

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name John F Kennedy Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 28 Front Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Jamesburg State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 08831-1394

County Middlesex County

Telephone (732) 521-0400 Fax (732) 605-0571

Web site/URL https://jfk.jamesburg.org/ E-mail kdefazio@jamesburg.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Gina Villani E-mail gvillani@jamesburg.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Jamesburg Public School District Tel. (732) 521-0303

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. Elliott Stroul
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 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	49	33	82
K	29	23	52
1	24	25	49
2	28	26	54
3	34	29	63
4	39	33	72
5	38	37	75
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	241	206	447

*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):
- 0.4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 6.5 % Black or African American
 - 54.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 34.2 % White
 - 1.5 % 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: 9%

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	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	27
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	42
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	475
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.09
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	9

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

Akan, Arabic, Gujarati, Hungarian, Macedonian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Tagalog, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 28 %
125 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 64 %

Total number students who qualify: 284

8. Students receiving special education services: 17 %
77 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>8</u> Autism | <u>7</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>22</u> Developmental Delay | <u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 2
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	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	20
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	10

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 15:1

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%	95%	96%	97%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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 mission of John F. Kennedy Elementary School is to further develop globally competent citizens that possess the knowledge, skills, self-esteem, and motivation to continue their individual educational growth.

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.

At John F. Kennedy Elementary School, all students started the 2020 school year as remote learners. A hybrid model was introduced in phases for specific grade levels and programs. Phase 1 included preschool and self-contained students which started on October 6. Phase 2 students included kindergarten, first, and second-grade which started on October 12. Phase 3 students included third, fourth, and fifth grade which started on November 10. Our hybrid model engaged students in classroom and remote learning instruction. The instructional model focused on both synchronous and asynchronous for the length of a full school day. Following a hybrid model, students were arranged in two in-person cohorts, in addition to fully virtual students. Cohort A students returned in-person on Tuesdays and Thursdays following a half-day schedule and cohort B students returned on Wednesdays and Fridays. All students and staff learned remotely on Mondays to support efforts to thoroughly sanitize and disinfect the building. By April 2021, cohorts were combined to return to school four half-days per week, with asynchronous instruction continuing in the afternoon.

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

John F. Kennedy Elementary School (JFK) is one of two schools located in the historical town of Jamesburg, New Jersey. Our neighborhood school currently educates approximately 447 students, preschool through grade five. Jamesburg Public Schools has an additional school, Grace M. Breckwedel Middle School for grades six through eight. The majority of students graduating from Jamesburg Public Schools attend Monroe Township High School. JFK Elementary School is considered a Title 1 School with a growing and diverse population.

The school building was originally constructed in 1959 with 12 classrooms. The building has since expanded to include a three-level addition, constructed in 1998. Modular classrooms were also introduced in 2019 to support the influx of students. The building is now home to eight preschool classrooms, 18 grade-level classrooms, four resource rooms, two self-contained classrooms, an autism classroom, two pull-out intervention classrooms, a STEAM lab, a music room, and an art room.

In 2018, the Jamesburg Public School district was awarded Preschool Education Expansion Aid funds. These funds allowed the JFK Elementary School to move from two half-day classroom sessions to six full-day preschool classrooms, serving three- and four-year-olds. The funding also enabled the district to purchase and fully implement the Creative Curriculum for Preschool and to support the use of the performance-based assessment, Teaching Strategies Gold. By 2019, the preschool program has expanded to eight fully inclusive classrooms, serving our entire preschool population. We have implemented a two-way immersion dual language program, where children are taught in both English and Spanish. With the support of the PEA aid, our preschool students have had greater success in their elementary years. Our data shows improvements in student achievement in English language arts and mathematics standards.

The district places a strong emphasis on enhancing cross-cultural communication skills through the implementation of a dual language program. We believe that bi-literate and bicultural programs and curriculum support the development of globally competent learners. The program was introduced in 2016 to kindergarten students. The following year, it expanded to preschool and first grade. By 2021, every grade level at JFK Elementary School will have a dual language classroom. The dual language program has evolved from a two-way immersion model to a self-contained model to better support students in the same classroom setting. Students spend one week in English World and the following week in Spanish World. The curriculum is fully aligned in both languages and follows a continuous schedule of instruction. Students are fully immersed in a 90/10 model and have the opportunity to experience the opposing language for a portion of the day regardless of the language being taught.

Supporting students academically can only be achieved if there is a strong social and emotional foundation. A contributing factor to student achievement and success is a positive classroom environment, and to encourage this, we follow a C.H.A.M.P. philosophy which is based on developing caring, honest, accepting, motivated, and positive learners. Daily announcements are made with reminders and ways we can demonstrate C.H.A.M.P. behaviors. Students earn Character Coupons by showing a characteristic related to our school philosophy. All students are encouraged to model behaviors that promote positive relationships and compassion toward others. Mindful Fridays are also scheduled to teach students strategies to calm down and learn ways to self-regulate through yoga poses and breathing techniques. These mindful practices are led by the school counselor and teachers that are certified yoga instructors. All social-emotional efforts have led to a decrease in disruptive behaviors. We strongly believe that if students feel safe and respected, they are more willing to take risks and succeed through productive learning.

With the expansion of our school community, we continue to set high expectations and standards for all students and staff. The focus for the 2019-2020 school year was to establish student-centered learning in an organized, academically stimulating, and socially emotionally safe environment that is equally accessible to all students. Walking through our building, you can see vibrant displays of student work samples, content-based focus walls, motivational posters, classroom libraries, and calming corners. Prior to COVID-19 regulations, students were arranged in groups to promote cooperative learning. At JFK, we want students to

know they are celebrated for their differences, encouraged to ask questions, and develop the skills to problem-solve both independently and collaboratively.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

At JFK our curriculum frameworks were designed around the NJSL. All frameworks have been developed and continually updated by teams of teachers and the curriculum and instruction supervisor. Each framework includes a monthly pacing plan, standards, lessons, materials, career readiness practices, technology integration components, and interdisciplinary connections.

For our English language arts (ELA) programs, we provide tiered reading supports within a blended language program. Students in the primary grades use both a foundational program and a balanced literacy program. We focus on developing skills related to phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. Additionally, students identified for Tier 2 reading supports are provided a replacement reading program with an intervention trained teacher. At the upper elementary grades, we use a balanced literacy program and also provide tier two supports which include two intervention programs depending on students' levels. Our writing program includes both a structured approach and a writer's workshop approach dependent on the grade level and the students' needs.

Our math program is built around students' developing a conceptual understanding of mathematics. We incorporate a visual learning component that focuses on reasoning and modeling. Additionally, problem-based instruction and small-group instruction play a large role in our program. This year, to address learning loss, we added a program that allows students to work on developing their mathematical gaps. Teachers are able to identify students' present levels and students work on filling those gaps. The data the program provides allows teachers to monitor students, in addition to working to align their independent level to that of the grade-level requirements.

An example of the content taught in second grade includes subtracting within 100 using multiple strategies. Then later in the year, our second graders move to adding within 1,000 using models and strategies. In fourth grade, our students embark on understanding addition and subtraction of fractions. Additionally, they develop an understanding of how to represent and interpret data on a line plot. The year rounds out with our fourth graders working on finding the equivalence in units of measure.

Our science program is designed around the Next Generation Science Standards. These rigorous standards drive our instruction and students' experiences. Students are taught to think like scientists following a model of exploration, analysis, application, and explanation. Additionally, our ELA program has a strong interdisciplinary connection to our science program and the standards. The readings from our ELA program are many times science-based and help to create background knowledge for our learners.

In our first grade science program, a unit our students work on focuses on light. Students observe how light passes through objects and develop an understanding of transparent, translucent, and opaque objects. Additionally, the students explore how shadows are made and how light travels. In our fifth grade program, students explore the different properties of matter along with dissolving rates of certain matter. Additionally, our fifth grade students explore phenomena of predator and prey population interactions and native and invasive species interactions.

Our social studies program is currently embedded within our reading, writing, and science programs. Teachers and students explore the historical understandings through their readings and writings. Within science, teachers and students gain a clearer understanding of the development and principles on which historical events have occurred and spurred.

In our kindergarten social studies program, our students study community members and how their jobs support the community. Additionally, our students study about being a citizen and actions that make people good citizens. In our third grade program, our students develop a greater understanding of civics through a study of the court system. Furthermore, our third grade students gain an understanding of how prejudice can lead to conflict and violation of rights. During this unit learning resources focus on developing a deeper understanding of African-American history.

Assessments within our programs provide valuable instructional data for reflection and action. Targeted program data aligned with custom data are maintained in a data warehousing and analytics system. For one, this allows the data to be disaggregated which assists in addressing targeted populations. Moreover, individual student data can be tracked over time and used as a teaching tool where students can set goals in a growth mindset model.

Data have been driving instruction for JFK for several years through standardized and custom assessments. The school follows a yearly benchmarking calendar that aligns with the pacing guides within the curriculum frameworks. In addition, teachers utilize formative and summative assessment to drive instruction by analyzing skills and standards growth. Our deep data dives provide intense guidance and explanations of trends within data pieces. Teachers are given the opportunity to work within their cohort to develop a deeper understanding of how to make their data actionable. During the unprecedented times, data dives continued in a new format where they blended into articulation meetings and professional learning communities. The 'red' clipboard is a staple for every teacher as it contains the data which that teacher is using for their instructional lessons, groups, and assignments and is a talking point with administrators.

Our instructional transition between remote and hybrid instruction has been anchored in our professional development learning sessions for teachers. The teachers have participated in more professional development during these remote and hybrid times than during any recorded time in JFK history. A large focus has been on asynchronous learning and streaming. Streaming during hybrid instruction presents many challenges, yet the training and colleague share-outs helped to mold an effective model. Teachers have been adapting lessons and assessments to the hybrid model. For example, during a lesson on compare and contrast, students use a digital interactive whiteboard to record their responses on a class page, and then during independent practice students work on their individual digital pages. Another example of how we adapted our instruction is evident in our writing instruction. Teachers are able to look over the shoulders of their students by using personal digital sheets within our learning management system to monitor student writing and to offer suggestions in real-time.

Our instructional plan has, in many ways, stayed the same in that we focus on standards; we follow a gradual release of responsibility model, and we assess for understanding. We continue to be a school that strongly believes in a growth model. Students are measured in many ways; however, the way we believe makes all the difference is when they are measured against themselves. It has not been without the need for much forethought and reflection for our teachers in these challenging times. One of the strongest integrations has been the custom developed social and emotional learning program which has helped both educators and students be their best selves.

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

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

With the receipt of Preschool Education Expansion Funds in 2018, JFK Elementary School has been able to offer a full-day preschool program for all three and four-year-old students in our school district. We have implemented the Creative Curriculum for Preschool to fidelity and have used Teaching Strategies Gold as our performance-based assessment. The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, 3rd Edition (ECERS 3), and the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool have been utilized to measure the quality of our program. Using the aggregate results yearly, we have offered professional development to our teaching staff and have used our master teacher to coach teachers on developmentally appropriate practice.

Due to COVID-19, we have modified our learning models to ensure we provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences for all students. The preschool program followed NJDOE preschool guidance for virtual learning. Therefore, teachers held live virtual sessions for all students, providing small group times, story times, and individual sessions for each child. To support the students at home we have provided one-to-one technology, hands-on learning materials, and parental resources and workshops. Our

teaching staff has worked diligently to modify the curriculum components to adapt to the virtual setting. We have also modified the classroom learning environment for hybrid students to ensure social distancing and sanitation of materials. Every preschool student was given their own set of classroom materials. Preschool staff also developed systems to limit the amount of cross contamination.

Over the past four years, we have developed a strong Jamesburg Early Childhood Advisory Council that has members of staff, parents, and community members represented. The council works to analyze data provided through parent surveys and school reports to support preschool through third grade transitions.

Since the introduction of the JFK Preschool Program, we have seen a tremendous increase in school readiness skills. Our kindergarten data demonstrates growth in both math and English language arts scores. Through the JFK Preschool Intervention and Referral Team, we have also been able to identify students who may need additional support from special services and academic support intervention. Our preschool program has made a significant contribution to closing achievement gaps in various areas.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Non-core subjects at JFK include art, music, physical education/health, and Spanish. These programs have well-developed curriculum frameworks which have been designed around the NJSLS.

Our K-5 students, in a typical year, attend each of these classes in rotations to maximize exposure to all areas. During the spring while we were providing asynchronous instruction, the related arts teams provided in-depth lessons built into choice boards, which students completed throughout the week. Then, students were responsible for demonstrating their understanding through technology and/or paper submissions showing their activities. A photo of an art project uploaded into the learning management system is one example of how students' non-core subject participation was monitored using technology. In our current hybrid model, students are afforded the opportunity to attend these non-core subject classes during their in-person time as the importance of these programs was carefully built-in to the schedule. Streaming occurs in these classes, as well.

We began our STEAM lab in the 2019-2020 school year. This course was literacy-based STEAM for the first half and then our plan was to move to a heavier influence of math and science-based STEAM in the second half. However, the pandemic changed our course and recreated the course. The STEAM teacher embraced the challenge and created interactive experiences students could complete at home. Materials were bagged and distributed to families outside of the school which gave students a more level starting ground for these learning experiences. Additionally, a unit on digital citizenship was instrumental in a time where everything was becoming digital.

A cherry on the top of our non-core subject sundae is the teacher created video lessons. These lessons were shared with students to ensure there was exposure to all non-core subjects during shortened times, synchronous learning, and difficult scheduling mandates. Videos were created in art, music, physical education, and Spanish. Many of the teachers' creations have impressed not only the students but their colleagues. It has been said that our art teacher offers a blend of the best art lessons, a new and might we say an improved Bob Ross.

3. Academic Supports:

Our academic support in many ways has flourished during the pandemic. Much of the supports provided were following a standard push-in or pull-out model providing Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports. However, in the 2019-2020 school year, we implemented a Tier 2 and Tier 3 replacement reading program for our upper elementary students. Our intervention teacher has received extensive training and continued coaching in program implementation and course development. This program is data driven and works on a student growth model meeting students where they are currently. Additionally, we kept moving forward during the pandemic and continued our plan for developing a tier two reading replacement program for our primary students. Another JFK teacher transitioned

to this new intervention role and received intensive training and continued coaching in program implementation and course development. Moreover, we added an additional layer of support into the program by having the intervention teacher also be certified in ESL. This certification helped the teacher fine tune her strategies to another population needing academic support.

Additionally, to support students during our modified hybrid schedule, we have created a full period of synchronous academic support for our students. Students are placed into appropriate support groups depending on their academic levels in English language arts and math. Lessons focus on gap skills and on current topics which students are struggling with within their class. Additionally, students above grade level work on project-based learning experiences. Our English language learners (ELLs), also receive push-in support during our in-person hybrid times and receive synchronous support during our afternoon sessions.

Our above-grade-level students participate in our QUEST program. To maintain our QUEST program during remote/hybrid instruction we moved to a synchronous learning experience. The students worked through challenges from home. Breakout rooms were used, when possible, to allow for teamwork. Students participated in various activities with an emphasis on engineering and literacy.

Our special education population continued to receive their required academic support. Additionally, paraprofessionals were assigned to support students who were struggling with remote learning, providing both Google Meet support and phone support. Paper packets were created for students who struggled with the technical aspects of remote learning. Students' packets were collected and reviewed. Teachers arranged individual one-on-one work sessions for special education students whenever possible. Furthermore, students who were displaced during the pandemic were provided hot spots, academic resources, and flexibility with coursework.

Overall, our academic supports embrace a full range of social and emotional services which become the foundation for a student's academic success. We continue to invest in our staff and our resources to enhance our academic support programs.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Prior to the pandemic, multiple events were held inviting community members and families to JFK Elementary School. The majority of events showcased student projects, activities, and performances. School-based events included chorus and band concerts, art shows, grade-level projects, STEAM Day, and character development theme weeks. For those unable to attend events, pictures and video recordings were shared on our social media platforms and the district website. All events were highlighted at monthly board meetings and students contributed to conversations by presenting to the public.

During the pandemic, JFK held a virtual awards ceremony at the end of each trimester to celebrate student successes and provide an opportunity to motivate all students. A web-based form was created for teachers and support staff to nominate a student from their homeroom or a student they work with closely. The ceremony honored students that were motivated, ready to learn, and hard workers. The first award went to the “Most Motivated” learner. Students receiving this award actively participate, are excited to attend school, and make an effort to succeed. The second award was for the “Ready Rockstar.” These students were honored for their good attendance, being punctual, and prepared with the appropriate materials for each lesson. The third award went to the “Warrior Worker.” Students receiving this award submit and complete assignments on time and add detail and effort to all classwork assignments. An interactive presentation was created to showcase an awards ceremony backdrop with staff presenting awards in the form of Bitmojis. Each child’s certificate was mailed home and presented during their classroom morning meeting.

Throughout the pandemic, videos were created by compiling recordings made at home by district staff and teachers. The videos included reminders of how much students were missed as well as positive affirmations and inspirational messages to keep them motivated. Videos were shared on the district website and social media. During synchronous instruction, mindfulness meditations focused on the core competencies of social and emotional learning. Students were instructed in mindfulness breathing strategies, yoga, and positive affirmations.

In lieu of JFK’s traditional moving up ceremony for fifth graders, a socially distanced moving up parade was held. Staff, teachers, and administrators decorated their cars and created banners to recognize the students. Each fifth-grade student was hand-delivered a certificate and gift at their home by their teacher in a socially distanced manner. A drive-by parade of cars ensued to celebrate each student.

Additionally, many student support services were organized to meet the needs of individual students and families during the pandemic. Technical assistance was provided both in-person and virtually to troubleshoot issues with devices and programs. Our district website included tabs specific to virtual and hybrid learning with handbooks, schedules, and resources for families to access. Teachers created Loom videos to provide detailed instructions on how to access various learning platforms. The school counselor and school nurse created web pages for students and families to visit with COVID-19 helpful resources and information. Hotspots were distributed to families in need of internet services. All students received free breakfast and lunch during scheduled weekly pick-up times. If families were unable to pick up food, administrators and custodians delivered bulk food packages to their doorsteps.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At JFK Elementary School we are committed to establishing positive and sustainable partnerships with all members of the school community. We believe these partnerships are built on a foundation of trust, respect, and community involvement. As a community-based school, it is a shared responsibility for providing an equitable education to all students. Developing support structures that enable successful community and family partnerships have allowed our school to continuously flourish. Many advisory teams, positions, and committees currently exist at JFK Elementary School to support families and engage with the community.

At the heart of our early childhood program is the Jamesburg Early Childhood Advisory Council (JECAC).

JECAC is a group of parents, educational practitioners, and community members whose mission is to support high-quality preschool program implementation for the children and families of Jamesburg. A similar group exists for our special education population. The Jamesburg Special Education Parent Advisory Group (JSEPEG) is a forum during which information and strategies are shared with presentations by district personnel and outside resources.

Many support services are offered to our families through outside agencies affiliated with our building. We are very fortunate to partner with the United Way of Central Jersey through the hiring of a family advocate. Our family advocate works to promote child well-being and family stability through advocacy services, parent workshops, and home visits. The Jamesburg Parent Teacher Association (PTA) works tirelessly to organize exciting school events, arrange fundraising opportunities, and fund student trips. During the pandemic, they organized several presentations made by teachers and staff that took place during their monthly virtual meetings. In 2019, the Jamesburg PTA was voted a National PTA School of Excellence for their extensive support of the school community with PTA events and sponsorships.

JFK has multiple committees that were formed to provide equitable services. The JFK Registration Committee consists of the building principal, district registrar, early childhood coordinator, and the family advocate. Prior to open registration dates, the committee members meet with local businesses and community members to support networking efforts for new kindergarten and preschool students. Flyers are posted throughout the town, in both English and Spanish. Building tours and program orientations are scheduled in-person and virtually to inform families of school initiatives, practices, and expectations. The JFK Translating Team consists of multiple staff members who are responsible for translating all school documents and broadcasts in Spanish. Every committee, conference, and event has Spanish translators present to support and inform all families within our community. The JFK Holiday Giving Committee consists of teachers and staff who volunteer their time to assist the school counselor in coordinating the distribution of donated gifts to families in need during the holiday season. Donations in the form of toys, winter apparel, and gift cards are received from various organizations in the surrounding area. Approximately 40 percent of JFK's families were helped this year.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

It is not uncommon to read or hear about schools that focus on resources and programs and other schools which focus on speakers and training. However, what is more uncommon is a school that develops a professional culture that encompasses the resources which teachers need with the training they not only need but request. Our model is based on providing full implementation training and support sessions for all resources and programs which are purchased for district use.

Another practice that has supported a professional culture at JFK, is the common planning times for grade-level teams. Additionally, these teams along with other staff members are part of professional learning communities (PLCs). The PLCs evolve each year, beginning with guided experiences transitioning to a team's intended goal by year's end. The focus of our PLCs varies including student growth objectives, data analysis for targeting skills and standards, and new initiatives.

The input from teachers is highly valued and respected in regards to programs, materials, and routines. Teachers are involved in the selection of programs through curriculum committees by grade level and/or content area specialty. Furthermore, teachers are surveyed on their needs for materials and training. Training is then selected based on teachers' needs or preferences. Additionally, teachers were provided with take-home packets for remote learning kits that included, to name a few items, a large whiteboard, chart paper, cameras, and tripods. Teachers were encouraged to set up a home office/classroom without disturbing their classrooms in the event transition from remote to hybrid occurred.

Each school year we begin with two professional development days; due to the demands of remote and hybrid learning a third day was included in this year's staff days. Additionally, an unprecedented opportunity was added on Monday afternoons; our teachers were provided additional professional development and planning time. More professional development has been provided during these remote and hybrid times than during any recorded time in JFK history. These professional development opportunities

focused on synchronous and asynchronous learning, streaming, adapting lessons, technological enhancements, data analysis, social and emotional learning, among many other topics. Some of the primary forces behind these professional development sessions were to improve instruction while keeping rigor intact along with supporting the social and emotional competencies for teachers and students.

4. School Leadership:

At JFK Elementary School, the school functions under a shared leadership model. The school leadership team consists of the principal, supervisors, teachers, the school counselor, the school nurse, and additional support staff. The team is successful due to a collective effort in the decision making process centralized around student achievement. Various roles are distributed to support a student-centered learning environment and climate. The leadership team is actively involved in improving teaching strategies and methodologies based on student progress monitoring and through extensive data collection. Other roles include designing professional learning experiences, reviewing attendance, and supporting social and emotional development.

Over the past two years, the leadership team has developed and supported professional learning communities (PLCs) across grade-level and content-specific programs. Each PLC has specific times scheduled to work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for student learning. The leadership team values the efforts of all teachers and guides them in analyzing student data to develop strategies for improvement. The PLCs are coupled with monthly faculty, articulation, and district meetings. These meetings influence the implementation of specific initiatives and maintain the efforts of a shared school-wide vision and mission developed to sustain student growth.

Due to the pandemic, the district switched to a fully virtual model in March of 2020. As a leadership team, maintaining virtual visibility played a crucial role in demonstrating a high level of commitment to the well-being of students and staff. The focus on student achievement continued through the implementation of both asynchronous and synchronous instruction. The leadership team worked diligently to support teachers through weekly check-ins. The check-ins were conducted in virtual meetings to review student progress, COVID-19 updates, and technology advances. Meeting with staff frequently led to a student-centered focus in a virtual learning environment.

When the district transitioned to a hybrid model, the school leadership team joined forces with the JFK Pandemic Response Team. The JFK Pandemic Response Team (JFKPRT) consisted of the principal, supervisor of special services, supervisor of curriculum and instruction, school counselor, school nurse, teachers, community members, and parents. The JFKPRT met regularly to review and revise COVID-19 procedures and policies. Information was then shared at the district and building level through virtual meetings. Parents were updated with daily broadcasts, in both English and Spanish, which reviewed curriculum plans, district initiatives, global and county updates, and wellness resources. As a school community, we worked together to support the needs of every child and family in the district.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

JFK Elementary School values all students and their families by building strong and positive relationships. Our school has a diverse population that has changed dramatically over the past five years. We encourage every family to embrace their heritage and cultural background by sharing their stories and participating in school activities. Building relationships with a multicultural community is better facilitated by hiring bilingual staff members, training all staff members in sheltered instruction, and providing translated materials and translators at every school event.

The staff at JFK take on an approach of modeling equity through supporting a safe learning environment. In the classroom, teachers give students opportunities to safely voice their opinions and concerns with age-appropriate global topics. Every teacher's schedule allows for a daily thirty-minute social and emotional learning period that gives students a platform both virtually and in person. The school counselor and various teachers spent countless hours writing a

comprehensive framework and curriculum that supports culturally responsive teaching through social and emotional learning. Our character education “CHAMP” philosophy ties into the social and emotional domains from which the curriculum is built. The acronym stands for our core values which include being caring, honest, accepting, motivated and positive. The topics explored ensure equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom.

We strongly believe that tying in a child’s interests and background knowledge makes learning relatable and promotes engagement. In 2018, JFK went under a complete overhaul of curriculum and classroom resources to support equitable learning across each grade level. Each classroom received leveled libraries with a plethora of books from award-winning authors. This effort transformed the school’s ability to provide authentic multicultural texts, giving students a snapshot of various cultures and lifestyles. These resources continue to facilitate open dialogue and rich conversations about every child’s background and life experiences.

During remote learning, the JFK Pandemic Response Team (PRT) worked diligently to create and implement an equity screening process for those in need of additional support services. Therefore, teachers and support staff were at the forefront of identifying students and families in need of internet providers, technology, food, and further healthcare or family services. Once a family was identified, the PRT would immediately disseminate information to the members of the team that could provide direct services. These services included delivering food packages, applying for internet services, relocating families when displaced, and lending hotspots. Our goal was to maintain our student and family support services throughout the pandemic.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Within the past two years, JFK Elementary School has shifted to a multi-tiered approach system to support students academically, socially, and emotionally. Student progress monitoring is at the forefront of all initiatives to provide ongoing screenings of student performance and development. The coherent systems put in place have allowed the administrative team and teaching staff to identify at-risk students, adjust instructional strategies, and improve academic programs.

Various data points are utilized for progress monitoring such as benchmark assessments, state assessments, and ongoing authentic formative assessments. All staff members and administrators utilize a data warehousing and analytics system to streamline data across all grade levels and content areas. JFK Deep Data Dives are meetings that are scheduled monthly with administrators and teaching staff to discuss student performance at each grade level.

Once data are analyzed across the grade level, teachers debrief about instructional practices and develop interventions for students that are not making adequate progress. Teachers meet with their professional learning communities (PLCs) to confer about their students and make informed decisions to provide differentiated instruction.

Instruction at JFK is carried out following a multi-tiered support system leveled at Tier 1 Core, Tier 2 Targeted, and Tier 3 Intensive. Teachers receive ongoing training to group students and provide systematic approaches to reach every student at their appropriate performance level. Academic support instructors facilitate comprehensive intervention programs to support children at the Tier 2 level within the general education setting. If a child requires further interventions, they are closely monitored through an extensive documentation process and referred to intervention and referral services (I&RS). The I&RS team meets with the teacher and parents to develop an action plan to further assist students that require Tier 3 interventions or evaluations. This has been an ongoing and fluid process that has required multiple revisions of school-level documents, forms, and procedures.

To maintain progress monitoring during the pandemic, the administrative team virtually met with grade-level teachers every week. As we transitioned to a new school year, JFK Student Action Planning Meetings were held at the midpoint of every trimester. Teachers completed progress monitoring forms based on attendance, academic progress, participation, and behavior concerns. The principal, supervisor of curriculum and instruction, and school counselor reviewed every form and developed detailed action plans to address the needs of each student. These students were then monitored through a collective effort to improve student progress. As we navigate through these challenging times, we continue to set high expectations for all students.