

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

Official School Name Torey J Sabatini Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 359 Woodland Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Madison State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07940-2400

County Morris County

Telephone (973) 593-3182 Fax (973) 966-1925

Web site/URL https://www.madisonpublicschools.org/o/tjs E-mail singi@MadisonNJPS.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. Mark Schwarz E-mail schwarzm@madisonnjps.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Madison Public School District Tel. (973) 593-3182

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

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

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

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

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

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	25	18	43
1	20	22	42
2	27	24	51
3	21	18	39
4	19	22	41
5	28	28	56
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	140	132	272

*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
 - 3 % Asian
 - 1.8 % Black or African American
 - 5.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 81.9 % White
 - 8.1 % 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: 5%

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	10
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	296
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Chinese, French, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 2 %

Total number students who qualify: 5

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %
44 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>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>1</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>13</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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.	13
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 19:1

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	97%	96%	95%	96%	100%
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.

To prepare students to become independent lifelong learners with the desire, skills, and ability to positively influence the world around them.

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.

Torey J. Sabatini School began the school year with an in-person, hybrid schedule as part of the district’s Phase I reopening plan. Students interested in attending school in person were placed into two cohorts, which alternated between in-person and remote school days on a fixed schedule (Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday). Wednesday was a fully remote learning day for all students. As per state guidelines, families were also able to select a full-time remote option for students if preferred.

In Phase I, in-person instruction was provided from 8:45 am to 12:45 pm each day and students learning from home participated remotely during that time through a combination of pre-recorded lessons and synchronous meetings. After 12:45 pm, all students were provided a break for lunch at home and then received additional live instruction via Zoom until 3:15 pm. Full-time remote learners interacted with their teacher and class daily through Google Classroom and Zoom meetings. On Wednesdays, students in both cohorts collaborated virtually and teachers had additional time to provide supplemental support for students as needed.

In addition to the standard cohort groups, school staff identified certain learners who would benefit from attending school in person every day. This group primarily comprised students with special needs and English language learners.

In October 2020, district elementary schools transitioned to Phase II, which provided all students with the opportunity to attend school five days per week for a half-day of in-person learning. Although the cohort model was eliminated, families still had the opportunity to elect the fully remote option for their child. In the afternoon, when students returned home, teachers remained in school to provide live instruction using Zoom until 3:15 pm each day. In this phase, certain students in higher-need populations were invited to remain in-person beyond the general 12:45 pm dismissal based on need.

The school currently remains in this Phase II model and is making preliminary plans to move ahead to Phase III, which would extend in-person instruction for all students.

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

Torey J. Sabatini School (Torey J.) is an exceptional elementary school located in the suburban community of Madison, New Jersey. The school balances rigorous academics with a culture that encourages emotional safety to provide a supportive environment in which each student can fulfill their academic and social potential.

Madison is a close-knit community with a walkable downtown, a weekly farmer's market, bike paths, nature preserves, and a commuter train to New York City. Families gather to support their children at youth sporting events, attend the annual holiday parade, beautify their town on May Day, and celebrate the town history at Bottle Hill Day.

Each weekday morning, you will see many children and parents walking or biking to school. Friends meet up on corners or by their homes to walk and talk before the school day begins. Upon arrival, students are greeted warmly by staff. A vibrant hum of children eager to see their classmates and teachers ensues, as all are ready to learn and grow.

The foundational strategy at Torey J. is building partnerships both within the school and beyond. Staff and administrators work to form meaningful relationships with students, families, and the community. With this web of connections, opportunities, and support, students can thrive.

This partnership can be seen through a colorful mural inside the building, painted by students, faculty, and families, that celebrates the school's history. Prominently posted on the mural is an inspirational poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson which was a favorite of the school's founder, Mr. Torey J. Sabatini.

Parent-led initiatives are also delivered through the active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), which plays an integral part in supporting both students and the Torey J. faculty. Large-scale initiatives such as the community garden, classroom art program, and newly-painted river rock stream are coupled with more direct services, such as Book Fair donations, student enrichment programs, and the fulfillment of teacher grant requests. Throughout, the PTO and school staff work with one purpose in mind - to provide the best possible experiences for students.

Torey J. staff and parents also use various resources within the community such as the local YMCA, the town's museum, local environmental and nature commissions, and other organizations. Through Madison's wide range of support opportunities, Torey J. creates a fully supportive environment that reaches across faculty, parents, and peers to help students achieve at their best. Collaboration, communication, and engagement between staff, parents, and students are the key components of the school's success.

In addition to providing engaging activities and fun opportunities, Torey J. staff and administration believe strongly in addressing students' social-emotional and mental health needs through both in-class and supplemental supports where necessary. While Madison is a safe and welcoming community, students are not immune from the pressures of growing up and engaging with the world, particularly if there is a challenging personal situation or a less than ideal home environment. To that end, the school has installed "Calming Corners" in each classroom that provide a safe haven where students can take a break for a few minutes, collect their thoughts, and prepare to reengage with their learning. These spaces are supplemented by the various sensory walks and stations that are placed throughout the building. Students can hopscotch, do wall push-ups, or do cross-body exercises as they walk down the hallway to help relieve their stress or just expend some extra energy. For self-regulation, all students receive direct instruction on breathing strategies, are taught exercises to calm their bodies and brains, and are given hand-held tools such as theraputty, sensory jars, and stress toys. These deliberate strategies, coupled with the district counseling curriculum, provide students at all grade levels with practical tools that they can use and develop throughout their lives to help them manage their mental health and well-being.

In many ways, school continues beyond the bell at the end of the day. Many students stay on-site after school to participate in enrichment activities like Ukulele Club or Coding Class. Torey J. teachers support

their students with after-school dance recitals, games, or other activities. With active student-to-student support through a peer leaders program and the “reading buddies” program, which pairs older students with younger students to foster positive reading habits, Torey J. strives to be a supportive community of learners, educators, and families who collectively believe that it truly “takes a village.”

At Torey J., educators take pride in creating strong relationships with all stakeholders. The staff and administration are dedicated to providing a positive and collaborative work environment while promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, engagement, and responsiveness in the classroom.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Students' social, emotional, and academic needs are met through a standards-based curriculum aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS), which encourages students to work collaboratively and to think critically about the world around them.

With the shift to remote instruction in March 2020 and the transition to hybrid instruction in September, curricular units were altered to provide a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Blended learning practices were established and various technology resources were adopted to ensure that students were empowered to take ownership of their own learning. Using Google Classroom as a foundation, staff began using new tools such as Screencastify, PearDeck, EdPuzzle, FlipGrid, and Jamboard to enhance their lessons. Through a robust hybrid schedule that combined pre-recorded lessons and dedicated live whole-group and small-group instruction, teachers provided students with an educational experience that mirrored an in-person school day by engaging skills, content, and learning objectives in meaningful ways.

In English language arts, the school uses a balanced literacy approach and implements the reading and writing workshop model. Each unit allows students to interact with fiction and nonfiction material and is designed with student choice and voice in mind. Using Schoolwide Fundamentals, a digital literacy platform, teachers have the resources needed to provide authentic, interactive, and meaningful learning experiences in either a fully remote or hybrid setting.

The workshop model begins with a mini-lesson and includes guided and independent practice to allow for individualized feedback and differentiated paths to meet learning targets. Through guided reading, strategy groups, and conferencing, students are provided with the skills and tools they need to grow as lifelong readers and writers.

Students also engage in daily phonics instruction and word study lessons. In grades K-2, the school uses a structured, multi-sensory language program called Foundations. Foundations is based on the Wilson Reading System principles, which provides the foundation for critical reading, spelling, and handwriting skills. In grades 3-5, the school uses Words Their Way to teach word study at the appropriate stage of development.

Teachers administer both formal and informal assessments such as Teachers College Running Records, Schoolwide Fundamentals unit assessments, on-demand writing pieces, Foundations phonics assessments, and reading responses. Student progress is also monitored through the Renaissance Star benchmark assessments (Early Literacy/Reading and Math) three times per year, which provides data regarding each student's areas of strengths and needs. This in turn informs individualized learning goals along the continuum of literacy and math skills. This year the district also implemented Freckle, an adaptive learning platform that works in conjunction with the Star assessment, to address possible learning gaps due to the pandemic. Freckle allows students to practice literacy and math skills at their instructional level and also provides opportunities for enrichment. These assessments provide multiple forms of data that are used to identify students who may be in need of either basic skills instruction, reading intervention (through the Leveled Literacy Intervention program), or additional enrichment opportunities within the classroom setting.

In mathematics, the school uses a workshop model approach based on the Singapore Math teaching method. Students engage in hands-on learning experiences that build their understanding, confidence, and overall desire to be a mathematical problem solver. Each lesson includes a number talk, explorations around real-world applications, and guided and independent practice. In addition to Star and Freckle as noted above, K-3 students also use a supplemental resource called Spatial-Temporal Math (ST Math). ST Math is a visual instructional program that engages students in creative and rigorous problem-solving in an adaptive and self-paced computer-based setting.

The science program is designed with an inquiry approach to learning that blends hands-on investigations in earth, life, and physical science with literacy-rich activities and interactive digital tools. Teachers provide

engaging online lessons that allow students to participate actively using live or virtual lab activities. Standards-based investigations begin with real-world science phenomena and embed the three dimensions of learning (scientific practices, crosscutting concepts, and disciplinary core ideas). Assessment in science is typically performance-based to allow students to demonstrate the transfer of knowledge and skills.

The social studies program is built in alignment with the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework as well as the NJSLS. Using an inquiry-based approach, students explore their world, school, family, community, and beyond. Through studies of civics, economics, geography, and history, students obtain the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and multiple perspectives needed to become active, informed, and contributing members of society. Assessment in social studies typically consists of authentic tasks that require critical thinking and the ability for students to take a position on a specific issue.

Broadening students' global awareness is another key component of the curriculum. As a capstone experience, fifth-grade students engage in a project called More than Madison, which is an interdisciplinary research experience based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The project culminates with a school-wide event in which participating students can share their experiences and key takeaways with their parents and classmates.

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:

Torey J. students are offered special area classes in art, music, physical education, library media, technology, and STEAM. Students in grades K-5 receive instruction in each class once a week, with physical education occurring twice per week.

In the current hybrid model, all special area subjects are taught asynchronously and students engage with the content each afternoon. The curriculum for each subject was modified to include teacher-created instructional videos, opportunities for interdisciplinary connections, and other resources that allow students to access the material in interactive ways.

In visual arts, students use a wide range of mediums and styles to create two- and three-dimensional works of art. The curriculum includes art history and exposure to the great masters as a foundation for their own art. Students also use art to view the world through a different lens and gain insight into other cultures.

In performing arts, the general music curriculum embeds culture, history, music literacy, and appreciation while providing students with the opportunity to create and perform. Third graders are introduced to the recorder, while students in fourth and fifth grade can participate in the band, orchestra, or chorus. Fourth and fifth graders also have the opportunity to participate in the annual school musical.

The physical education program focuses on providing students with the necessary skills, experience, and tools to achieve optimal wellness and success not only in school but throughout their lives. All students receive instruction on the importance of exercise, proper fitness strategies, safety techniques, teamwork, body awareness, and manipulative motor skills.

The goal of the library media curriculum is to act as a framework for instructing students to be seekers and users of information and ideas. Even though physical access to the library has been curtailed due to the pandemic, the library media specialist has developed an online request system to get print resources into the hands of students. Emphasis is placed on establishing a lifelong love of reading and developing intellectual curiosity.

The STEAM program integrates science, technology, engineering, art, and math. The cross-curricular units presented in the curriculum are designed to build on what students have learned or will learn in their science, math, language arts, and technology courses. Students are given a series of tasks to complete throughout each unit, which culminates with a final real-world project.

While technology is an integral part of the classroom environment, students also receive supplemental direct instruction in technology from a specialist. The goal of the program is to provide students with the skills needed to not only excel in school but also in the workplace. Students focus on developing digital citizenship tools, typing fluency, and online research skills.

Throughout the school, students are exposed to concrete social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons one to two times per month. The program centers on three themes: empathy, emotion regulation, and problem-solving. These skills are taught through explicit lessons by the school counselor and are reinforced by teachers in the classroom. While many of these initiatives have been modified in the current COVID learning environment, SEL continues to be a school-wide priority.

3. Academic Supports:

At Torey J. there is a core belief that all students are capable of learning and succeeding. The diverse range of learners' needs is addressed through a variety of interventions that are driven by the results of ongoing assessments. Systematic benchmark testing in reading and math occurs at least three times a year.

Using various data points, students at both ends of the learning continuum are identified for additional support. Students performing below grade level benefit from working with the school's reading specialist or basic skills instructor. Intervention groups are skill-based and targeted to meet each student where they are while providing specific feedback to address identified gaps.

Classroom teachers also provide intervention for their students. In grades K-2, staff provides supplemental phonics instruction to students when necessary. At all levels, instruction is fully differentiated so that each student is provided with material in each subject that is targeted to their ability level. Since the onset of the COVID pandemic, teachers have also provided additional small group remote sessions to meet with students and address learning needs.

For students achieving above grade-level expectations, teachers provide fully differentiated instruction as well as enrichment opportunities. These might include the use of a higher-level text, differentiated spelling lists, and/or supplemental math puzzles or problems to challenge students' critical thinking skills.

Special education teachers, therapists, and child study team members focus on creating dynamic and individualized programs that meet the needs of students. Students are serviced with in-class support and resource settings that have a focus on placing the students in the least restrictive environment. Each grade level has one in-class support section. General education and special education teachers work closely to plan and deliver engaging lessons for the diverse needs of the students in their class. Therapists and teachers work closely together to provide coherent and individualized programs for students based on their individualized goals. Teacher assistants play an integral part in supporting students and helping them achieve success. Currently, there are two Level One Certified Wilson instructors that provide small group multisensory reading instruction to identified students. One special education teacher is certified in Lindamood Bell Visualizing and Verbalizing program which focuses on comprehension and higher-order thinking skills. Students also use Learning Ally, Reading A to Z, and Read and Write for Google to support and access the curriculum. All classrooms are outfitted with frequency modulation (FM) systems to support

diversified learning and instruction.

Torey J. has a small yet diverse population of English language learners. Depending on their English proficiency, a student may receive both pull-out and push-in support, and the ESL specialist works closely with teachers to align supports with the classroom material. The ESL curriculum supports the development of English language proficiency for learners who have little or no English and provides them with the tools to perform successfully in a school setting. In order to bridge the gap between home and school, communication with the parents of these students is ongoing and additional opportunities that develop both the social and academic English skills needed for each child's continued success are continually being developed.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The Torey J. staff and parent community have been able to provide students with engaging and motivating experiences during both hybrid and fully remote learning. In order to foster a positive school climate, school-wide programs have continued to operate, but with appropriate adaptations, as needed. Recently, students participated in The Great Kindness Challenge where both in-person and fully remote students had the opportunity to practice acts of kindness together. In partnership with the PTO, various cultural programs, an author visit, and educational enrichment assemblies have been conducted virtually in order to maintain student engagement during this challenging school year.

Torey J. continues to be a No Place for Hate certified school and has maintained this status for three consecutive years. Climate surveys are administered annually to students in grades 3-5 and the results are thoroughly analyzed to find trends, areas of strength, and items for additional focus. A centrally-located school chalk wall that consistently displays positive messages of affirmation is also maintained to help build up the student community. With support from the PTO, the school participates in the “Look for the Good” gratitude campaign that empowers students to show appreciation for people, places, things, and activities. Activities included gratitude spots located in classrooms, a school-wide gratitude wall, the passing of kindness cards, and a culminating project where students write about someone they are grateful for.

Torey J. students annually participate in a Week of Respect, Red Ribbon Week, a Week of Gratitude, Read Across America Week, and this year a newly introduced school-wide Green Week. Through interactive activities such as gratitude choice boards, food drives, recorded read alouds from staff members to celebrate a love of reading, and consistent student participation in the principal’s morning video announcements, students continue to be engaged whether they are in-person or fully remote.

Additionally, teachers have adopted the Responsive Classroom as part of the school’s character education initiative. Establishing character education as a priority reflects a clear determination to be proactive regarding the social and emotional areas of child development. Throughout the pandemic, class meetings or community circles have remained a critical component of the school day. In both the fully remote learning environment and the hybrid environment, each teacher’s schedule has maintained a time in the day for the class to meet, share, and engage in group activities. This is the type of consistent activity that establishes an empathetic culture among peers within the school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Flexibility has been key to our success in supporting and engaging with families and the greater community during both hybrid and fully remote learning. Staff have made themselves constantly available and easily accessible via Zoom, phone, and email throughout the pandemic. This has come in the form of academic, social, and emotional support from teachers, support staff, the counselor, and the principal. Also, work has been done at the school level to keep relationships with the greater community strong during the pandemic, as these relationships promote success.

During COVID it became clear that keeping family participation, engagement, and communication at the forefront of the school mission would be critical. At the beginning of the transition to virtual learning, guardians were presented with a Google Classroom Parent Guide. Throughout both the virtual and hybrid scenarios, parents have also been provided with weekly classroom updates. Parents have also been able to participate virtually in classroom activities such as mystery readers, birthday celebrations, and conferences.

Community outreach includes a partnership with the local Interfaith Food Pantry for whom over 1,800 pounds of food were collected and donated. Over 350 meals worth of food was also collected, bagged, and donated to the local BRIDGES program. During the height of the pandemic, the school nurse and teacher volunteers hand-delivered meals and fresh produce boxes to community members in need. The school counselor refers students to the free and local YMCA counseling service, Project Community Pride. Staff

members have benefited from grants submitted to the Madison Education Foundation (MEF) and the Torey J. PTO. Both have provided the school with countless items and programs that support student growth across grade levels. Students with limited financial means have also been connected to various athletics programs through the Madison Recreation Department.

One way the school has interacted with the community and businesses in town is through the Madison Environmental Commissions Green Forum project. Students in second grade worked together to create a cookbook that included recipes with local, native plants found in Madison. This cookbook was delivered to local eateries along with a persuasive letter written by a second-grader, who encouraged the restaurants to include the native plant recipes on their menus.

Each Spring, members of the community participate in the annual May Day. May Day is a town-wide beautification day in which volunteers help clean and improve Madison's public places. Staff, students, and families are often seen cleaning up, mulching, and planting flowers and trees at Torey J.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The professional school culture can be witnessed at monthly faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, staff book club meetings, and during school-wide and district-wide professional development days. The building principal is always available to provide support, guidance, and gratitude to the teachers and staff at Torey J. The principal encourages staff to showcase not only their classroom successes but their challenges as well. Faculty meetings often consist of school staff providing professional development to their colleagues. One example of this was a recent Technology Symposium, where teachers led sessions on innovative technology tools and were seen as the experts by their colleagues. This model of teachers learning from one another fosters a truly collaborative learning community.

Another component that has helped create an environment where teachers feel valued and supported is the openness of the building principal to provide time and space for teachers to share out successes and concerns. When concerns are shared openly at faculty or grade level meetings, the conversation is collaborative in nature, solution-based, and focused on what is in the best interest of the students. Through this approach, staff feel heard, are empowered to share their opinions, and recognize a larger investment in the school community.

Collaboration has proven to be a crucial component to the success of the school during the transition to remote learning and a hybrid learning environment. In addition to grade-level and faculty meetings, district administration has allocated time for vertical and horizontal grade level articulation as well as professional development. At the initial transition to distance learning, virtual collaboration time was scheduled every two weeks with a heavy focus on supporting teachers in blended learning and assessment practices. This model continued when the district transitioned from fully remote learning to hybrid and the school continued to support the teachers as new needs arose.

Communication has also been of utmost importance to establish a positive professional culture. The building principal publishes weekly newsletters, in collaboration with the teachers, to inform and engage the parent and staff community. Besides the weekly newsletter, the principal also created a critical staff document called the "Jaguar Den." This document includes hyperlinks that provide staff with all the necessary information they need during the year, such as technology videos and tutorials, district blended learning practices, Google Classroom guidelines, and a staff handbook. Finally, the principal created a faculty Google Classroom as well as a school-wide Google Calendar that has transformed the way that staff and administrators interact with one another when planning and coordinating.

4. School Leadership:

An effective leader has the ability to not only discover their own strengths but to also discover the strengths of others. A core leadership value at Torey J. is to encourage and foster staff to excel in their profession and model for students what it takes to be a lifelong learner. Torey J. educators are encouraged to take risks, regularly collaborate with both school and district administration, and are often included in the decision-

making process. Relational trust, which is at work in all practices of the school, has created a thriving atmosphere and professional culture. This approach to school leadership has developed a highly motivated and innovative staff who are focused on obtaining high levels of student engagement and achievement.

Teacher leadership is encouraged at both the school and district level. The principal encourages staff to pursue their passions in education through graduate programs as well as participation in district curriculum councils and district goal workgroups. Teachers often lend their voice to conversations with school and district administration on various topics such as anti-racism and social justice, equitable outcomes, innovation and engagement, and social-emotional learning practices.

The Torey J. principal works collaboratively with the other principals and the central office administrative team to review progress on student achievement data and wellness. As an administrative team, data from assessments such as NJSLA, Star, and various local assessments are reviewed. The data guides programming and instructional decisions and helps to identify district professional development needs.

Through regular administrative team meetings, the district has experienced success in keeping the schools safe, open, and operating amidst a global pandemic. At the elementary level, the three district principals routinely collaborated; the result was that all students, regardless of which school they attended, received a similar educational experience during the phased return to school.

During the COVID pandemic, the building principal has worked in conjunction with the school nurse and local health department to conduct contact tracing within the school setting. While preparing the school for a socially distanced COVID learning environment that consisted of desk shields, hand-sanitizing stations, and hallway and classroom signage, the building principal has kept the philosophy the same regarding a collaborative approach to school leadership. The tools, policies, and procedures in place at Torey J. have allowed the team to build, gain, and sustain success through a systematic approach.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Celebrating differences and recognizing students' individuality is critical to ensuring an inclusive and respectful school environment. The Torey J. staff recognizes the importance of including students' culture in all aspects of their learning. Both at the school level and classroom level, teachers are aware of the cultural differences present in the school building. In response to these differences, educators take time to examine teaching materials and their practices to be sure that they are interacting with their students and materials in a culturally appropriate manner. Teachers frequently adapt their programs and interventions to respond to different student needs.

This year, some students and staff are participating in a community initiative designed to elevate the untold stories of the Black, Hispanic, and Latino community through visual art, literature, and music. The project, "Hidden Figures of Madison and Morris County," will provide students with the opportunity to research impactful individuals and changemakers in the local community. A culminating community-wide event in partnership with local businesses is scheduled to celebrate the hidden figures and display a window mural project that celebrates student work.

Embedded within the curriculum are opportunities for students to read and write about important individuals and events in history. As a school, students also have the opportunity to learn about the holidays of different cultures both in their classrooms and in special areas such as art, music, physical education, technology, and media. Both classroom teachers and special area teachers address topics such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, and Light It Up Blue Week for Autism Awareness.

Within the reading, writing, and social studies curriculum, as well as in all classroom libraries, there are a wide range of culturally inclusive books and materials. Recently, the library media

specialist assessed the school collection to ensure that it was diverse and representative of authors and characters from different cultures, genders, and family structures. To address current events and social movements, teachers and students often access a resource called Newsela to read and write about important events in a developmentally appropriate way.

To further celebrate diversity and foster inclusivity in the school, this year English language learners wrote, edited, and published their own bilingual books. These books, written in English and the student's native language, were published and placed in the school library for all Torey J. students to enjoy.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Maintaining a sense of community has been the school's most impactful strategy for overall success. By nurturing positive relationships between staff, students, and families, the school has been able to create the climate and culture necessary to promote social and emotional health for all. It is a strong belief throughout Torey J. that students cannot be open and available to learning in academic areas if they do not feel safe and supported. Because of this belief, every teacher in the school has created an environment that is supportive of their students' social-emotional needs. The Responsive Classroom approach has provided teachers with the necessary tools needed to create a positive and safe learning environment. Students feel safe sharing about not only their academic pursuits but their personal lives as well. Through compassionate listening, staff are able to provide students with the emotional support they need on any given day.

Teachers and staff have been dedicated to keeping students connected, engaged, and safe throughout the pandemic. Torey J. educators participated in a Staff Talent Show and students were eager to vote for the best acts. Themed trivia nights have encouraged family members to work together to get the highest score and see their name up on the leaderboard. Before students returned to school following the COVID closure, teachers also created a video series of public service announcements around social distancing expectations and what the new routines would look like in school.

Despite students being absent from their physical classrooms, the school counselor embedded weekly guidance lessons into students' virtual classrooms. Weekly virtual lunch groups provided students with an opportunity to socialize and connect. These practices continue to occur and be expanded upon.

Mindfulness is another important practice being implemented in Torey J. classrooms. With support from the Madison Education Foundation (MEF) the school received a grant that will provide further training around mindfulness for staff and students. The grant also included an expansion of classroom calming corners, read aloud texts, and a student-friendly mindfulness app.

Torey J. teachers have determined that the key to a successful school climate and culture is to address the social and emotional needs of students. Modeling is key and educators are often seen showcasing their own successes, failures, frustrations, and healthy relationships on a daily basis. The school's social and emotional programming has created a sense of community that acts as a blueprint for the overall success at Torey J. Sabatini School.