our specials' curriculum had to be adapted to meet the unique needs of this school year. We are proud that we have made decisions with children at the center, revising our plans as feedback warranted, and ultimately creating a system that honors the importance of these curriculum areas while keeping all children and staff as safe as possible. This year, all children have access to live, virtual specials. Children participate in one, 30-minute art, physical education, and music class each week, with a fourth class added rotationally. Fifth graders have the option to participate in Instrumental Music lessons after school (we have adjusted the schedule of our band and orchestra teachers, so they start later in the day and work into the evening hours). One adjustment we did have to make was that we had to revise the media class. While children still have access to our library and are able to check-out books, our media specialists have been trained this year to provide extra literacy support to readers we have identified as needing Tier Two or Three intervention.

In adjusting the content of these specials' classes, our visual arts program has geared its lessons towards drawing this year. Rather than explore a variety of media as in years past, this year, the focus is on teaching children different strategies to use with their pencils and coloring tools (landscapes, pop art, portraits, etc.). Our physical education program has adapted its curriculum to be focused on health, stretching, and flexibility. Exercises have been modified so that children can participate both at home and in a small space next to their desk in the classroom. Children are also learning how to adapt their physical environment to make use of everyday items in their health and wellness routines. Our traditional vocal music program has changed to a general music program this school year. While the children are not singing due to COVID restrictions, they are learning about rhythm, melody, tone, and pitch and enjoying music appreciation as well. Children are kinesthetically involved in their musical education. In addition, because all children have iPads, our older students are creating their own music on a variety of apps while incorporating the techniques learned in music class. For all specials, additional incentives for children to continue their education outside the classroom through home-school connections encourage creativity and healthy living habits. This culture cultivates a positive learning environment for all students to thrive.

Our character education program (Family Circles) has adapted this year as well. Rather than meet in our multi-age groups, children stay in their homerooms and lessons are taught at least monthly within classrooms. This has allowed us to continue our focus on core values and preserve the spirit of Family Circles even in these challenging times.

3. Academic Supports:

We believe that every student deserves and benefits from strong tier one curriculum and instruction. We recognize, however, that some students require additional academic supports to ensure their needs are best met. Our multi-tier system of support (MTSS) team collaborates on a regular basis with classroom teachers to develop plans to provide intervention to students who are not yet at benchmark and to provide extensions for students who have already exceeded benchmark. For example, if a student is below expected grade level as a reader, the classroom teacher and the MTSS team will create an individualized reading intervention plan (IRIP) to address the student's specific needs. Teachers will meet with the student in a small group four to five times each week to provide targeted instruction using our Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program. Progress is monitored regularly, and attendance is documented. If the classroom intervention is not proving effective, the student will meet individually or in a small group with our literacy specialist to receive a Tier Three intervention. In most cases, a student is able to make accelerated progress and meet benchmark expectations with these supports. If, however, a student is still experiencing difficulties, our MTSS team will refer the child for a special education evaluation.

Our students, who receive specialized instruction under the guidance of an Individualized Education Programs (IEP), are seen as classroom students first. They participate in Tier One curriculum and receive their special education services in addition to their classroom instruction. Schedules are created with the child in mind, ensuring that multiple service providers are coordinating their times in the best interest of the student.

For our students who are exceeding grade level expectations, our classroom teachers first differentiate the curriculum to provide appropriate challenges. Students are always reading texts at their independent or instructional levels, so our most capable readers are able to select books that continue to push their literary development. We use the Lucy Calkins Writing Pathways Rubric to assess our students as writers. The progressions provided in the assessment tool offer teachers support in extending instruction years past their grade level. Our students, who are exceeding expectations in math, are challenged through small group activities in which they may work with a larger range of numbers, create their own problems based on the content, or even design instructional videos to teach peers the content. In the rare circumstance that a student needs more extension, we do have district procedures in place to explore advanced grade placement.

We have 104 English Language Learners (ELLs) here at Leonard that represent 29 languages (other than English). We consider it a privilege that just under one-fourth of our student population is multi-lingual. Our ELL students receive instruction from their classroom teachers and our English Language Development (ELD) specialists. The ELD specialists design a schedule that is in collaboration with the classroom teachers. They work on language acquisition, and also support the ELLs with their classroom work. Their services are a combination of push-in and pull-out supports to provide the most comprehensive instruction.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

When spending time in our Leonard classrooms (virtually or in-seat), it is easy to see how engaged our students are in their learning. Our expert teachers design meaningful lessons that are not only rigorous and relevant; but are also intentionally created to allow students to have choice in their learning path. When students become agents of their learning and their voices are heard, deep learning is an expected outcome. Motivation becomes intrinsic and a culture of learning promotes success for all.

Not only are students' academics supported in this positive environment, but their social and emotional growth are as well. Relationships are at the center of our school community. Teachers intentionally develop meaningful relationships with each child; taking the time to not only learn how to say each child's name properly, but to know them as people. Teachers also deliberately create classroom environments that enable students to build relationships with their peers. When children know they are valued, that they are an important part of the classroom, a sense of belonging and engagement is a natural outcome.

Student engagement is also a product of our community's (staff, parent, and student) expectations. Classroom norms are collectively established by the teacher and students at the start of each year. These norms are reinforced daily and adjusted as needed. Students learn to hold themselves and each other accountable and work to support learning for all. Teachers communicate frequently with families, ensuring the home-school partnership is productive and positive. Through collaborative and nurturing interactions, students experience support from their families at home and school.

This school year, we have continued to make it a priority to engage students in their learning despite the challenges the pandemic has brought. Again, relationships remain at the center of our classrooms. Our learning model this school year has allowed us to maintain classroom communities. Our Leonard students have remained Leonard Leopards, regardless of whether they are learning virtually or in-person. Teachers are live-streaming their instruction, and all families who want their children to attend in-person are able to do so. Teachers have approximately half their class in-seat and the other half on-line. Both audiences interact in real-time, and kids maintain friendships with their peers. This model has also allowed us to continue teaching children who have had to quarantine as a result of a COVID exposure, which maintains engagement even throughout their extended time away from the physical classroom.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Leonard, we have always valued the support of our families and the surrounding community. It has been our practice to engage families in meaningful ways both through academic opportunities and through community-building activities. We strive to have our school be the center of our community, a place where families come together not only to socialize, but to learn and grow together as well. Having Leonard as the heart of our neighborhood allows us to provide a positive, nurturing environment for our children to make many happy memories throughout their elementary lives.

We achieve this goal through close collaboration with our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Our PTO supports our classrooms by providing funds to equip our classrooms with resources for learning. In addition, our PTO supports our Leonard community by organizing events that bring our people together. From parent coffee chats on the first day of school, to Trunk-or-Treating events that are fun for the whole family, and to our annual Fun Run and School Fair, our PTO is always providing opportunities to bring families to Leonard.

In reaching beyond our families, we have strong partnerships with local universities and businesses as well. We partner with Oakland University (OU); hosting three undergraduate courses each semester in our school to provide preservice teachers hands-on experience with world-class educators. We also join efforts with local businesses through events such as restaurant nights and March is Reading Month in ways that benefit local businesses as well as our families. We also have a relationship with Gleaner's Food Bank, providing

bags of groceries to families in need (available for pick-up right in our vestibule). Perhaps, one of our most unique partnerships has been with Fredi the Pizzaman, a local philanthropist/small business owner who sponsored our sensory room and gifted us with equipment and tools to help meet the needs of our most vulnerable learners.

Realizing the impact COVID-19 has had on our community, we have had to adjust our practices involving family and community partnerships. While our building is only physically open for staff and students (no parent volunteers or guests), we have tried to maintain our sense of community in other ways. Our PTO now meets virtually each month. Teachers invite parents to read to classes during events, such as March is Reading Month, by joining online. Our OU preservice teachers meet virtually with their assigned students on a weekly basis. Family and community support continues to have a positive impact on our Leonard students.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

A strong, professional culture is built through meaningful collaboration. Here, at Leonard, we have created an environment in which teacher efficacy (knowing and believing in our impact) has empowered us to make a difference for every child. This professional culture existed prior to the pandemic, and it has enabled us to continue to provide highly effective instruction throughout these challenging times.

One of the pillars of our district's vision is job-embedded professional learning for all members of the school community. This approach to professional development has enabled us to create a guaranteed, viable curriculum for all students. Our staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, and adult support aides) participate in regular on-the-job learning. We host institutes in which we open our classrooms and allow staff developers to model best practice and coach us as we work directly with our students. These opportunities are supported through ongoing, highly effective team meetings in which teachers discuss student progress, analyze student work, and responsively plan for future instruction. Our literacy specialist serves not only as an interventionist for students, but also as a coach for staff members, modeling, and teaching shoulder-to-shoulder on a regular basis.

At the district level, we have partnerships with experts from across the nation in the core curriculum areas so that our collective thinking is always being influenced by the most recent research in the field. Leonard staff participates in on-site summer learning opportunities facilitated by staff developers from Teacher's College, Columbia University. We also have teachers trained in Reading Recovery, Literacy Lessons, and Math Recovery – all of which have ongoing professional learning as an established component of the experience.

As we began this most recent school year, it was essential that we applied the same philosophy of professional learning to prepare for our transition to remote and, eventually, hybrid learning. At the district and building level, we focused our direction to provide professional learning on the absolute essential components of teaching in this new environment. Teachers needed to learn how to navigate our new digital classroom (Zoom) and our new learning management platform (Schoology). Staff developers hosted sessions that modeled the new tools. Then, our curriculum instruction specialists supported at the building level with shoulder-to-shoulder coaching in each and every classroom. Our technology department increased their support by deploying technicians to every building to provide immediate assistance when challenges arose. As this year has progressed, we have continued to maintain a narrow professional learning focus, offering teachers sessions that directly impact their daily teaching (direct support for their upcoming units of study).

4. School Leadership:

At Leonard, we believe that all members of our school community have a vested interest in the success of our students. Our shared leadership philosophy engages all stakeholders at appropriate times in making decisions that impact each student in our care. Our principal not only manages our school, but also is the lead learner in our community. Her role is to ensure that we remain focused on student well-being and achievement in all that we do. Our principal works very closely with our head teacher, who is also our literacy specialist. Together, they enact the school's vision through the work of the leadership team and our

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team. Our leadership team plans and facilitates building professional development (PD) sessions twice monthly. These learning opportunities are focused on understanding and implementing best practices. For example, it is common for our principal to lead our staff in a PD session in which our staff analyzes student writing samples. We learn new ways to study student work and thin-slice a class set of writing to form small groups of children. Teachers then develop responsive teaching plans designed to target the specific needs of each group of students in order to improve student achievement. Our building MTSS team meets weekly to discuss student achievement. The MTSS team is led by our school principal and consists of our literacy specialist, our teacher consultant, our speech pathologist, our psychologist, our resource room teacher, our English Language Development (ELD) specialist, and our social worker. As a team of experts, we collaborate with classroom teachers to problem-solve complex student situations. For example, a classroom teacher may bring a student to our child study team with an academic concern. Our MTSS team will review the data and implemented interventions, and then brainstorm new strategies to help the student.

In order to keep our school community safe during COVID-19, our principal has worked collaboratively with district officials and county nurses to develop plans. Our arrival and dismissal procedures have been adapted to minimize congregation and facilitate student entry and exit as quickly as possible. Our lunch procedures have been changed to allow more space between students. We are utilizing both the cafeteria and gymnasium as eating spaces. Children sit in assigned seats in order to minimize potential risk. Also, recess zones have been established so each class can remain with their cohort for the entire day. Administrative roles have adapted this school year to include more creating, implementing, and managing new building procedures for most aspects of the school day.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Leonard, we value culturally responsive teaching and learning. It is important that every person in our school community is valued and respected. We recognize, at the district and building level, that both time and financial resources must be allocated to this essential work. We have dedicated professional learning time focused on guiding staff through their own personal journeys of understanding the equity and inclusion work. We have explored our own identities through mapping and created identity maps with our students. Our character education lessons have explicitly taught the importance of learning how to say someone's name correctly. The language, "Will you please teach me how to say your name?" has become integrated into our culture. Because we know this work is ongoing, our Leonard staff participates in book clubs hosted by the district. These book clubs are focused on reading current thinking in the field and discussing the implications of the text in both our personal and professional lives.

Our Leonard staff continues to examine the books on our shelves, to ensure that our libraries provide many opportunities for children to experience both mirrors and windows in the literature they read. We know that all children benefit from both seeing themselves represented in texts and learning about people and places who may be different than they are. In our weekly school newsletter, our media specialist features a book talk that highlights a picture book and a chapter book by a Black, Indigenous, or author of color. Our students then can borrow these books from our school library.

Our school leadership team is focused on reflecting on our systems and practices to explore equity challenges. We analyze both academic and social-emotional data to discover and address disparities. We participate in learning opportunities (for example, Teacher's College Equity Institute out of Columbia University) in order to be best prepared to facilitate the professional development of our staff. Our leadership team works closely with the district's Supervisor of Equity and Inclusion to guide our own growth, to problem-solve complex challenges, and to plan for future learning opportunities for our staff.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While we have employed multiple strategies since schools originally closed in March 2020 to attend to the social-emotional and academic needs of our students, the single most effective strategy our Leonard team has enacted is to maintain a very focused direction. Rather than try to become experts at many things over the course of this past year, our principal and leadership team have narrowed our professional focus to include the most essential priorities at any given time. This strategy has allowed our school community to manage the challenges of this difficult school year by keeping students at the center of our decisions, minimizing stress on the adults as much as possible, and allowing our community to heal and grow together.

In March 2020, when schools first closed, our immediate priority was the health and safety of our community. We designed instructional methods in a matter of days to bring meaningful content to our students as they learned from home for the first time. Then, as we prepared for our new school year to start virtually, our professional learning in the summer was focused entirely on teaching staff how to navigate our online classroom (Zoom) and our classroom management system (Schoology). In years past, we would have a wide variety of choice sessions in which teachers could elect to participate in deep learning on literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and social-emotional education. This year, we narrowed our direction with the purpose of ensuring that every teacher would have the necessary tools to start our school year effectively. We had on-site coaches and tech support for staff on a daily basis to help problem-solve new challenges and provide support in the moment.

Once the intricacies of the technology components had been attended to, we were able to then focus our direction on establishing relationships with our students and their families. Knowing the impact that strong relationships has on student achievement in a traditional school year, we understood that building meaningful connections with our students this school year was going to be even more important, and likely challenging considering our virtual start. Rather than stress the pacing guide, or start workshop lessons in the first week, we emphasized the importance of taking time to build relationships not only between staff and students, but among the students themselves. This investment in relationships built a solid foundation on which academic success has grown.

Throughout this past school year, our principal and leadership team has carefully limited, and in many cases, eliminated, student and staff exposure to non-essential items. The intent has not been to lessen the experiences of this school year, but rather to allow our community the freedom to focus solely on the most meaningful teaching and learning. By paying close attention to the emotional well-being of staff and students, we have been able to decide when it was appropriate to push our thinking in new ways. For example, in November, when we had been back to hybrid learning for several weeks, teachers and students began to feel more comfortable in their new learning environments. At that time, our leadership team realized our staff was open to new learning. We choose to spend time learning about the importance of selecting books for our libraries that represented all of the students in our classrooms. However, in December when we had to make an abrupt switch back to virtual learning for all students, the time spent together as a staff had to shift to accommodate the increased levels of anxiety in the community. Being able to provide responsive, focused attention to the community's needs has allowed us to continually provide the very best education to our students on a daily basis.