

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

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

School Mailing Address 4100 Quarton Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Bloomfield Hills State MI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 48302-4041

County Oakland County

Telephone (248) 341-7000 Fax _____

Web site/URL
<https://www.bloomfield.org/schools/conant-elementary-school> E-mail rphelps@bloomfield.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr Pat Watson E-mail pwatson@bloomfield.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Bloomfield Hills School District Tel. (248) 341-5400

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. Paul Kolin
(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):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 9 TOTAL

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	34	29	63
1	39	51	90
2	42	29	71
3	52	49	101
4	37	46	83
5	0	0	0
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	204	204	408

*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
 - 10 % Asian
 - 7 % Black or African American
 - 2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 75 % White
 - 6 % 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: 2%

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

1.5% is turnover, cannot type in above field

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	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	455
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Chinese, Arabic, Romanian, Japanese, French, Punjabi, Spanish, Albanian, Mandarin

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 9 %
38 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 7 %
 Total number students who qualify: 27

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %

32 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>1</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>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>28</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 7

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.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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%	96%	96%	96%	96%
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 Conant school mission is to foster inquiry and innovation while preparing active citizens to participate in a global 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.

We began the first two weeks in full remote session. We then moved into a hybrid fashion (all students attend half days, four days a week). We then went remote for a short time during November and December and then returned to the same hybrid fashion. We are now offering a full schedule five full days a week.

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

Conant Elementary School of Bloomfield Hills Michigan is a fully authorized Primary Years Programme (PYP) of the World recognized International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). Conant's suburban upper-middle-class community sits approximately 10 miles north of Detroit, Michigan. The community values education and attracts families looking for strong academic success, development of the whole child, and supportive environments. Our responsibility is to guide instruction that demonstrates a commitment to the development of each student through the International Baccalaureate (IB) learner profile. The PYP offers opportunities to inquire into human commonalities. Our goal is to provide a caring environment that provides resources, opportunities, and a culture that values each child's unique needs and potential in this diverse world.

Conant's success is guided by the mission to foster caring relationships and encourage academic excellence by empowering inclusive, open-minded, and initiating responsible actions. Conant staff value multiple perspectives and recognize our culturally diverse community. We provide relevant and engaging academics through district-aligned curriculum, while still providing unique experiences through inquiry and interdisciplinary themes. Our community is involved in monthly assemblies (pre-COVID), grade level sharing, action projects, and culminating exhibitions that infuse technology and student agency. Teacher and student agency is observed throughout the day and exhibits our strong belief in literacy, social-emotional well-being, and hands-on conceptual learning. As you walk the halls, children are engaged in direct instruction, discovery and inquiry models, and cooperative learning. Students participate in workshop models, small group conferences, various kinds of feedback, and real-world experiences. Teachers and instructional supports are dedicated to making connections that motivate and engage learners. Teachers and our strong parent organization utilize and provide programs, like Art Smarts, chess, robotics, Math Pentathlon, Happy Feet, and many other collective endeavors to cultivate an environment that is socially and academically strong. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is in consistent communication with school leaders and classroom teachers, to facilitate a relationships between school and homes that builds the respect and value of the learning environment. The Media Center classes, computer lab, and rolling technology carts are ways that we bring literacy and 21st-century instructional strategies into the learning environments. Conant teachers serve on various committees that range from curriculum, social-emotional, interventions, and community outreach programs.

Lastly, we are proud of our culturally diverse community. We celebrate our students' individuality and celebrate kindness through our PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) framework. Our PYP curriculum supports thinking, communication, research, self-management, and social skills through the learner profile. Our robust "specials" program connects with the whole child and allows them to explore and expand their talents in art, Spanish, music, and physical education. We value and honor our community by developing and maintaining partnerships with the fire and police departments, local library, school district farm, business owners, and guest speakers to connect real-world learning experiences.

Conant supports the community's commitment to education by ensuring various supports are in place. We have a strong building instructional team that conducts child-study meetings weekly. Conant holds regular Global Education Team meetings that support equity and restorative practices, while recently prioritizing social emotional wellness during the COVID-19 school shutdowns. We provide rigorous instructional supports that are student-centered. All classrooms use workshop models and utilize small group instruction. Teachers are in constant communication during team meetings and professional development (PD). Recent building-wide PD includes formative assessments, inquiry, and data analysis to improve instructional practices resulting in student growth. We are proud of the cultural differences and supports that build and identify our school's character.

We believe that our commitment to challenging all students to develop their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally was evident during COVID-19 closures. Our staff and community rose to the occasion in keeping students' needs and safety a priority. During the beginning of the COVID shutdown, our administrator offered virtual town halls for all parents and community members to come together and discuss important topics to transition to our immediate virtual model. This gave staff and

the community a voice and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, each student received a device for home use. Kindergarten and first grade received iPads, where second through fourth grades received Chromebooks. This allowed accessibility and equity across the district to connect with educators and classmates. From March 2020 to now, access to the curriculum was also fostered by various modes of interaction. Students were offered live and asynchronous lessons. The hybrid and blended learning opportunities provided families with options and supports that met learners' needs. While providing a hybrid model (October 2020, January-March 2021), alternative childcare was offered to students of staff and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This aided in alleviating concerns about staff childcare, as well as allowing students with IEPs access to their specialized instruction.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Conant Elementary school utilizes the Common Core Standards. We are an authorized International Baccalaureate (IB) school and implement the IB curriculum. For grades Kindergarten through fourth, we utilize our Primary Years Programme's (PYP) transdisciplinary units. Our PYP curriculum is designed to connect all subject areas to facilitate a transdisciplinary, concept-based approach to learning. In addition, we integrate subject-specific programs and resources based on each subject area. For example, Conant utilizes Envision math and unit assessments, while Teachers College/Lucy Calkins resources for reading and writing are implemented through the workshop model. Formative assessments that follow the program resources, including pre-and post-unit tests in reading and pre- and post- writing samples for writing. Teachers utilize the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment three to four times a year to formally gauge a student's reading level. Resources from Phenomenal Science and Mystery Science are used when building our science units. For social studies, we follow the Common Core standards. We implement a variety of resources, including teacher-created units that follow the central idea of our interdisciplinary units for our PYP units.

In order to accommodate for the school closure, Conant made a variety of adjustments to have a successful spring semester. From a technology perspective, materials such as iPads, laptops, Chromebooks, document cameras, etc. were given to both students and staff. We utilized unified platforms such as Seesaw, Zoom, and the Google Suite in order to make access to virtual instruction user-friendly for all. During the school closure, teachers held live classes on Zoom, as well as created YouTube lessons for students to watch at times that worked best for their households. During our hybrid model (combination of in-person and virtual learning), teachers created asynchronous lessons for students, as well as sent home materials for hands-on learning and instruction. Since March of 2020 teachers attended many professional developments centered around virtual instruction best practices.

At Conant, learning standards are addressed through first reviewing the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)_ for each grade. Teachers are able to prioritize the order and length of each standard by creating curriculum maps, incorporating the programs and resources that are available. Each curricular approach was chosen with researching best practices, piloting programs at our school, and including teacher and stakeholder voices.

Conant implements a multi-tiered system of support, starting with a universal screener for all students at the beginning of each school year, followed by increasing levels of support for students who are not meeting grade-level expectations throughout the school year. In order to meet individual student needs, Conant offers small group interventions and one-on-one interventions, in both pull-out and push-in formats. Within the classroom, teachers differentiate instruction for all students. Teachers are able to differentiate instruction using rotations in a workshop model, pulling small groups of students during independent work, and utilizing paraprofessionals and other support staff in the building.

Conant Elementary uses Illuminate to store and disaggregate all the data to make it visible for stakeholders. Summative assessments, such as FastBridge, are used as a screener in math, reading, and social/emotional health. We use Fountas and Pinnell as a reading diagnostic, Envision math topic tests, pre- and post-writing prompts, and Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) for third and fourth graders. As for formative assessments we use exit tickets, observational notes, and running records. Teachers are provided time with their cohorts to analyze student assessment data, which is then used to determine next steps in the teaching process. During this time together we are able to analyze data and have meaningful discussions about best practice. Although COVID-19 has changed the way we assess our students, we continue to use the data we do have access to so that we can make decisions that ensure student growth. make data based decisions and take the proper next steps to ensure student growth.

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:

Students at Conant Elementary School receive Art, Music, physical education (PE), Media and Spanish instruction for approximately 45-60 minutes per week. Students in grades kindergarten through fourth have equitable access to the robust transdisciplinary curriculum. All curriculum areas are connected through the transdisciplinary concept based themes of the PYP curriculum. While general education instruction moved in and out of the virtual and in-person settings, access to our “specials” curriculum remained virtual September 2020-March 2021 secondary to COVID-19 safety precautions.

Conant’s art curriculum provides students with an opportunity to express themselves, explore materials and develop their creative processes. Students develop an in-depth understanding of the studio habits of mind and essential skills for thinking creatively. The general music program at Conant gives students multiple opportunities to develop musicianship skills. Students develop vocal music skills, play instruments, and learn to think as musicians. Students are exposed to the use of a diverse collection of musical instruments and movement experiences, which enhance their understanding of what it means to be a musician. The physical education (PE) curriculum at Conant is designed to teach students how to live a healthy lifestyle, both physically and mentally. Students learn team building, self-reflection, and perseverance throughout the PE curriculum. The Spanish curriculum at Conant encourages students to inquire and make global connections through language acquisition. The Conant Media curriculum enhances the reading and writing development by providing essential literacy skills to all students. The curriculum is part of the PYP interdisciplinary units and supports the development and understanding of the concept-based instructional practices. Students start with book care, self-selection of appropriate materials, parts of books, and nonfiction text features. As the year continues students are introduced to digital citizenship, STEAM through literacy, digital learning tools, and research skills. The Media Center takes pride in offering diverse books for students. The Media Center also provides access to literature for staff. We have a current and relevant book collection to support PYP units and updated literature. The Media Center also offers instruction for digital skills. Students work on keyboarding; mouse skills, identifying parts of a computer, and are exposed to numerous google suite productivity applications.

In order to nimbly adapt to the COVID pandemic, Conant modified these curriculum models to a virtual format. Students were provided with a challenging, dynamic experiences during virtual learning. For example, art students were provided with personalized art materials, developed home studio spaces, and were encouraged to participate in virtual art shows. All families were provided access to Capstone Interactive - an Elibrary, which has access to over 3,500 books spanning all reading levels. Students had access to virtual instruction with their specials’ teachers during live instruction, in addition to an asynchronized curriculum to allow for deeper more meaningful connections and to provide families with choice and flexibility. Appropriate online platforms were utilized to quickly adjust practices. Technology, not limited to, but including Google Suite, Seesaw, and Flipgrid, were used for formative assessment practices.

3. Academic Supports:

Following principles of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, Conant general education teachers and support staff use a myriad of sources to obtain information in order to determine the needs of students. Within the classroom, two to three times a year, screeners, such as Fastbridge assessments, begin to filter the academic and social/emotional standing of students. As teachers deliver the core instruction to all students, multiple measures of data are used to drive services based on student needs, in the beginning, middle, and end of the units. Small group instruction is delivered inside the classroom at the students’ optimal zones of learning, whether the student is advanced or in need of support during unit instruction. Research-based, instructional delivery images the students’ needs and offers multiple ways for students to make meaning, across

all content areas. Most critically in literacy, the workshop model offers the continued practice of reading and writing, peer discussion, tactile approaches to word work and phonemes, conferring, feedback, and text to world connections.

While the workshop model allows teachers to address the needs of students who are advanced in literacy, Conant also provides opportunities for students to advance in math.

Structures are in place to support students demonstrating talents in mathematics, such as moving to the next grade for math instruction.

Through the lens of an MTSS approach, data continues to determine TierII services provided outside the classroom by interventionists in the areas of literacy and mathematics. Our model is strategically focused on instruction and services for early literacy. Students are placed in and out of Tier II programs based on data, which is monitored every six weeks using running records and criterion-based assessments. Moreover, we also offer Reading Recovery, a research-based, twenty-week early literacy program out of The Ohio State University. This program is offered to our lowest literacy achievers in grade one only. Students of all grade levels whose data and progression indicate a need for a Tier-III intervention are serviced through Individualized Education Programs, carried out by two certified special education teachers in collaboration with general education teachers and a student's parents/guardians. Ancillary staff, such as a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and consultants all come together, when necessary to service students.

Our ELD (English Language Development) students are serviced by a full-time educator, who meets with students and families. This teacher provides instruction in an English Language Immersion culture of teaching and learning using small groups of two to five students. Student English proficiency is monitored yearly using the WIDA (World- Class Instructional Design and Assessment) MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) assessment tool. Students and families must meet criteria of a second language spoken inside the home to qualify for these services, as determined by student services at the time of enrollment.

Finally, Conant offers Section 504 plans to students who demonstrate a need for classroom and curriculum accommodations. These plans are developed with teacher and parent input and coordinated by an interventionist.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

In order to maintain a positive environment at Conant Elementary, we use different types of engagement activities and programs to promote student voice. Amidst the pandemic and school closures, Conant has continued to engage students through the Student Action Team. This team is student driven, as students are the main voice in the creation and implementation of chosen projects. This year the Student Action Team welcomed back other students by creating and hanging posters for all children/staff in the building when we returned to hybrid learning in late January 2021. Students also led a donation/collection project to help families and those who struggled with COVID-19 related issues through the nonprofit organization Brilliant Detroit.

Prior to COVID-19 precautions and restrictions, all teachers had the opportunity to give out “caring coupons” as part of our Positive Behaviors Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. Children are motivated to display behavior that is respectful, responsible and safe as these coupons are given out at random by teachers. Monthly coupon drawings over the announcements or at all school assemblies allowed children to be honored for their actions in a public way. Although this system is not possible with COVID-19 restrictions, teachers at Conant now provide in-class positive behavior rewards for students.

During the abrupt school closure in March 2020, we quickly switched over to Zoom meetings with our classes that included small and whole group instruction. YouTube lessons were created by teachers in our district, and printable activities were available for families to print or pick-up from the school.. Morning meetings have remained constant through school closures and the hybrid model. This has allowed our staff time to focus on the social/emotional needs of our students while staying connected to the school and building a classroom community.

Our school has continued to adapt to a changing schedule throughout the year due to COVID-19. Based on county data for COVID-19 cases, our district has been in and out of remote learning and hybrid learning. When in-person during our hybrid learning model, our classrooms are furnished in a way that allows the children to be properly spaced according to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. When in the virtual model we have found Google Classroom to be useful to disseminate classroom material and assignments. We used Zoom for whole-class virtual instruction, as well as small-group instruction using the “breakout room” feature. Finally, by scheduling outdoor time specific to each classroom, students are afforded the opportunity to play with one another outside, at safe distances and wearing masks. This allows another opportunity for children to build and maintain friendships with their classmates.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We have implemented many strategies when it comes to working with family and community members for school success. Families have opportunities for volunteer experiences, such as mystery reader in their children’s classrooms, Art Smarts, room parents, classroom party helpers, PTO, Junior Achievement, and general classroom assistants. The parents at our school welcome the opportunities to be involved and continue to offer their time and efforts to help provide a rewarding school experience for the students. We coordinate educational experiences with our community librarians, firefighters, and police officers. The students excitedly anticipate visits we have from community members.

Initially, during the COVID-19 shut down teachers kept in close contact with the parents of students in their classes. During this time we held Zoom parent office hours. Parents could log on at a weekly scheduled time to discuss any questions or concerns they may have had. Parents were also given the opportunity to connect via phone or email if needed. Our district administration, including principals and the superintendent, also held Zoom “town hall” meetings to address any parent concerns or questions. Parents would receive emails from classroom teachers, school principals, and through the district with any updates or information they would need. There were many additional resources that were created such as examples of daily schedules for your children, websites, YouTube lessons, etc. in order to set our students up for success during these

unprecedented times.

We are fortunate to be in a very supportive community. Families are always willing to help one another, particularly students in need of items, such as snow gear, boots, clothes, shoes, etc. Recently, two families in our district experienced house fires. Through communication of the principal, our community supported these families by providing financial support in the form of gift cards, and material support in the form of clothing, food, and toys.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Staff and school culture is valued by all members of the Conant Elementary community. With the abrupt ending of in-person teaching and learning due to COVID-19 in the Spring of 2020, the physical school environment changed drastically for everyone at Conant. However, even though we were physically distanced, our focus on developing and maintaining a positive staff culture did not waver.

After the shutdown of in-person school, a Conant teacher created a virtual staff Social Emotional Learning night to maintain teacher connection and relationships. These staff nights may consist of trivia, friendly competition, or a chance for teachers to chat virtually in small groups. At a time where there are restrictions on in-person socialization, maintaining a connection with others became crucial.

While professional development switched to a virtual format, our initiatives with students have remained consistent. However, professional development has also adapted to meet our ever-changing needs as hybrid educators. From beginning to advanced trainings on Zoom to collaborating with other teachers on Google Classroom, professional development has kept us prepared to meet the needs of our students.

Due to the changing nature of the COVID-19 situation in schools, we have had to switch learning formats multiple times this year. Teachers have been provided with teacher workdays in order to prepare for the transition.

Throughout the year, both during COVID-19 and prior, teachers feeling valued and appreciated is a priority at Conant. Each year during our return to school week, we participate in fun team building activities—a ropes course, bubble soccer, cooking competition—we have done it all! This opportunity to take a break and have some fun together before returning to a new school year is always guaranteed to lift spirits and build connections.

Teachers at Conant are encouraged and supported to explore their interests, be risk-takers, and try new things in their classrooms. Our school administration, even during COVID, continues to allow teachers to pursue their passions as they relate to the school and teaching. If teachers are interested in restorative practices, want to incorporate more STEM into their classroom, or want to learn about a new word study program, they are both encouraged and provided with the resources to do so. Teacher interest and exploration has resulted in many new ideas and teaching initiatives being introduced at Conant.

4. School Leadership:

At Conant Elementary, our school leadership consists of the principal, the learning specialist, and the IB instructional coach. However, one of the defining characteristics of Conant is our model of shared leadership among all that work at Conant. Our school has a leadership team that is made up of one grade-level team member from each grade, as well as a member from the unified arts team, the special education team, and administration. These positions rotate biannually to allow all staff to have input into school initiatives and improvement plans. Leadership opportunities are shared equally—whether it is your first year teaching or your 30th, you will be offered chances to contribute to school decision making.

For staff and leadership at Conant, students are at the center of decisions made. Our school leadership keeps us focused on student achievement through regular data digs. This process affords teachers the time to review formal and informal data to develop action plans for individuals and groups of students in their classrooms, as well as across grade level teams. These data digs result in action plans, which are followed up

on during scheduled staff professional developments. Whether we are piloting a new curriculum, implementing social emotional learning lessons, or developing relationships with community programs, our leadership and staff continually reflect on, “Is this best for kids?” and if so, “How do we know?”

As a result of COVID-19, leadership roles and responsibilities have shifted and adapted. While leadership meetings, staff meetings, and student intervention are just as crucial as they were pre-COVID, many of these have had to shift to online formats. This has required leadership and staff to remain flexible and adopt new methods of sharing data, collaborating, and creating action plans. It has also required a change in thinking and practice, such as allowing some students to remain fully virtual, while others participate in a hybrid format. However, our commitment to student outcomes has remained unchanged.

School leadership has also shifted ways in which students are provided essential services during COVID-19. Conant is currently in a hybrid format, with students attending school for half of the day and the other half of the day at home. Math support, reading groups, and special education services have continued to be provided virtually in order for students to continue to receive their in-class instruction, as well as additional support. Flexible scheduling and staffing by administration has allowed for students to continue to make growth during the pandemic.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Our school has a global education team (GET). This team is open to staff members and parents. During these meetings we come up with ideas that will continue to empower an equitable and inclusive school culture. During meetings we discuss topics, such as student voice and choice, social/emotional learning, events coming up in the community, different types of articles/educational resources, and ways to encourage diversity.

Throughout the school years, we have also had the opportunity as a staff to participate in professional developments centered around equity, cultural awareness, and respect. We have programs, such as healing racism, restorative practices, and anti-racism, which address all of these topics and provide training, resources and a forum for discussion for staff, students, and the community. Many of our staff members who have attended these training sessions found them extremely motivational and uplifting.

At Conant Elementary we have a variety of families with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. One special way we celebrate and educate each other on our cultures is through the Cub Culture Bag which connects a PYP inquiry of study around Who We Are. Students have the opportunities to take the bags home and fill them with cultural or familial artifacts to share with the class. Each grade level has a different focus with the bags so that the students are getting new information as they grow vertically through the school. The students are always very excited to share traditions, history, or discoveries of their peers. Our district also holds an annual multicultural celebration night each year where students and families are invited to create an exhibit that showcases their culture of choice.

Whenever some type of current event or social movement has occurred our administration, including our principal and superintendent, will make sure to address through communication to all stakeholders. As a staff we will typically engage in emergency staff meetings to discuss major events and the best ways to conduct class and be authentic with students. Teachers and teams collaborate to share resources and begin to share practices in how to enter discussions - bringing current events into the classroom with care. As a way to connect and/or support families, administration, teachers, or teams offer opportunities to talk to their classroom teachers, social workers, and administrators for further discourse.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At Conant Elementary, the one practice that is the most instrumental to the school's continued ability to successfully educate and support students since school closures began is putting students at the center of every decision we do.

When school closures, due to COVID, we made it a priority to maintain teacher connection to students with meetings twice daily--one academic and one social emotional meeting. Conant staff went over and above the district required daily minutes to make connections with each and every student in our classes. Teachers connected with students via Zoom, phone calls, dropping off supplies, outdoor home visits, and more. Whether than doing the minimum required, we continually asked ourselves, "What is best for students?" This driving question kept all teachers and community members pushing themselves to go above and beyond.

As the new school year commenced, and we began the year in a remote format, teachers again pushed themselves to connect and include every student in their classroom by creating a culture of belonging in each and every classroom. As the year progressed, teachers adapted and made changes to meet the needs of all students. This included the district creation of Bloomfield virtual--a fully virtual school taught by Bloomfield teachers, as well as the return to an in-person hybrid classroom for those who felt comfortable with in-person instruction. This required the adaptation of teacher and specialist schedules to ensure that teaching and learning was equitable across the two settings.

In order to continue to meet the needs of students, we adapted our intervention programs to provide both virtual and in-person intervention as part of our multi-tiered system of support. In order to maintain an in-person instructional experience, interventions were planned outside of that dedicated time, while students were working at home during their 'asynchronous' time. In addition, the creation of Blackhawk Care, an in-person program for students with IEPs and Tier-III needs, allowed students to be supported in the school building during the asynchronous portion of the school days.

We created an assessment and instructional plan to meet individual academic and social needs of students. This was based on frequent academic and social assessments. Teachers met throughout the school year to examine data and to share professional practices.

At Conant Elementary, our school culture allowed us a seamless transition as we prioritize students at the center of everything we do. Doing what is best for students is our most instrumental practice--pre, post and during COVID.