

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Center Grove School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 25 Schoolhouse Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Randolph State NJ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 07869-3112

County Morris County

Telephone (973) 361-7835 Fax (833) 617-0371

Web site/URL https://www.rtnj.org/our-schools/center-grove-elementary E-mail mrodas@rtnj.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* Ms. Jennifer Fano E-mail jfano@rtnj.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Randolph Township School District Tel. (973) 361-0808

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Ronald Conti
(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 signatures 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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 for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 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 | 35 | 35 | 70 |
| 1 | 38 | 41 | 79 |
| 2 | 36 | 33 | 69 |
| 3 | 39 | 28 | 67 |
| 4 | 39 | 33 | 72 |
| 5 | 32 | 32 | 64 |
| 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 | 219 | 202 | 421 |

*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
 - 25 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 15 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 56 % White
 - 2 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 5%

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

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

| Steps For Determining Mobility Rate | Answer |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year | 10 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year | 12 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 22 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020 | 468 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.05 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 5 |

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

Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Nepali, Portuguese, Sindhi, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Ukrainian

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 5 %

Total number students who qualify: 23

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 19 %
82 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>14</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>12</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>23</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 10
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 | 2 |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher. | 25 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 14 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 15 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 14 |

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 17:1

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

| Required Information | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| High school graduation rate | 98% | 97% | 96% | 96% | 96% |

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 2021.

| 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.

Center Grove... Our home away from home, where we are free to be curious, respected individuals, inspired learners, and future leaders creating better tomorrows.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=5750&id=f294aed3e8804bec9f8dbd693dbd6eeb>

5750: Equal Education Opportunity

<https://www.straussesmay.com/seportal/Public/DistrictPolicy.aspx?policyid=1550&id=f294aed3e8804bec9f8dbd693dbd6eeb>

1550: Equal Employment/Anti-Discrimination Practices

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Center Grove Elementary School is our home away from home for students, parents, and faculty. Although our school is comprised of families with various religions, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds, our eagle spirit brings us a sense of togetherness. Center Grove (CG) is a unique elementary school because of continuous family support and involvement. Parents are invested in their children’s learning and social-emotional well-being. To further build our community, administrators, teachers, and staff go above and beyond to develop relationships with each family. These connections make Center Grove everyone’s home away from home.

Center Grove students arrive each day with smiles on their faces. They are greeted outside the school, rain, or shine. Upon entering, students are excited to see new pictures on our hallway timeline, which document events that occur each month. As they make their way towards class, students sing and dance as music plays throughout the hallways. Once students enter class, homeroom begins with our 5th grade CG news broadcasters announcing birthdays, special events, noteworthy updates, and leading us in reciting our student-created Center Grove Pledge.

Over the past years, Center Grove has focused on developing the whole child. Throughout conversations, committee meetings, and data analysis, Center Grove has created a culture that supports academics, social-emotional well-being, and cultural differences. The creation of our home away from home did not happen overnight. Staff members gathered as a Steering Committee to discuss communication, celebrations for students, and the connection between Center Grove and our stakeholders. This led to the implementation of the school wide Friday Finale and adoption of the 7 Habits of Happy Kids. Committee members connected each month of school to habits promoting self-regulation, growth mindset, empathy, and leadership. These habits are infused throughout our building on a continuous basis. Our Friday Finale occurs monthly to celebrate the learning and achievements happening in all classrooms. The Finale is managed by our student council and provides opportunities for each grade to present an instructional highlight from the month. Our eagle mascot high fives students as they receive Student of the Month awards tied to the monthly habit. There is no better feeling than hearing our school sing our CG song to kick off the assembly. “Success is a part of our goal each day, we’re Center Grove.”

From the Steering Committee, the Outreach Committee was adopted. Center Grove identified a need to make sure all students were heard and seen. The Outreach Committee conducted a relationship mapping initiative. This process has teachers identify which students they know something personal about to help visualize who was supported and who needed a personal connection. Simultaneously, Center Grove connected with The United Way to conduct surveys of students, faculty, and parents about their overall happiness. Our findings were extremely positive. To further connect students to their home away from home, staff continued enriching curriculum with a focus on social-emotional learning. Classroom teachers worked with our guidance counselor to schedule classroom lessons and discuss student self-regulation. As a building, we were able to identify the needs of our students and address them in a meaningful way.

Throughout the year, students participate in spirit weeks to get themselves involved in the school community. The memories of these weeks live on throughout the school year and beyond. For example, during Read Across America, the students were challenged to reach a reading goal of 120,000 minutes to earn a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) supported reward. This school year, Center Grove students exceeded the goal and will “dunk” our Principal and Vice Principal in a dunk tank. Students are over the moon with excitement and proud of their reading achievement.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought uncertainty across the globe. Here at Center Grove, we didn’t skip a beat. In March 2020, students received live, virtual instruction using Microsoft TEAMS and curriculum-based instruction continued throughout all grades. During this time, we focused on students’ social-emotional well-being. Our Friday Finale went virtual for students to enjoy so they could keep home away from home in their hearts.

In September of 2020, Center Grove began the school year on a hybrid schedule. This allowed students to be in person every other day. On their home instruction day, students logged into live classes, where they could

be active participants. During this time, Special Education students could attend in person learning each day. This hybrid schedule continued until April of 2021. As the COVID pandemic unfolded, our teachers met the students' needs in all settings. Virtual learners were involved in classroom instruction, discussions, and social-emotional work. Beginning the 2021 school year, candidates for virtual instruction were identified by the nurse, who then communicated with the teacher and Principal. Once notified, teachers provided virtual instruction. In-classroom instruction was conducted within the parameters of New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) guidelines. Seating charts were maintained to accommodate contact tracing as required by the NJDOH.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:

Center Grove Elementary School works tirelessly to foster and maintain a positive learning environment that supports students socially, emotionally, and academically. We believe that students thrive here because they are truly at their home away from home. The community understands that our responsibility goes well beyond academics as we focus on the needs of the whole child. When this occurs, one can feel and see how innovative and passionate teachers are because they recognize that each learner is unique. Our practices promote the belief that our one class of 24 children is actually 24 classes of one child. This allows our teachers to develop experiences that promote choice, voice, decision-making, and hands-on learning. By employing these approaches, one can witness classrooms that celebrate student differences while also uniting them in support of one another. Our staff strives to empower and engage students in all subject areas so that they will retain what is learned and transfer their learning into the real world. At Center Grove, we believe our success is attributed to how we account for the needs of our students. When our students encounter different challenges in achieving success, there is an openness to meeting their needs. Our teachers and staff are responsive and flexible. This approach is common in all subject areas as we constantly review the best way to improve student performance. The use of assessment is valuable in guiding instruction and addressing areas of concern in a timely fashion. Student achievement is therefore viewed as a progression with a high focus on individual growth. This mindset benefits both our teachers and students as they understand that their strengths will be highlighted and their areas of struggle met with support, understanding, and compassion. All in all, when we think about our approach to curriculum, we strive to develop a home-like atmosphere so that each child can truly excel socially, emotionally, and academically.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The literacy curriculum at Center Grove is designed to support a student-centered inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning while building upon the requirements outlined by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Students acquire knowledge and develop skills and understanding through cross-disciplinary opportunities which encourage students to read widely and deeply in high quality literature and informational text. Young writers from kindergarten through fifth grade develop an understanding that writing is a way of offering and supporting opinions, demonstrating understanding of new topics they are studying, and conveying real and imagined experiences through narrative genres. Each grade level curriculum embraces reading and writing workshop structures and is intentionally designed year-to-year to build upon each unit of study, fostering rich conversations and powerful thinking to engage the whole child.

The literacy curriculum at Center Grove is designed to build foundational skills alongside authentic reading and writing opportunities for our students. Through play-based approaches and developmentally appropriate practices in kindergarten, students engage in independent, shared, and interactive, reading and writing experiences. These practices foster progress from recognizing environmental print, letter-sound recognition, one-to-one correspondence, and decoding to read for meaning, building fluency and comprehension across content areas.

For our more sophisticated learners, the curriculum is designed to bring about higher levels of synthesis, and to deepen comprehension and critical thinking. In first through fifth grade, students study fiction and non-fiction authors. The use of these genres inspires passion, encourages engagement with historical and social issues and utilizes a repertoire of reading skills to make meaning from complex texts with increasing engagement and comprehension. A strong emphasis is placed on instruction in authentic narrative, argument, essay and informational writing, including feature articles. Students write for genuine purposes, such as storytelling, analyzing literature, teaching others, and offering a unique perspective on a topic. Writers use mentor texts to generate ideas and inspire their craft. Instruction also focuses on improving stamina and the ability to write increasingly complex pieces. This is where Center Grove excels as students

can write about topics in which they are passionate. By offering choice through book clubs, writing clubs, and open workshops, our students develop ownership, collaborative skills, and social responsibility as they navigate sophisticated issues and topics.

Assessment of and for learning happens throughout the reading and writing process using a variety of research-based practices. Assessments, such as running records, whole-book comprehension assessments, conferring notes, small group instruction, kid friendly rubrics, and learning progressions, are some of the ways that teachers and students keep track of growth across a continuum. Teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction daily, and flexibly choose the most appropriate teaching structures and strategies to address the learners' needs. This approach reflects the idea that Center Grove's literacy instruction focuses on the needs of each individual student.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The mathematics curriculum is closely aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and the Standards for Mathematical Practices to provide teachers with a clear framework to help ensure student readiness for college and the workforce. Students acquire knowledge and develop communication and problem-solving skills that serve as a tool to promote lifelong learners that are confident and resourceful thinkers.

In kindergarten and first grade, students gain knowledge of mathematics through rigorous content that includes number sense, counting, addition and subtraction, and place value concepts. The curriculum in these grade levels is designed to foster a natural curiosity in students about mathematics so they feel empowered to think critically and experiment with various problem-solving strategies. Each unit provides opportunities for students to collaborate, discuss, and reflect while problem-solving with real world problems. Students are encouraged to use mathematically appropriate language to construct an argument and support their strategy.

In second and third grades, instructional time builds on the skills and practices from prior grades to support new concepts and advance mathematical mastery. To this end, the focus in second grade is on four critical areas: extending understanding of base-ten notation, building fluency with addition and subtraction, using standard units of measure, and analyzing shapes. Students will solve problems through integration of mathematics, science, and technology to build mathematical literacy. The focus in third grade prepares students for upper grade level concepts, such as: developing understanding of multiplication and division strategies, fractions, and area. Students solve problems through integration of mathematics, science, and technology with the belief that mathematicians should be fluent, flexible, and precise in applying mastered concepts to real world problems.

Fourth grade concepts focus on fraction skills in developing an understanding of fraction equivalence, addition and subtraction of fractions, and multiplication of fractions by whole numbers. In fifth grade, the curriculum focuses on developing fluency with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of fractions and fluency with decimal operations to the hundredths place. Volume is also part of the fifth-grade curriculum.

Instructional practices throughout the grades provides opportunities for students to engage in mathematics in a student-centered environment that supports differentiation. Teaching practices include, but are not limited to, modeling, small group work, use of manipulatives and games, math talks, literature connections, use of technology, and multi-media formats. A diverse approach in instructional practices is the standard used to meet the needs of different levels and different types of learners.

Across the grades, formative and summative assessments are used to gather data about student performance and guide instruction. These approaches take form in teacher observation, tests, projects, and performance tasks. Additionally, assessment is accomplished with student input through self-assessment and reflection opportunities.

The goal of the curriculum is to foster a love of mathematics, engage student interest and intellect, and

support a depth of mathematical knowledge that will develop life-long problem-solvers and future leaders in various careers for the 21st century.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

Our science curriculum is designed to engage students using hands-on, inquiry-based explorations. It has been developed through integration of crosscutting concepts, disciplinary core ideas, and science and engineering practice standards. Students explore phenomena and participate in problem-based learning to formulate answers to questions and engineer solutions relevant to the real world. Students experience the excitement of authentic learning activities and develop a strong understanding of the engineering and scientific processes. In developing these skills, students become independent, lifelong thinkers and learners. Students communicate by sharing theories, original ideas, and findings, which encourages them to take risks and build confidence as learners.

Formative assessments are utilized to gauge progress and further guide instruction. Student-centered rubrics outline learning goals and provide expectations for learning during project-based assessments. Teachers create experiences for learning, which encourage student engagement and the opportunity for students to share the knowledge attained throughout units of study. For example, kindergarteners study animals in their habitats and host a “zoo” to share their knowledge. In addition, the third grade students host a Cardboard Challenge to conclude their force and motion unit to teach the other grades about the importance of forces in arcade style games. The fourth grade hosts an annual Wonder Museum where students present their research based on a “wonder” they researched. Our school vegetable and perennial garden is used by many grade levels to reinforce curriculum and create a sense of community and environmental stewardship. Recently, a team of teachers and administrators applied for a grant with Bosch which allowed for garden expansion as well as the purchase of hydroponic towers to teach sustainability. Each grade level is invited to grow a crop of lettuce for all students to enjoy at lunch. Teachers and administrators at CG create opportunities for students to make connections between science concepts and present-day situations and issues.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

At Center Grove we utilize our district’s curriculum which is aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The primary purpose of social studies is to provide a supportive and academically rigorous environment that produces active critical thinkers and productive, civically competent participants in society. Students are given the opportunity to develop their own sense of place in our school community, the Randolph community, state, nation and global society. Students will pursue individual goals as they develop an understanding of self, the diverse community of which they are a part, and their connection to the goals and interests of the global community and planet Earth. The digital age has transformed social studies education, allowing 21st century learners to transcend the limits of time and place and experience historic events virtually.

Collaborative, authentic, and student-centered lessons promote a sense of community, acceptance, positive social interactions, and problem-solving skills. Students learning about the history of Randolph tour the numerous historic sites in our community. Other students learn about different holidays that people celebrate around the world by researching diverse cultures and participating in a "world tour." In fourth grade, classes are enriched through a tour around the "United States." Students often persuade their parents to visit one of the learned tour stops on their next vacation. Fifth grade students tour historic sites in Philadelphia after learning about the forming of our nation. In addition, the PTO funds culturally enriched assemblies that support the curriculum.

Formative and summative assessments are used to ensure understanding of concepts taught. Students show what they know by creating individual and group projects, such as developing a museum of Lenape Native American artifacts, giving class presentations on explorers, and designing brochures and billboards. Overall, the importance of community, respect of differences, diversity, and tolerance are embedded in the curriculum.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Center Grove, students in music and art specials practice critical thinking skills, develop empathy, and explore the inner worlds of artists. Students create and develop appreciation for music with hands on instrumentation and diverse musical works. Observational drawing, pre-planning, and a variety of media including ceramics, animation, and fiber arts are utilized. Art emphasizes the process of creating art and builds on prior experiences. There is a focus on interpreting contemporary art from diverse voices and understanding other cultures through artmaking. Teachers emphasize responsibility through care of the classroom, resource centers, and open artmaking activities that feature student-led art classes. Our art and music teachers collaborate with staff to create arts experiences that reinforce learning in the classroom. Students have one sixty-minute block of art and music each week. In fourth grade students may participate in chorus and strings while in fifth grade there is an additional offering of band lessons and ensemble.

Students expect diverse challenges in physical education (PE). Each year, new activities such as Pickleball, are introduced that present new ways to reinforce hand/eye coordination and get kids moving. Exercise and active play are lifelong skills our students acquire in PE. A yearly highlight is the Speed Challenge Jump Roping Club. Students aspire to jumping goals and work towards achieving them by the end of the year. PE generates interest and love for fitness and having fun while being active. All students have two sixty-minute blocks of physical education and health each week.

In library media, students utilize technology and literacy to engage with sustainability, environmental activism, digital citizenship, and robotics. Students might code a character to teach digital citizenship or program robots to save earth's resources after reading stories on those topics. Students have designed stakes for the garden and use the design process to solve problems, such as how to clean plastic from our oceans. Our media specialist collaborates with teachers to teach or reinforce technology skills and literary genres being taught and promotes diverse books within school and classroom libraries. Students attend library media classes for thirty minutes per week in kindergarten and first grade and sixty minutes per week in grades two through five.

Character building programs are facilitated monthly by our school counselor. She visits classrooms to present lessons on topics such as feelings, coping skills, conflict resolution, growth mindset and friendship. She periodically reaches out to teachers to conduct needs assessments and creates monthly classroom counseling lesson schedules with topics that truly benefit students. Our guidance counselor's dynamic scheduling allows her to meet student needs as they arise. Students are given the tools to help them cope with daily struggles.

Outside of specials, Middlebury software is utilized to teach interactive Spanish, Chinese, German, and French lessons in classrooms. Additionally, students are invited to participate in popular afterschool programs including Maker Space, Art club, Garden club, K-Club (Kiwanis), Student Council, and TREP\$. TREP\$ is a comprehensive project-based entrepreneurship curriculum that fifth-grade students choose to participate in every year.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Education is constantly evolving. Teaching grade-level expectations and promoting learning for all students comes with challenges. At Center Grove, our focus is to help all students, including those performing below grade level, maximize their learning through tiered levels of support. This can include using differentiated strategies within the whole class, to recommend intervention services like Basic Skills Instruction (BSI) or

Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS).

Differentiating instruction means that teachers observe and understand the differences and similarities among students and use the information to plan instruction. To differentiate instruction, teachers at Center Grove are continually working to understand and respond to each student's learning needs. In doing this, teachers maximize the comfort level of their students, which in turn, will maximize output even for those struggling.

Research has shown the importance of providing intervention for struggling or at-risk students. Through our BSI program at Center Grove, the interventionists focus on improving the student's specific area of need through intentional small group instruction, using a multi-sensory approach. Communication, monitoring, and assessment of the students' progress is ongoing. It is the goal of the interventionists to have students integrate learned strategies that will enable them to be successful in their classroom moving forward.

I&RS is a school-based committee that meets with the purpose of assisting teachers and parents in working with children who are experiencing academic and/or social-emotional difficulties. The purpose of I&RS is to develop a plan (or refine an existing plan), to equip each child with strategies needed for success in the classroom. If the student needs support through a 504 plan, the team collaborates with key stakeholders to develop appropriate accommodations to be incorporated in the classroom. Meeting the diverse needs of our students is something Center Grove takes immense pride in and works tirelessly to do.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

The National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) provides research support for differentiation for gifted students and identifies gifted learners as students who exhibit specific characteristics. Gifted learners require differentiated content, products, and learning environments. They can process information quickly and make connections across various subjects. They demonstrate a depth of understanding and have a variety of interests.

At Center Grove, teachers' preparation and modifications of assessments, curriculum and instruction are all embedded within how the needs of gifted learners are met. Teachers identify the students' areas of interest and strengths, not just in the classroom but through other methods such as student surveys and individual conferences. Also, suggestions from the students are often considered to incorporate their ideas and have their choice as well as voice heard. Further, teachers actively adjust the pace of instruction to ensure it is consistent with the individual student's progress. The teachers do this through the pre-assessment of skills and ongoing assessments. Teachers also create opportunities for peer-coaching and encourage leadership opportunities. In the classroom, some specific examples include acceleration and enrichment of content by using independent learning activities or centers as extensions within the classroom, offering problem-based learning opportunities, compacting curriculum, and delivering tiered lessons. Providing an alternate activity or ongoing project is a way to enrich gifted learners in class. By engaging our gifted learners, teachers at Center Grove have been able to recognize their unique abilities and potential while enhancing their self-confidence.

Center Grove teachers address the needs of gifted students well. They set elevated expectations, encourage inquiry, and promote ways in which highly gifted students can grow, wonder, and extend their thinking further. By compacting curriculum and offering alternative learning opportunities, gifted learners are always challenged to excel.

3c. Special education:

The Common Core State Standards dictate participation from a wide range of students, including those students with special needs. Students with disabilities must be prepared to succeed in all areas of their education, including general education settings, as well as their post-school lives. Therefore, the instruction, intervention, and assessment of these diverse learners is of critical importance.

At Center Grove, there is a range of special education programming options, including co-teaching, resource

replacement, and self-contained classrooms, to support students with diverse learning profiles in the least restrictive environment. Across all settings, the individual needs of each student are addressed through differentiated instruction and supports, as well as on-going assessment.

When instructing students with special needs, Center Grove staff provides multiple means of representation of information, such as providing instruction in both auditory and visual formats. Additionally, specific multisensory instructional programs, including Wilson Reading System and Touch Math, are utilized, dependent upon student need. Environmental modifications are made to optimize instruction including preferential seating and intentional groupings of students within the classroom.

Special education students are afforded multiple means of expression of knowledge at Center Grove. Various methods of response are accepted and encouraged. The use of assistive technology is embedded across all special education settings, ranging from the use of voice-to-text software for writing assignments to augmentative and alternative communication applications for students who have limited language skills.

To encourage optimal engagement in their learning, special education staff at Center Grove promote individual choice and autonomy; therefore, optimizing the relevance and value of instruction for each individual student. Demands are varied for each student based upon their individual abilities and areas identified for further growth. All special education students are supported in personal goal setting and development of executive functioning skills that will allow them to be active participants in their education.

At Center Grove, special education students' instruction and assessment is tailored to match their individualized needs based on their unique learning profiles to allow for maximum exposure to and engagement in the core curriculum standards in the least restrictive environment.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

Historically, Center Grove has not had a large population of English Language Learners (ELLs). However, in recent years, the number of ELLs at Center Grove has been increasing. To meet this need, we use a supplemental instruction model with the ELL curriculum designed to deepen student understanding of culture and language. The curriculum enables students who are non-native speakers of English to effectively use content knowledge and skills to develop within their new linguistic community. Our curriculum is intended to provide our linguistically and culturally diverse students with the foundation for their success in our schools.

Center Grove recognizes that it is important to support ELLs within the general education classroom. In addition to students seeing the designated ELL teacher, general education teachers have been trained in Sheltered English Instruction. This training helps educate teachers in practices of collaborative learning using elaborate language and talks. There are various practices that teachers are encouraged to utilize in class. Examples of some of these practices include positive interdependence, encouraging face-to-face interactions, flexible groupings and emphasizing the use of visual supports to go along with oral speech. Through these scaffolding activities ELLs build social skills and awareness of their new language.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

In teaching, engagement is the key to creating motivation and positive environments, that has its purpose and impact on the educational process, which sets the stage for learning. At Center Grove our innovative and passionate teachers are always ready to start the day with great enthusiasm. They weave experiences into the school day to support the application and acquisition of knowledge and skills to assist students and allow them to thrive. It all begins when the students are walking through the hallways and laughter is heard over the cheery music that plays daily. That feeling continues throughout the day and has an impact, not just on the attitudes of students and teachers, but on the entire learning experience. Starting with the youngest learners, having choice time where the skill of purposeful play allows for growth and an expansion on social skills. This extends to all learners and plays an integral role in elementary education and is essential for the education of the child as a whole. Our students learn through exploration and are given the resources to feel and show empathy for others while making responsible and caring decisions. Our learners foster healthy identities, manage emotions all while achieving personal and collective goals which extend beyond the classroom. The cornerstone of our student-centered classrooms comes from student voice and choice. At Center Grove, we believe that fostering the curiosity of our learners allows them to feel not only excited about learning, but also connected to the process as well. Every day children are provided with rigorous opportunities to design and create through hands-on authentic learning experiences that allow learners to feel empowered. Creating that feeling of empowerment in learning opens the door to transferring student learning into real world experiences. During the pandemic, our school gave our students the ability to feel connected throughout the remote learning experience. The ability to belong exist even when outside of the building allowing our learners to believe, and therefore, continue to grow both educationally and emotionally. Through engagement, the focus can stay on building structures for learning that supports students in growing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. At Center Grove, we develop the foundation for success that will follow our students into the ever-changing world beyond our school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Few things foster student and school success more than an inclusive environment that brings the broader community into the educational experience. At Center Grove, we have a strong partnership with our Parent Teacher Organization (CGPTO). This group of committed parents is a critical element to Center Grove that bridges the school with the community. This partnership has fostered many experiences, activities, and programs that strengthen Center Grove's ability to provide an environment for student success.

The CGPTO sponsors and organizes dozens of programs and activities throughout the school year, kicking off each academic year with a fun and exciting family carnival.

Working in collaboration with the administration and staff, the CGPTO provides an array of enrichment programs. One activity the PTO sponsors is author visits, an opportunity for our students to listen and ask questions of published authors. This is just one of the many PTO sponsored and organized assembly programs that tie curriculum and cultural initiatives together for exciting experiences across all grade levels.

Our close relationship with the CGPTO also opens numerous opportunities to engage and coordinate with local businesses. One of our most recent projects was assisted by a local plumbing company, who volunteered their time and expertise to replace decades-old water fountains with more efficient and environmentally friendly bottle filling stations.

The CGPTO also works to ensure that every student has an opportunity to be included in school events, regardless of economic predisposition. One example is during the school's book fair, the CGPTO discreetly provides classrooms with funds to allocate to students in need so they can purchase at least one book alongside their classmates.

Center Grove's parent teacher organization not only supports our students and families but also our staff.

They sponsor a program called 'Be Inspired Grants' which supports our school community by giving staff the opportunity to apply for funds that expand the classroom experience.

Besides our relationship with our PTO, we also have a strong relationship with our local Scout organizations. This helps increase the feeling of community among the students within these groups. As a result, many troops based at CG have gone on to do their service projects that enhance our school.

The PTO strongly believes that students with a strong sense of community are likely to be academically motivated. They feel like they have a stake and say in a place where they spend most of their time.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The professional culture here at Center Grove embodies the idea of a home away from home. This belief extends to not only the students and community members but our staff as well. Center Grove's support for teachers and other professional staff follows a three-pronged approach: provide staff with a voice and role in developing professional development, build in multiple options for participation and pivot, as needed, to provide staff what they need.

Center Grove teachers identify professional development wants and needs through a building survey. This survey guides professional development offerings, giving teachers a choice and voice. The principal and vice-principal can work with teachers to create unique learning opportunities. For example, Center Grove utilizes an instructional coaching model to tailor professional development. If a teacher desires support in how to conduct more effective guided reading instruction, the teacher can sign up for a six-week coaching cycle. The work is driven by what the teacher wants and needs. This example encompasses our belief that teachers have a voice and role in identifying how they can continue to grow and evolve in their profession.

Moreover, our teachers thrive on having choices. The ability to work with instructional coaches is only one of many options. Our school also brings in learning consultants to provide ongoing professional development and coaching. The teachers have a chance to sign up to discuss current practices and for classroom visits. Finally, we hold grade level meetings to provide a forum for specific grades. Many times, we have philosophical discussions regarding instruction and how best to support each other and the work we do. While at Center Grove, the idea of a home away from home allows our teachers to feel comfortable with each other.

As a school, we understand the ever-changing demands placed on our teachers. This became apparent as we switched to a virtual and hybrid model for instruction. Our teachers shifted their needs to focus on using Microsoft Teams, developing activities using Microsoft Suite, and prioritizing social-emotional well-being. Center Grove met and exceeded expectations leaning on staff members who were more comfortable in using online tools to help peers. We pivoted our in-person professional development model to an online approach to support teachers in delivering instruction.

Our goal is to provide staff with a voice and role in developing professional development, offering various participation models and adjusting, based on teachers' needs to support a culture where everyone feels valued.

4. School Leadership:

Center Grove's leadership philosophy is one where all community members work together to obtain the same common goals. Our immediate leadership goals are to provide a solid education, create a positive learning environment, and promote curiosity for both our students and staff members. Our leadership structure and style are cooperative, collaborative and hands on. Committees have been created to provide venues that create the best learning environment academically and socially. It values the importance of empowering all stakeholders to be part of the decision making in order to develop a sense of ownership and prepare staff and students to be future leaders. Equally as important, we ask individuals to provide input and feedback that is appropriate for their role in the organizations and that can be implemented, discussed and put into action. The two main ideas that work well for Center Grove are leading by example and having

clear communication. Being an elementary school, we work under the premise that actions speak louder than words, therefore, we will practice what we teach at all levels. With this goal in mind, Center Grove administration has created various committees that address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students and staff. A good example of this is the creation of the student council. The student council provides the student body a voice and a venue to share ideas and concerns; similarly, with the same idea, a committee was created to then listen to those ideas and/or concerns and to make them actionable items. The administration and anyone involved in any type of leadership role follows the same ideas. We believe that clear and concise communication with all staff, leadership teams, parents, and the community is vital for a positive educational climate. In addition, we believe that a respectful and trusting team concept with the staff will encourage a unified effort toward our school vision and mission statement.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Center Grove addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff. First, we created a committee that focuses on the diversity of classroom libraries. This committee assesses, identifies, and restructures the content of books in the school. At the elementary level, students learn a large amount of information through books and stories. The goal of this committee is to ensure that all students are represented in the stories. Additionally, our school counselor visits classrooms once a month for counseling lessons. Every October, the lessons focus on cultural awareness, diversity, inclusion, and respect. Along with these lessons, there are school-wide activities including spirit days and discussion prompts that emphasize topics related to culture, diversity, inclusion, and respect. This is also shared through our daily CG News morning announcements. Examples of school-wide activities are wearing mismatch socks for Down Syndrome Awareness Day, lighting our lobby blue for Autism Acceptance, and recognizing cultural months, such as Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month.

Staff members work together to create a curriculum that addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of students. Starting in kindergarten, students learn about the different cultures and ethnic populations by celebrating and sharing their own unique heritage. This continues throughout the grades. For example, by fourth grade, students will be able to explain how and why it is important that people from diverse cultures collaborate to find solutions to community, state, national and global challenges. These topics are tied to current events. Additionally, teachers identify students' needs to create the best learning environment for them. To accomplish this, teachers utilize books that represent all students, provide differentiation to meet students' needs academically and refer students to support services as needed. Center Grove also participated in a School Culture and Climate Survey Program. Through this program, we were able to gather the perceptions of students, staff members and families related to our school culture and climate.

Character building programs are facilitated by our school counselor. She visits each classroom to present lessons on character building topics such as conflict resolution, growth mindset, and friendship. To plan lessons that best meet the needs of students, the counselor reaches out to teachers in the beginning of the year to conduct a needs assessment and creates a monthly classroom counseling lesson schedule. Additionally, the counselor reaches out to ask for lesson requests and/or topics that would benefit students at that time.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Center Grove Elementary School is exceptional for many reasons, but the one aspect that stands out and contributes the most to our success is the sense of community created by the administration, faculty, staff and students.

The sense of community starts with a focus on social-emotional learning in the classroom. The focus on social-emotional learning plays an integral role at Center Grove for both students and staff. Administration is aware that teacher-student social-emotional health has a great impact on learning and the classroom environment. Each day teachers and staff members make it their priority to create experiences that support students self-regulating their emotions and feelings. Administration, teachers, and support staff have continued to work together in partnership to come up with creative and exciting ways to support students in multiple ways. Something that Center Grove takes pride in is recognizing the hard work of the entire Center Grove learning community. Each month students at Center Grove attend Friday Finale. The Friday Finale was created to allow students to share with the rest of the school all the wonderful things that are happening in their classroom. The staff at Center Grove want students to know what they do each day in their classroom matters. Additionally, this event has given our learning community a platform to share the 7 Habits of Happy Kids as well as celebrate students of the month and other important events happening at Center Grove.

Over the past few years, Center Grove administration and staff members have worked collaboratively to focus on different and creative ways to meet all the students' needs. Since teachers' mental health and experiences can have an impact on students in the classroom, the Center Grove administration is constantly coming up with new and innovative ways to support their staff and students. Some examples of this are team building days, staff appreciation days, and opportunities to gather and connect with other staff members in a social environment.

In summary, here at Center Grove, all staff members strive to ensure that all social-emotional needs of teachers and students are met each day, which leads to a greater morale and sense of community. Both students and faculty are recognized for hard work, progress, and helping others. This truly helps create our home away from home.