

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 450 Homestead Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Hershey State PA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 17033-0898

County Dauphin County

Telephone (717) 531-2277 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://www.hershey.k12.pa.us/ E-mail jfunck@hershey.k12.pa.us

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Stacy Winslow E-mail swinslow@hershey.k12.pa.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Derry Township School District Tel. (717) 534-2501

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 Mrs. Lindsay Drew  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 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	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	108	122	230
3	129	108	237
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	237	230	467

\*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 18 % Asian
  - 7.4 % Black or African American
  - 6.6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 65.3 % White
  - 2.3 % 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: 7%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	31
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	434
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Hindi, Turkish, Nepali, Arabic, Kannada, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Urdu, Punjabi, Spanish, Gujarati, Telugu, Kirghiz, Japanese, and Tamil

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 7 %

33 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 24 %

Total number students who qualify: 111

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
65 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>20</u> Autism                 | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>15</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>31</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</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.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	22
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.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
 Yes  No

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

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

Engaging all students every day to help them achieve their greatest potential as global citizens.

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.

Our school has offered families a choice of an in-person hybrid model or virtual model of learning for the 2020-2021 school year. Students in the hybrid model attend school in person for half of the day, and then participate in virtual asynchronous learning the other half of the day. Students in the virtual learning model attend school full time in the virtual model. Our virtual model consists of a mixture between synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. In the event that our building was closed due to COVID, all hybrid model students participated in a full time virtual model of learning during the time of the closure.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Derry Township School District is an award-winning public-school system located in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Our community enjoys a legacy that began with founder Milton S. Hershey. The district serves approximately 3,400 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade residing in Derry Township, Dauphin County. Our 114-acre campus hosts Hershey High School, Hershey Middle School, and Hershey Elementary School - home to our students in Grades K-5. Specifically, Hershey Primary Elementary School consists of second and third grade students and staff. Our Primary students and staff are housed in one main elementary building structure with other grades K-5, but are considered a different “building” in state reporting. While our classroom teachers are assigned specifically grades 2 and 3, many of the support staff including special education, intervention, counselors, and essentials arts teachers work with students throughout grades K-5. All of our schools have exemplary facilities, curriculum, faculty, administrators, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs. Annually more than 90% of our graduating seniors pursue post-secondary education. Our collective goal is to be a model for how public education should - and can - function.

To launch students successfully into the 21st Century, the Derry Township School District believes that effective collaboration among home, community, and school is essential. We have a strong community partnership and value the input and collaboration of our stakeholders. Our primary elementary building continues open lines of communication through a Building Advisory Team composed of parent representatives and administration, as well as monthly Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings where all community members are welcome to engage in learning and dialogue focused on our school.

Learning within the entire school community is optimal when all who enter feel physically and emotionally safe and secure and all children are given meaningful encouragement, guidance, support, instruction, and an opportunity to connect with at least one significant adult. In order to encourage and challenge all students to develop their full potential, high expectations are held for all. Our building implements a positive school wide behavior (PBIS) system to teach and develop our young learners in skills related to social and emotional learning as well as academic learning. A PBIS team that is formed by staff regularly analyzes student and staff data focused on the key components of an effective school wide PBIS system. The team continues to identify strengths and areas of growth for our school wide PBIS while continuing to keep the vision and goal of fostering and promoting a safe, positive, and respectful environment in which all students are able to achieve social, emotional, and academic success in view. In addition to our school PBIS team, we have a team of staff that collaborate on analyzing the Social and Emotional learning (SEL) needs and structures in our school, and then further developing our SEL curriculum. We have utilized the Second Step program as a tool to enhance the SEL curriculum for several years. In addition, this year we formed a team to continue to learn together and develop further structures and instructional opportunities to help our students transition and be successful in the school environment after their world was drastically changed due to the COVID19 pandemic.

We believe that systemic change is necessary for continuous improvement. Our building and district has begun to focus professional learning opportunities around offering equitable experiences for all students. All staff are engaged in professional learning communities (PLC) and discussions on curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions that are based on research, evidence, and best practices. Our staff work collaboratively with each other, instructional coaches, and building leadership to have continual discussions focused on the 4 questions of a PLC, “ What do we want all students to know and be able to do, How will we know if they learn it, How will we respond when some students do not learn, and How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?” From these ongoing discussions and reflections, teachers participate in regular reflection and facilitate instruction and learning that is ever improving with learning opportunities that are high in rigor, relevance, and engagement. Through the structures we are developing and ones that we have in place to support positive behavior supports and strategies, social and emotional learning for students and adults, and professional learning communities focused on student learning we begin to make strides towards a more equitable learning environment for all students.

Schooling models across the world have had to pivot many times to address the new challenges and needs that have surfaced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff, students, and community have taken these challenges in stride, and tirelessly worked together to provide the best possible instructional opportunities during these unprecedented times. In the initial onset of this pandemic, we had to pivot on a dime when our schools were shut down for in person learning without notice. Learning did not stop. Our community, staff, and students rallied together and were able to offer an emergency remote learning model for students to ensure a successful end to the 19-20 school year. We then continued to work together to re-design education as it has traditionally been to offer learning models that addressed the needs during this pandemic. We have continued with in person learning for our elementary students with an in-person hybrid model and have also developed a fully virtual elementary program where students who were unable or uncomfortable attending the in person model still had access to the learning and curriculum through a fully virtual model. The learning model is just a piece of what our school has had to plan for to ensure the educational experience for students with keeping with our school vision and mission, while ensuring the continued health and safety of our students and staff.

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

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

Elementary students are instructed in core curriculum and content focused in the areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The process of developing and aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment is a systematic process that starts at the district level. Our district curriculum council includes representation from the elementary building. This team focuses on the areas of curriculum articulation, grade reporting, assessment, various educational programs, and classroom requirements for rigor and relevance in the classroom. The discussions and direction from the district level ensure consistency and vertical alignment from our elementary level to the high school level. In addition, we have five elementary instructional coaches on staff that work closely with all elementary teachers to develop curriculum, instruction, and assessments in each of these areas that is directly aligned with the Pennsylvania State Standards.

All teachers collaborate in discussions and learning through professional learning communities (PLCs). These PLCs follow a continuous cycle of improvement and focus on a line of questioning centered around curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

Our school follows a Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model. We provide tiered intervention in the areas of reading and math. After the administration of our benchmark assessments, Intervention Planning Meetings are held. These occur four times a year. The team includes the assistant principal, school counselor, school psychologist, math coach, literacy coach, and classroom teacher. This is an opportunity for the team to look at the teacher's class data and ensure that the students are supported in all areas of academics and social-emotional well-being. Data is collected throughout the year for students at risk and reviewed at these meetings.

In the area of reading, Acadience is given to grades K-5 as our benchmark assessment. Students who do not meet benchmark are progress-monitored weekly with the appropriate measure. Additional diagnostic testing is done with students in intervention. These assessments include probes from Really Great Reading such as the Beginning Decoding Survey, Advanced Decoding Survey and Phonological Awareness Survey. Teachers in grades K-5 are using the core program Open Court. This program provides systematic, explicit phonics instruction, word analysis, vocabulary, comprehension strategies and skills, grammar and writing. In response to the unusual schedule this year, teachers dedicated a majority of their instructional time to phonics, word analysis and comprehension. The literacy coaches supported the teachers by prioritizing the strategies and skills focused on each lesson. Teachers used the lesson assessments to collect data on the students' progress. SeeSaw was utilized by all teachers to provide students with a variety of tasks to practice and apply their skills. For example, second grade teachers would upload a decodable story that included the new phonics skill. Students would record themselves reading the story and submit it to the teacher. Due to our hybrid schedule, teachers were limited in their time. This was a way they were able to hear each student read and give them feedback. SeeSaw also provided teachers with ongoing opportunities for formative assessments.

In the area of math, Acadience is given to Kindergarten students and STAR Math is given to students in grades K-5 as our benchmark assessment. Students who do not meet benchmark are progress-monitored weekly with the appropriate measure. Additional testing based on specific math skills that align with the PA State Standards is also done with students in intervention to track their progress. Teachers in grades K-5 are using the Everyday Math program as a tool for instruction. The math coaches have worked with teachers to identify essential standards and have rearranged some of the lessons to provide students with the opportunity to master each concept. Virtual teachers have sent home math bags with each student to provide tools for learning. Students are assessed on essential standards and data is collected on student progress. Working in small groups allows teachers to gather accurate data. Teachers use that data to make instructional decisions, ensuring that all students continue to learn and grow. Tier 2 intervention groups have been created for students that need additional support in pre-requisite skills in order to be successful in the next grade level. Student data is continuously monitored, and instructional strategies are changed based on that data. Based on our hybrid schedule, intervention is all virtual. Intervention teachers have created math bags to send

home with tier 2 students that include tools for learning such as counters, ten frames, number grids, cards, and clocks. These hands-on tools allow students to learn skills at the concrete level first, then representational through interactive digital tools and finally at the abstract level.

For the core instructional areas of science and social studies, we utilize curriculum and instruction that follow the Pennsylvania State Standards. Our science curriculum is supported by the FOSS science program materials. Students engaged in hands on investigations and experimentation through the scientific process. Social Studies instruction and curriculum is support through a mixture of resources including the Nystrom Social Studies program and integration of social studies content and standards addressed through our English-language arts stories and program.

**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:**

All essential arts classes in Derry Township School District support the mission, "Engaging all students every day to help them achieve their greatest potential as global citizens." The essential arts classes follow a six-day cycle having one essential arts class per day for forty minutes. Physical Education classes happen twice a cycle.

Derry Township School District's art programs encourage all students to communicate, collaborate, and create through making art. The district art curriculum empowers student learners to build a strong foundation in art history, art production, art skills and knowledge. The curriculum framework is built upon experiences in drawing, painting, and three-dimensional design on all levels to include grades one through twelve. These young artists will be prepared for real world challenges through skills gained in critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration.

The primary goal of physical education in grades K-5 is to develop students' fundamental movement skills within a variety of developmentally appropriate activities. The program enhances students' personal fitness and provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in a variety of physical activities. Personal and social responsibility, self-directed learning, and problem-solving skills are reinforced throughout the physical education curriculum.

In our elementary schools, students receive comprehensive classroom music education in grades kindergarten through five. Students learn to sing, perform, compose, create, movement, folk dance, and experience music through a variety of classroom activities. Additionally, students in grades four and five have the opportunity to participate in our instrumental music program (both band and orchestra) and choir.

We recently added a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) special that is offered to all students at the elementary level. This class ensures that all students have access to engaging and rigorous activities in a collaborative setting. The course is designed to take students through a variety of technology topics and engineering tasks. Students are taught the importance of creativity, communication, and critical thinking while developing problem solving skills and fostering resiliency.

The library curriculum is designed to empower students to accomplish the following: consume information critically, enhance their love of literature and reading, research skillfully, and use information ethically and productively. With heightened demands for critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, our learners must develop relevant skills to succeed in our information-rich society. All learners must be able to access high-quality information from diverse perspectives, make sense of it to draw their own conclusions or create new knowledge, and share their knowledge with others. The curriculum framework is

standards-based and built upon the Model Curriculum for Pennsylvania School Library Programs, which draws on the PA Core Standards, the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, and ISTE Standards.

Guidance and counseling services are offered to all students at Derry Township School District, utilizing a comprehensive developmental approach. The counselors are Certified Professional School Counselors who have the unique opportunity to follow students through the elementary career. Students will have the same counselor in grades 2-5. Counselors provide services in the following areas: academic development, personal/social development, and career development. Services are provided through individual and small group counseling, developmental classroom guidance lessons and academic screening and assessment. Counselors support teachers, support staff and parents and coordinate services outside of the school setting to assist students and families in need.

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

We utilize a multi-tiered system of support for all students in the areas of reading and mathematics. Data is reviewed during PLC meetings, data review meetings and Intervention Planning Meetings (IPM) by the instructional teams. Interventions are planned based on the data. IPMs are held four times a year to review student progress, ensuring that the current classroom interventions and supports are appropriate for meeting student needs. Data review meetings intentionally take place prior to IPM meetings so the data review team can discuss specific students who may not be appropriately placed or responding to intervention. Data review is also used to check progress monitoring fidelity. The IPM team consists of: the principal, assistant principal, school psychologist, school counselor, instructional coaches, intervention specialists, and classroom teacher. Prior to the IPM team meetings, classroom teachers are asked to identify students who are having behavioral difficulties within the classroom, in addition to struggling in reading and/or math. During IPM meetings, together, the team discusses student learning and collectively develops an intervention plan for each student. Interventions may be delivered in the classroom by a specialist, learning support teacher, or even by the classroom teacher with professional development and a replacement curriculum that is more intensive than the core. All interventions have a focus on the essential content standards in each subject area and utilize the individual learning needs of the students as a guide for providing the best intervention for the student. To support this model and instructional fidelity, the district employs five instructional coaches. Two coaches focus on English Language Arts, two coaches focus on Mathematics, and one instructional coach focuses on instructional technology.

At-risk students in kindergarten through fifth grade receive intervention from the classroom teacher and an intervention specialist. We have ten intervention specialists to support this model. Intervention groups change based on (1) the skill being taught, (2) student progress, and (3) data review meetings.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program aims to develop linguistic competency for students, with limited English proficiency. The goal of the program is to provide students with the language skills needed to actively participate in social and academic settings. Support and intensive instruction are provided to enable students to become successful in content classes. Emphasis is placed on the four domains of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing addressed through content-based instruction in an ESL class.

Special Education is planned instruction specifically designed to address the educational and related developmental needs of children with disabilities. A plan is designed through a team approach, in which an IEP is developed to enable the student to make progress by addressing their individual needs. This includes Early Intervention Services for pre-school-age students starting at three, as well as services for school-age children in grades K-5.

The Derry Township School District provides gifted educational opportunities for qualifying students. Students who are evaluated and identified as gifted, according to Pennsylvania Chapter 16 Regulations, may require instruction and support that is matched to their unique abilities and needs. Specially designed instruction for gifted students is individualized and may take various forms both within and outside of the regular classroom.

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

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

After our forced building closures in March 2020, we specifically planned for a re-opening in the fall to address the social and emotional toll that the pandemic has had on our students and staff. The first weeks of school were spent with focus on re-establishing routines, structures, and social-emotional learning throughout the district for all students K-12.

Our school has always maintained a focus on classroom communities, but this year we added morning meetings which are a meaningful way our school engages, motivates, and provides students with a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth. During morning meetings, each day of the week is focused on a CASEL (Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning) standard: Mindful Monday (mindfulness), Take Charge Tuesday (responsibility), Wise Wednesday (self-aware), Thoughtful Thursday (socially aware and thankful), and Friendly Friday (being a friend and practicing kindness). Sharing, activities, and messages were mindful of including digital resources that were able to be adapted to in person or online instruction. Morning Meeting is a purposeful time to establish positive connections and relationships within our classroom community. This structured time works to strengthen students' academic, social, and emotional skills throughout the year while engaging students with fun greetings, sharing prompts, and activities.

In addition, we teach social and emotional learning skills throughout the year through dedicated weekly lessons focused on these important skills. Utilizing the Second Step program as a resource, students learn and practice skills related to skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and bullying prevention. These are all skills and strategies that students will use to effectively manage their own emotions and build positive relationships.

Our Elementary School Counselors provide developmentally appropriate lessons that meet the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) domains of social/emotional development, career development and academic development. Students in the hybrid classrooms receive 30-minute classroom lessons that engage students in interactive activities and discussions. Students in the virtual classrooms have learning through a virtual Counseling office that includes monthly lesson topics that have interactive videos, student check in opportunities, a calming room of strategies and activities. The lessons are skill based or skill awareness at the elementary level that eventually leads to understanding their individual skills (strengths).

We ensure our students' academic engagement and overall well-being through a student support team of the assistant principal, school counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, and district social worker. If students are not participating in their synchronous learning, asynchronous activities, or demonstrating a greater need for support, the team reaches out to the students, families, and other members of the team. If needed, the team submits a referral to our school assistance team in order to support the student and family by connecting them with outside agencies for more support.

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

Prior to the start of the school year, the district created a pandemic task force to include stakeholders from the district and community to discuss information and plan for the school year in response to COVID. This task force works closely together in developing and maintaining our school health and safety plan for this 2020-2021 school year.

Communication and the utilization of a digital learning platform was another area that we focused on this school year to be able to respond to the needs and learning environments as a result of COVID. We began using a common platform for all students and staff to use in kindergarten through 5th grade. This platform allows for parents to collaborate and communicate with teachers and support their students' learning. Families are involved in the educational experience more this year than ever before because they are able to see into the classroom, watch their children learning, and connect with the school faster than using only

email. In addition, the Zoom video conferencing platform is used to host parent teacher conferences, IEP meetings, team meetings, and Title I parent night. By using Zoom, we have seen an increase in parent participation in all of our meetings.

We hold monthly parent teacher organization meetings (PTO), as well as building advisory team (BAT) meetings for building communication and a forum to answer questions. In previous years, we had these meetings in person during the school day. However, this year we needed to host them on Zoom. This allowed for more families to participate as there was not a child-care need and less of an impact on work schedules.

Prior to the start of the school year, the district worked with local daycare providers to give them information, so we could work together to support the students when we were closed or when they were doing asynchronous schoolwork. When we went completely virtual for an extended period from Thanksgiving to the New Year, the district partnered with neighboring churches to provide an option for parents who could not find childcare.

Throughout the summer and school year, the district partners with COCOA Packs, which provides food and other essential items (coats, clothes) for students and families in the district with those needs.

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

Our district is a campus style, and all of our elementary students attend school in the same building. We have eleven teachers in each of second and third grades. This year, we offered four virtual classrooms and seven hybrid classrooms per grade level. Hybrid students attend school in person for an AM or PM session and in asynchronous learning the other part of their day. We have a strong professional culture at a grade and department. Teachers have a variety of supports to help guide them through the year as well as resources for creating better instruction for our students.

A grade level coordinator attends monthly meetings with the administrative team and the Assistant to the Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction to discuss important information about curriculum. Once a month there is also a faculty council meeting where a representative from each grade level and essential arts meets with the elementary administrators to go over concerns and updates. Later that month, all elementary staff have a faculty meeting.

Grade level coordinators facilitate weekly meetings with the assistant principal present as well as other team members to communicate updates and provide collaboration time. Related services staff and special education teachers who support those grade levels attend as well. When we have closures due to COVID or weather, this collaboration continues virtually.

We also have two literacy coaches who support 2nd and 3rd grade teachers and a math coach. Our coaches run professional learning communities (PLCs) on Tuesday mornings and alternate meetings with grade levels to support virtual and hybrid teachers. During these meetings, the coaches lead discussions about curriculum updates and support the grade levels with concerns that have arisen.

To start the year, staff participated in a week of professional development in response to the many changes that COVID has brought. Topics focused on building goals of a new learning platform, social and emotional learning, and effective instruction using technology.

Teachers have the support from a director of technology, technology instructional coach, and building technology technician. Staff participate in collaborative meetings focused around topics of online learning, using technology to engage students, and other ways to support our students this year when our learning environments are much more focused on technology. We also have a science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) teacher who has been a great support as well, especially for those looking to make their virtual and asynchronous lessons more dynamic.

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

Supported by the district leadership team, our elementary school leadership team is composed of a K-5 principal, and three assistant principals. The structure of the elementary administration team changed during this school year when one assistant principal was transferred to another building and we added a temporary role for a Dean of Students. The elementary leadership team is a collaborative group that works closely to support all students and staff. While the roles of a building leader differ each day, this team keeps the focus on goals and vision of the district at the forefront, while supporting the needs of students and staff. This year, an additional focus has been to maintain the health and safety of all of our students and staff, while creating the best instructional plan possible.

While a typical summer break is spent planning and refining school goals for the upcoming school year, an added focus this past summer was ensuring a safe return for our students and staff, while following the safety guidelines that have been passed down from our state level. In addition to these plans, we had to work to restructure the typical learning models at our building to accommodate for two new learning environments and created several different master schedules to be prepared for the fall. Our school model as we typically had known it was changed in a few weeks to offer the best learning environments we could under the COVID circumstances. The elementary administrative team worked tirelessly in planning over the summer, and then continued to work with all teachers and staff as we began the school year. We spent all of the summer planning for all possible scenarios, yet as the year progressed, we continued to work together as unforeseen issues arose.

We went from being able to offer in person instruction for all students, to creating a virtual learning model and hybrid learning model where in person instruction was able to be offered half of the time. Teachers worked closely to then have conversations on how to identify the most essential skills and standards to teach when students were in person, versus other skills and standards that could be addressed in asynchronously learning. Instructional coaches and teacher leaders were imperative in supporting these discussions and collaboration to ensure that all of our staff members were able to offer consistent instruction in all of our learning models.

COVID added an extra layer to everything we do, yet we also stayed focused on students and ensuring they have the best educational experience possible while keeping them safe and healthy. Without the strong team that we are so fortunate to work with, our school year could have looked very different.

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

Our district has a board policy that relates explicitly to the diverse needs and background of our students. This policy prioritizes the principle of educational equity through the fair and just allocation of resources, opportunities and treatment of students based upon each individual student's needs. The pursuit of educational equity requires the continuous and collaborative effort of identifying various aspects of District programs and operations in which consideration of educational equity shall be analyzed, incorporated and prioritized. To facilitate educational equity for all, the District shall be committed to promptly identifying and addressing barriers that impact achievement and/or opportunity gaps for students and ensuring that a student's educational achievement is neither predicted nor predetermined by explicit or implicit biases. Each school employee is expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the principles of this policy and for fostering a school climate that is equity focused and culturally responsive. The district has (and will continue to) receive support in the form of training regarding cultural competency, cultural proficiency, cultural responsiveness, implicit bias, explicit bias, diversity and inclusion to further meet the needs of all of our students.

Our school ensures that we are addressing the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff through the systems that we have in place with our positive school wide behavior systems, professional learning communities that collaborate and have discussions based around specific student data practice, and multi-tiered systems of support for all students in both academic and social/emotional areas. In addition, our community involvement with families

through PTO and BAT allow for continuous improvement in these areas and collaboration and feedback from our community. This area is one that is continuously being evaluated and can improve.

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

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The one strategy that has had the most impact over time and was key to our continued success during the educational changes and challenges that we began experiencing in March 2020 was our teacher collaboration and focus on instruction through professional learning communities.

All staff are engaged in professional learning communities (PLC) and discussions on curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions that are based on research, evidence, and best practices. Our staff work collaboratively with each other, instructional coaches, and building leadership to have continual discussions focused on the 4 questions of a PLC, “What do we want all students to know and be able to do, How will we know if they learn it, How will we respond when some students do not learn, and How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?” From these ongoing discussions and reflections, teachers participate in regular reflection and facilitate instruction and learning that is ever improving with learning opportunities that are high in rigor, relevance, and engagement.

When our schools were closed in March 2020, the “normal” way of learning for our students and staff changed in an instant. We were challenged with continuing the education of our students, in a situation that did not allow us to see them in person. During this time, the PLC discussions focused on identifying the essential skills and standards that our students needed to know to finish up the school year and be successful in the next grade. We had to streamline our instruction and provide it in new ways through the virtual world. PLCs then focused discussion on vertical articulation and ensuring that skills and standards were aligning in each grade level.

As we began the school year in August 2020, we continued to have a different learning model with students attending a hybrid model of learning. There was a mix of asynchronous and synchronous learning and PLC discussion continued to focus on what areas of the curriculum were essential to student learning and success, as well as what assessments would help us to know what students were achieving and how we needed to change our instruction.

Without the PLC structure, we would not have had the consistency and success to ensure that every student was offered the same experience, and the focus on essential learning would have looked different among different classrooms.