

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

Official School Name Raymond C. LaPerche Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 11 Limerock Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Smithfield State RI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 02917-1903

County Providence County

Telephone (401) 231-6652 Fax (401) 231-1141

Web site/URL https://rles.smithfield-ps.org/ E-mail jdorsey@smithfield-ps.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Judith Paolucci E-mail jpaolucci@smithfield-ps.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Smithfield Public School District Tel. (401) 231-6606

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. Virginia Harnois
(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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 6 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	26	51
1	15	20	35
2	31	19	50
3	11	23	34
4	25	26	51
5	23	23	46
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	130	137	267

*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 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 85 % White
 - 4 % 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: 4%

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	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	253
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Spanish, Gujarati, Portuguese, and Uzbekistan

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
5 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 19

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %

37 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>9</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9

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.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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

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

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

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

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

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

The promise of Raymond C. LaPerche School is that "Every student will be prepared for continued learning, career, and life." In partnership with families and the community, LaPerche School seeks to create a rich learning environment enabling students to become confident and effective communicators, proficient readers, critical thinkers, and life-long learners.

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.

Raymond C. LaPerche School has offered in-person instruction five days a week since the first day of school on September 14, 2020. They also offered a full virtual option (VO) for students in all grades. Families could choose either option.

The classroom teachers posted a daily schedule that included videos and assignments. Additionally, the district hired virtual tutors who worked with the VO students for an hour a day; 30 minutes of live reading instruction and 30 minutes of live math instruction. The classroom teachers met with the VO students twice a week and invited them to join the classroom during special events.

In January 2021, the district hired additional virtual tutors to increase the live instruction for VO students to 2 hours a day, including one hour of live ELA instruction and one hour of live math instruction.

If a student wanted to return to in-person instruction, the family needed to let the principal know by Wednesday of the week prior. She would inform the classroom teacher, secretary, school nurse, and district leadership to organize bussing and space and materials in the classroom.

They have continued to offer full in-person instruction 5 days a week all year except for three days

before winter break and the week following winter break, where the whole school moved to distance learning. As of April 2021, the school has 11 students who remain learning virtually.

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

LaPerche is a small, quaint neighborhood school where onlookers find multi-generations of families who have attended. It is not uncommon to see a LaPerche alum (parents, grandparents, visitors) pointing out their former third-grade classroom or the name of a favorite teacher when visiting. Best friends who met at LaPerche decades ago often share stories about their time at LaPerche with their children who are current students. When the school celebrated 50 years of educating children, fourth-graders delighted in the opportunity to interview former students. The captain of the Smithfield Police Department, graphic designers, a local chef, and current LaPerche teachers were eager to share special memories. These former students reminisced about their favorite teachers and friends they've kept in contact with. LaPerche alumni are proud of their school!

Raymond C. LaPerche School holds all students to high expectations. One of the qualities that mark LaPerche and make it so special is the emphasis on leadership and public speaking starting in Kindergarten. Here at LaPerche, we believe that public speaking boosts self-esteem, communication skills, and strengthens relationships, as well as, develops students' critical thinking, and enhances the overall learning experience of each student. All students are provided with a variety of public speaking opportunities throughout their entire elementary career. Students in kindergarten lead the class in the foundations sounds, share their writing and ask for feedback, and speak to a large group during the kindergarten celebration. Our kindergarten and third-grade classes team up for poetry night where they read their own poetry to the crowd. Starting in third grade, students lead small reading and math groups. Fourth-grade students serve on the recycling team and give a weekly report card to each classroom explaining their score on each recycling expectation. The fifth-grade students all serve on the student council which rotates leaders monthly. The student council leads the school-wide morning meeting each day where they greet the school, reteach expectations, celebrate upcoming events, shout out birthdays and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Pre pandemic, this daily meeting was held in person before the school day began. In April 2020, the principal met with the student council each afternoon to record the morning meeting which was shared with all LaPerche families at the start of each day. Since September 2021, the fifth-grade teams have led the meeting over the intercom for the in-person students, while live-streaming to virtual friends. During our bi-monthly Town Meetings, classrooms sign up to perform in front of the entire school as they reteach expectations or share information about a topic they are passionate about. The entire school community benefits from the student leadership and presentation opportunities creating a culture of community and collaboration.

In addition to being academically strong, LaPerche students focus on being physically and mentally fit. Raymond C. LaPerche is a Recess Rocks RI school. Recess Rocks RI is a partnership among Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Playworks New England, and Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition. A team of educators from Raymond C. LaPerche School attended the training and returned to school to revamp and revitalize their recess space and activities. The students worked together to fundraise money for a rock wall for the gym. In 2020, they added a morning yoga class and continue to expand their outdoor garden.

Raymond C. LaPerche School has extensive green space. The outdoor garden has been a part of the school for years and continues to expand into new areas. The students grow and harvest strawberries, enjoy outdoor learning in the classroom space inside the garden, and In March 2020, 14 raised beds were added with the expectation of planting in April 2020. Due to the pandemic, planting was moved to April 2021, when the students planted spinach, carrots, beets, peas, and broccoli. Students will harvest these vegetables before leaving school as well as sign up to work in the garden during the summer months. All students and families will have access to the fresh food produced in the garden throughout the summer.

Starting in March 2020, Raymond C. LaPerche School has been under construction rendering the playground, blacktop, and play fields inaccessible. Understanding the importance of physical activity and access to outdoor spaces, the principal and custodians sectioned off an unused field into 13 pods using different colored survey flags and silt fences. Following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the outdoor pods were spaced 14 feet from each other. Classrooms were each assigned an outdoor space which they utilized for a variety of outdoor activities including reading stations,

math games, snack, lunch, recess, and science experiments. The district purchased each educator a wireless, portable voice amplifier they could wear inside or outside the building to ensure all students access their voice despite wearing a mask. At any time that students needed a break from indoors, teachers have a designated space available. In September of 2022, LaPerche will welcome the district preschool program and become a pre-K-5 school.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Raymond C. LaPerche School enrolls students in grades kindergarten through grade 5. Although this school has been open for in-person instruction five days a week since the first day of school on September 14, 2021, families were also provided the option of engaging in virtual instruction. Approximately 20% of Raymond C. LaPerche students have participated in the virtual option. As of April 2021, only 11 students remain in the virtual option. All students at Raymond C. LaPerche utilize Chromebooks to engage in each curriculum area fully.

The elementary curricula include English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, music, art, library, and health/PE. The school is committed to the implementation of high-quality curriculum materials. This year, the teachers embraced the use of ReadyGen, a new English Language Arts program, which is rated “all-green” according to EdReports. The online platform has contributed to the success of the various methods of instruction that are being employed in this pandemic year and was utilized by the classroom teachers and the virtual tutors. The district hired virtual tutors who instructed the virtual students in reading, writing, and math following planning shared by the grade level teams. In addition, the instructional units incorporate science and social studies content to build the background knowledge that their students need to excel in future years.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the priority focus was on mathematics instruction. Although the teachers had been implementing the mathematics curriculum for several years, they were concerned with the rigor of the assessments and the lack of their students’ conceptual understanding. By conducting a series of walkthroughs and data analysis, the administrative team validated this concern. The principal then led the faculty through a series of short cycles of inquiry following the plan-do-study-act methodology to address these concerns. Specifically, teachers collaboratively examined common assessments and completed looking-at-student work-protocols to determine the next steps for instruction for individual students and small groups. Also, the principal reinforced the essential components of each mathematics lesson, including quick checks, problem of the day, building conceptual understanding, guided practice, and then independent practice with opportunities for feedback. The school used the Instructional Practice Guide developed by Student Achievement Partners to ensure that the essential components and associated pedagogy that reinforced the mathematical practices outlined in the Common Core State Standards were being implemented. The staff was able to see their progress through walkthrough data collected and graphically represented throughout the year.

The elementary science curriculum is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards. FOSS science kits engage students in hands-on investigations allowing them to put the science and engineering practices into action. The only change due to the pandemic is that students have their own materials instead of sharing.

LaPerche employs a comprehensive assessment system to monitor the health of core instruction and identify students in need of additional supports or enrichment. Students in grades 1-5 are screened three times per year using STAR Reading and STAR Math. The STAR assessment is an online assessment that was also given pre-pandemic. It was also given to the VO students, who were monitored by the reading specialist throughout the virtual testing period.

Students in kindergarten are screened using early literacy and early numeracy measures. The kindergarten teachers developed an online version of these assessments to be continued with students in the virtual option. The common assessments articulated in the curricula continue to be administered to all students and analyzed by grade-level teams. During the 2020-2021 school year, the looking-at-student-work protocol has been expanded to ELA to assist with calibration and ReadyGen implementation.

Although students in grades 3-5 successfully utilize Google Apps for Education to submit work and receive feedback from teachers, it was challenging to ascertain younger students’ thinking and understanding of grade-level concepts when learning virtually. The K-2 teachers at Raymond C. LaPerche School swiftly

implemented SeeSaw in April of 2020, an online platform that allows students to demonstrate and share learning through audio and video recordings and by taking pictures of their work. Teachers can now listen to individual students read and provide feedback to students on a platform shared with families.

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:

In music classes at Raymond C. LaPerche school, students participate physically, socially, emotionally, and creatively while immersed in hands-on music activities. Our elementary music program provides a musical foundation through which students learn to express themselves through singing, playing instruments, active listening, moving, and composing. As students develop their musical skills, they are encouraged to utilize critical thinking and intellectual curiosity to pursue lifelong music learning. During the pandemic, students participated in all areas of music besides singing. The school purchased additional materials and provided each student with a personal music kit instead of sharing materials.

In addition to music classes, the children have the opportunity to perform at various school-sponsored musical events throughout the year, including Winter and Spring performances, Veteran's Day celebrations, local Nursing Home performances, Elementary All-State festivals, and Talent Showcases. Our 5th-grade students participate in a fully immersive concert band experience. Throughout the band experience, 5th-grade children choose an instrument to play, learn to read sheet music and develop technical skills on their instruments. During the pandemic, 5th graders all learned to play the xylophone as wind instruments were not permitted. In all of the music classes at LaPerche, students are exposed to music from various cultures and genres to help deepen their understanding of our global society.

The art curriculum at Raymond C. LaPerche School teaches students foundational skills based on the Elements of Art and the Principles of Design and art history and contemporary art interpretation. They seek to provide updated examples of artists from diverse backgrounds and use the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) line of questioning when asking students to respond to art. Using the VTS method when viewing art, students can form their own opinions and use developmentally appropriate vocabulary to connect with art. Our art curriculum is also deeply connected to the design process beginning in kindergarten! Encouraging the design process in elementary art education leaves our students with more confidence in their own work and helps them practice creative problem-solving skills and find value in self-reflection.

Due to the pandemic, students were not allowed to share materials. Before the school year began, the staff created "art kits," which included materials that could be used for various art-making techniques. This year, outside of art classes, students had the opportunity to participate in virtual paint nights sponsored by the PTA. This year Raymond C. LaPerche School will again celebrate their students' artistic accomplishments via the annual art show, which will now be held virtually with an online "gallery" for each student, and the 5th graders will be presenting their culminating mural project to the school community out on the front lawn!

In health classes, the teacher uses a project-based learning approach combined with hands-on activities to increase students' interest in the content.

In Library Media classes at Raymond C. LaPerche School, students become independent information seekers. They learn to read spine labels, understand the library's layout, and practice using the online catalog to locate books. They also learn crucial research skills, such as what a reliable website looks like and where to find age-appropriate sources. During a research project, students learn how to organize notes, keep track of sources, understand plagiarism, and paraphrase. Students showcase their work digitally through various

Google Apps For Education.

All students at Raymond C. LaPerche School utilize Chromebooks to engage fully with the curriculum. Smithfield Public Schools provides the necessary hardware and software to integrate technology into all aspects of education. Each student in grades preschool through 12 receives a Chromebook. Direct instruction is provided in digital tools, digital citizenship, and typing. Also, technology is appropriately integrated into each curricular area.

3. Academic Supports:

At the heart of Raymond C. LaPerche School, you will find a team of educators who foster the highest quality of teaching and learning with the promise to motivate each child to reach his/her greatest potential. These educators come together to create numerous teams, learning communities, and support systems throughout the year to ensure they uphold this promise.

Raymond C. LaPerche School educators end every school year engaging in grade-level data conversations, where they reflect on classroom and individual student data to determine interventions that are needed for the fall. The team, consisting of the reading specialist, special educators, classroom teachers, and principal, discusses each student and determines what can be put in place (reading interventions, support staff, social group, etc.) for that individual student to continue to thrive the following year. After the team reflects on instruction and interventions, they determine Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 intervention groups and an assessment schedule for the following year to monitor student progress and growth throughout the year. Students attending Extended School Year (ESY) have already been discussed, and summer goals have been created.

When students return in the fall, intervention groups established at the end of last year begin meeting. Included in the school master schedule is a 30-minute daily intervention block where students receive enrichment or intervention. The classroom teachers are getting to know their new students while providing targeted and intensive interventions for those who did not end the previous year at goal. The teacher uses playlists and choice boards to challenge and meet the diverse needs of all students. Students will complete district-wide performance-based assessments during the first few weeks to determine the extent of the summer slide.

At the end of the first benchmarking period, grade-level teams meet again for data conversations, and the cycle begins all over. The team meets to review recently collected data and determine what students need urgent intervention, are at-risk or are at/above benchmark. Who is making progress? Are their social-emotional needs being met? Do we feel their placement and programming are the best fit for them? Would they benefit from specialized instruction? All of these questions are asked and answered to make data-driven instructional decisions. This formal process takes place three times each year, with informal meetings occurring in between and are called data days.

In addition to the special education students serviced through a resource teacher, the school has an Intensive Resource Program and an Intensive Special Education (ISE) program.

The Intensive Resource Program provides students with moderate disabilities the highly structured, small group learning environment needed to make adequate yearly progress in reading, writing, and math. The students in this program have a homeroom like same-age peers and follow the regular education classroom schedule for science/ social studies, lunch/recess, and any special activities. The students are discussed during data conversations, and necessary interventions are put into place.

The Intensive Special Education (ISE) program provides students with significant and multiple

needs a highly structured program with individualized and small group academic instruction outside of the regular classroom setting. They join their grade-level peers in the regular education classrooms for morning meeting, recess, as well as other opportunities in content areas that are appropriate and student-specific. Students within the ISE program receive a multisensory learning environment and intensive individualized support for their academic, functional skills, communication, and other student-specific areas. The growth and progress of the students are discussed at team meetings. There are two ISE classrooms that are split by grade level: kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth grade. An important focus of the ISE program is inclusion to promote friendships with their peers and understanding and acceptance of the differences of each child.

The English Language Learner (ELL) program at LaPerche is small but vital to meeting the needs of the ELL students. The ELL teacher services students in K-12 across 6 schools. She uses the WIDA Screener, W-APT, the ACCESS test, STAR assessments, Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment, grade-level curriculum, and teacher recommendations to tailor instruction and interventions for each student. The students are discussed during data conversations.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Raymond C. LaPerche School Elementary is a fully trained Responsive Classroom school, where students are highly engaged academically and socially. Responsive Classroom (RC) is an evidence-based Social Emotional Learning program focused on creating a classroom and school culture where students feel supported, safe, and ready to learn.

Each day LaPerche begins with a school-wide Morning Meeting run by the fifth-grade student council and principal. During this daily meeting, the student council announces upcoming events, celebrates successes, provides reminders about expectations, and shouts out student and staff birthdays. They end the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Previous to the shutdown, this meeting took place outside or in the cafeteria. Now, the fifth graders use the intercom system to connect with the school as a whole, while our virtual learning students join the morning meeting via a Google Meet. These morning meetings form our foundation of respectful communities and positive school culture.

Classrooms begin each day with their own Morning Meeting incorporating a greeting, sharing, activity, and message. Students are cheerfully greeted each day by their teachers and classmates, get to know each other through sharing, work together in an activity, and then read a message from their teacher. The message may share something the teacher is proud of them for, an area where they continue to grow and make progress, or a zig-zag to the routine. Previous to the shutdown, the meeting took place with students circled on a rug, but now it is circled on the outskirts of the classroom.

Throughout the school day, teachers use RC practices such as Interactive Learning Structures to increase participation and engagement. An Interactive Learning Structure that has taken off at Raymond C. LaPerche School is “Stand Up Hand Up.” The teacher poses a question, provides time for the students to think about their own response, then calls out “Stand Up Hand Up.” All students stand up with their hands up in the air, find a partner, high five hello, and then begin discussing. When they are done, their hands go back up, and they find a new partner to greet and engage with. Students are taught to always say "YES" whenever someone asks to be their partner to ensure all members in their classroom community are being taken care of. Stand Up Hand Up is a powerful structure that allows students to share their thinking, learn from each other, and move at their own pace. Previous to the pandemic, students would high five to connect and now air five.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

LaPerche educators understand the important role the family plays in their child's success. Building trusting relationships between the school and home while inviting parents to be a part of all areas of the school are strategies they have found to be the most successful.

The positive relationship begins with an open-door policy where amazing parents, grandparents, and community members have endless opportunities to volunteer or simply visit. Before volunteering or visiting, individuals meet with the school principal to review school expectations, ask questions and explore opportunities. Of course, all volunteers also need a current BCI on file with the Smithfield Police Department. During the pandemic, volunteers have been invited to help supervise lunch and recess, which occur outside. Teachers meet with parents before, during, or after school to celebrate success and share concerns. Since the Fall of 2020, those meetings have been virtual, but both the family and the school understand the importance of this vital partnership and work together to keep them flourishing.

At LaPerche, you will find families volunteering in the LEAP program (enrichment classes held after school), in the classrooms, visiting for lunch, and serving on various committees.

LaPerche offers LEAP twice a year, in the fall and spring. A LaPerche parent organizes the programs, and instructors include family members, LaPerche teachers, Smithfield middle and high school students, and

local organizations.

You will often find adults volunteering in classrooms during science, where they unpack and set up hands-on materials allowing more time for the teacher to focus on instruction or writing, where many students are looking for help to get started and move to editing, or have a writing conference.

Families are invited to join their child at lunch on any given day, no notice needed, and have expressed how much they learn about their child and their friends by joining the lunch table.

LaPerche students host a yearly celebration where each child greets a volunteer with a flower and escorts to the decorated cafeteria. Each student has the responsibility to serve their volunteer refreshments and the opportunity to share why their volunteer is important to them and the school. The event is a highlight for the students and adults.

Parents and community members are invited to serve on the School Improvement Team, which looks at the goals that have been set and progress towards meeting them. Family input is always appreciated as it often adds a different and important perspective to the goal-setting process. Parents serve on the Garden Committee, which has been instrumental in the continued growth of our outdoor learning space and gardens, and the PTA Board, which works tirelessly to plan engaging events for the students.

Since March 2020, all meetings and events have been held virtually, and even more attendance has been noted. Being able to attend from home has opened the opportunity to so many more families. Families have been invited to visit the classrooms during a virtual open house, share special holiday traditions and expertise via google meet, and join the class as the mystery reader.

In July 2021, the Smithfield School District established the Return to School Committee, which communicated weekly to families about the plan to get students back to in-person learning and keep them there. The committee chair, superintendent of schools, shared a weekly update with families every Friday. On April 16, the superintendent sent out Return to School Report #40. The principal also established a google document that she shared with families. She answered questions families asked, shared information specific to LaPerche, and communicated other important information multiple times a week.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

On March 13, 2020, Raymond C. LaPerche teachers and staff received word that the school was shutting down for an indefinite period of time and to send home what they could. The principal was out of town, and they handled it all by supporting the students and each other as they always do. April school vacation was moved to the following week by the Governor to provide time for schools to prepare to transition to full-distance learning. The educators at Raymond C. LaPerche worked tirelessly and were prepared for material distribution the following week. Paraprofessional teams and the principal worked side by side to distribute materials to all families safely. Throughout the rest of the school year, the district and teacher leaders provided various professional development on everything Google; meet, classroom, slides, and forms. Many pieces of the Google Suite were new to them, but together they made the transition seamless. At least it was seamless in the eyes of the families. Behind the scenes, frustrated, nervous, excited teachers called each other and the principal to vent, cry, celebrate, troubleshoot, and figure out this new type of teaching.

One group of people who made significant gains professionally was the paraprofessional team. Before the shutdown, the paraprofessionals supported students in classrooms, for inclusion opportunities, and in specialized programs. Being virtual opened a whole new world of possibilities, and they all stepped up, albeit nervously, into their new roles. Some paraprofessionals who worked primarily with our intensive population on pre-kindergarten skills were now supporting students with fourth-grade math. Some who were unfamiliar with any of the technology we used were now running small groups on a google meet. The principal scheduled weekly meetings with the paraprofessional team to check-in, hear their concerns, listen to suggestions and make adjustments to their schedules. The teachers supported them every step of the way and were so thankful for the extra support for their students.

The secretary took on the role of enforcer. Each time a student did not show up to a virtual learning session, the teachers texted the secretary, who reached out to the family and reminded them to get on the meet as she helped navigate the process.

Due to the pandemic, the state of Rhode Island created a statewide calendar incorporating additional asynchronous professional development days. The school utilized this valuable time in Spring 2020 and throughout the 2020-2021 school year to provide professional development in addition to collaborative work time for teachers who were tasked with making multiple changes to the curriculum this year.

Knowing that there is limited time for elementary teachers to work collaboratively during the school day, the principal utilizes monthly faculty meetings to provide additional collaboration. This year, grade-level teachers across the district used this time to calibrate common ReadyGEN assessments. Teachers have been appreciative of this time with their colleagues.

The District Professional Development Committee is composed of teachers and administrators who work collaboratively to determine offerings that align with the District Strategic Plan and individual School Improvement Plans. This committee organized professional development focused on trauma-informed practices specific to the pandemic. Raymond C. LaPerche's teachers engaged in this important learning and focused on implementing our new English Language Arts program, ReadyGEN, during the 2020-21021 school year. The professional development was initially offered by the publishers to assist the teachers with acclimating to the materials. Then, the district hired Instruction Partners, content experts and research reviewers, to work with the elementary teachers on ReadyGEN implementation plans. Instruction Partners worked with Collins Writing Approach experts to incorporate Collins Writing with ReadyGEN. Teachers had concerns about the implementation of the writing portion of ReadyGEN, and the infusion of Collins, an approach that teachers had used for two years, solved that concern.

4. School Leadership:

At Raymond C. LaPerche School, the principal is an instructional leader who can be found modeling lessons in classrooms, team teaching an intervention group, or leading social skills classes. She makes student-based decisions while often consulting with educators first. She is always available to the LaPerche staff and creates structures that allow them to be available to each other. In the master schedule, grade level teams have a daily common prep and weekly common planning, ensuring significant time each week to plan consistently and discuss student progress academically, socially, and emotionally. She provides extensive feedback to teachers after observations focused on improving practice to advance student achievement.

Teachers and specialists are invited to serve on curriculum leadership teams charged with researching and piloting programs. The district has recently purchased ReadyGEN, a reading and writing program for elementary students, but not before having teachers at various grade levels pilot it and other programs. The curriculum teams met extensively to weigh the benefits of each program and together chose the one they thought would support teachers and help students achieve at high levels. Educators are encouraged to share best practices with all stakeholders at monthly faculty meetings.

LaPerche special educators carefully review IEP goals and, when a student is not growing academically, find research-based programs they feel will meet the needs of their students. The principal encourages teachers to think outside the box and will find the money to purchase the materials needed for individuals.

During the summer, the district created the Return to School Committee, which was broken into three subcommittees, including the Leadership and Communications Subcommittee, the Instructional Core and Social-Emotional Learning Subcommittee, and the Operations and Resources Subcommittee. The LaPerche principal served on the Instructional Core and Social-Emotional Learning Subcommittee and worked closely with other district stakeholders to ensure a smooth and safe transition back to in-person learning.

The superintendent created a Return to School Report that is shared with the whole school community every Friday, and the principal shared weekly staff notes with all staff members. The principal also shared updates with information specific to LaPerche to families every few days. The new information was dated a d added NBRS 2021

to the top of an ongoing google document. This way, families did not have to search through endless emails to find the new schedule or answers to questions. They could search within one google document. As of April 2021, the document is over 90 pages long.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Raymond C. LaPerche School supports and promotes equity, diversity, social-emotional learning, and teaching empathy; they are committed to continually extending and refining their programming. There is no “stand-alone” initiative or single program. Rather, they work to establish a cohesive approach, weaving culture, diversity, and equity into the fabric of the school. They do this through curriculum materials adoption, professional development, and a variety of programs and initiatives. They take great care in choosing curriculum materials. One example is the recent adoption of our core ELA program that represents diverse cultures and backgrounds and materials that include support for students with learning differences and english language learners. Teachers use the Responsive Classroom program to model and teach empathy and engage in age-appropriate conversations about current events. Responding to misbehavior with empathy builds a strong learning community. Giving students the social emotional tools to make better choices in the future encourages learning and growth.

The district has offered a variety of professional development for teachers in response to current events to help them better understand a variety of perspectives. The art teacher at LaPerche hosted an anti-bias discussion group to provide a safe space for adults to share experiences and ask questions. Prior to the discussion, participants took a race test and shared findings at the meeting. From that discussion, a list of anti-bias teaching resources, including articles, websites, social media accounts, and children’s books, was generated and shared with all staff. The LaPerche principal and assistant superintendent hosted a book club on *White Fragility* and contracted with Nonviolent Schools RI to facilitate. Educators from across the district actively participated and engaged in the important discussions.

LaPerche is the home of the district's elementary Intensive Resource and Intensive Special Education (ISE) Program, where students with significant cognitive or medical needs learn and thrive in an inclusive environment. Both programs are described in detail in part IV, section 3, academic supports. The students in both programs are fully included in the general school environment through daily morning meetings, inclusion in content areas, and weekly social inclusion. Social inclusion is a technique started at Raymond C. LaPerche School to address the social gap between typically developing students and students in our specialized programs. Students need to spend time together socially, playing cooperative games and having fun in order to develop friendships and to feel included. During social inclusion, fifth-graders join the students in the gym for social opportunities. The typically developing students learn how the students communicate (picture symbols, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, sign language) and get to know their interests. Intensive students see typical behavior and social interactions modeled and enjoy learning from peers rather than adults. Reverse inclusion occurs when students in various grades visit the intensive classrooms and read-aloud favorite books, play games, dance, and have fun together. Both opportunities help create a culture where all students are valued for who they are.

During the annual field day for all students, the physical education teacher noticed how the students in the intensive programs had difficulty accessing the stations and were not fully included. Unified Field Day, an annual field day for all the local elementary school-aged students in our intensive programs, was created and occurs annually at Raymond C. LaPerche School. Students in the intensive programs participate alongside a buddy and work at their own pace

through the events. Unified Field Day includes an opening ceremony, parade of athletes, various events, a closing ceremony, and distribution of medals. Our local fire department provides an honor guard, and the LaPerche students are the fans in the stands.

Raymond C. LaPerche School was named a Special Olympics Unified School and received the National Banner in 2019.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The practice that has been the most instrumental to the school's continued ability to successfully educate and support students since school closures began in February/March 2020 is their commitment to the continuity of education for all students. What does that mean? It means that amid an unprecedented year, the school did everything in its power to ensure 2020-2021 was similar to every other outstanding year at LaPerche. Familiar activities and routines not only provided comfort for both children and adults during the pandemic, but also provided consistency during the uncertain times and allowed students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The educators at Raymond C. LaPerche School have a deep understanding of the standards and access to high-quality instructional materials to ensure academic success. All of the curriculum, including the new ELA program, have online components, many of which were used in the classroom prior to March 2020, continued to be used throughout the rest of that school year as well as 2020-2021. Student academic growth depends on ongoing formative and summative assessment opportunities, whereas the teacher and students, if appropriate, analyze errors and determine instructional next steps, all of which continued during the pandemic. Teachers have time to analyze and discuss the data, plan instructional next steps, and fluidly move students in and out of intervention groups as the data and classroom observations dictate. This important work takes place during data days, weekly common planning, daily common prep, use of faculty meetings for assessment analysis, and more and have been in place for years and continued throughout the pandemic.

At LaPerche, they believe developing the social and emotional side of a student is as important as the academic. The school utilizes Responsive Classroom practices as described in part V, Engaging Students. A whole school morning meeting led by the fifth-grade student council continues to kick off each day, albeit over the intercom. Students are still greeted at the classroom door by their teachers, although it is with a socially distanced elbow or floating heart greeting in place of a high five or hug. Redirection, when needed, is still done privately. Reset stations are created in each classroom and provide all students a place to recharge while still being a part of the classroom. The principal and school psychologist continue to teach whole class social skills lessons as well as meet with individuals and small groups of students, socially distanced but just as engaged.

Engaging classrooms continue to be engaging places to learn. Students have their own materials, instead of sharing with a community, as they engage in hands-on experiments or partner math games. Teachers instruct guided reading groups while sitting in the hall instead of at a guided reading table while a support staff works with the rest of the class. Students engage with and learn from partners while sitting on blue arrows spaced 6 feet apart.

Movement is vital to growth. Flexible seating is utilized throughout all classrooms. In a socially distanced classroom, it is simply assigned to an individual instead of open to anyone. Kindergarten teachers incorporated yoga mats into the students' individual space, and first and second-grade students each have a square foam mat leaning against their desk, ready to be deployed. Third through fifth graders use towels from home or sit on top of their desks to change their body position. Go Noodle and other brain breaks are enjoyed while in your own space. Every class has its own green space for breaks, recess, and outdoor learning.

Students are thriving at LaPerche and have been since the doors opened for five days of in-person instruction on September 14, 2021.