U.S. Department of Education
2019 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 <u>Dr. Jill DelConte</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name <u>Radix Elementary School</u>
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address <u>363 Radix Road</u>
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

<u>Williamstown</u>	<u>NJ</u>	<u>08094-3759</u>
City	State	Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County <u>Gloucester</u>

Telephone <u>(856) 728-8650</u>   Fax <u>(856) 262-7491</u>

Web site/URL   <u>https://res.monroetwp.k12.nj.us/</u>   E-mail   <u>jdelconte@monroetwp.k12.nj.us</u>

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*<u>Dr. Richard Perry</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail <u>rperry@monroetwp.k12.nj.us</u>

District Name <u>Monroe Township Public Schools District</u> Tel.   <u>(856) 629-6400</u>
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 <u>Mr. Fred Powell</u>
(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, write N/A in the space.

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 2019 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 includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.

4.   The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 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: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.

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 most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   1 Middle/Junior high schools
                                       1 High schools
                                       0 K-12 schools

                                       6 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [ ] Urban or large central city
   [X] Suburban
   [ ] Rural or small city/town

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	53	15	68
K	45	46	91
1	52	73	125
2	50	54	104
3	65	69	134
4	70	65	135
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	335	322	657

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   <u>0</u> % American Indian or Alaska Native
   the school (if unknown, estimate): <u>3</u> % Asian
                                       <u>12</u> % Black or African American
                                       <u>5</u> % Hispanic or Latino
                                       <u>0</u> % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                       <u>71</u> % White
                                       <u>9</u> % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: <u>10</u>%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	28
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	37
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	65
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	670
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: <u>4</u> %
                                                       <u>29</u> Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
<u>Spanish, Arabic, Polish, Mandarin, Turkish, Haitian Creole, Indonesian, Punjabi, Russian, Vietnamese, Gujarti</u>

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: <u>24</u> %
   Total number students who qualify: <u>159</u>

8. Students receiving special education services: <u>21</u> %

          <u>139</u> 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. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>8</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>36</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>22</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: <u>2</u>

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	32
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	25
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	25
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   <u>21:1</u>

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	95%	97%	96%	95%	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 2018.

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 X

    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.

Radix prides itself on addressing all aspects of a child's growth and development, focusing on the whole child - academically and socially/emotionally.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

The Radix school community resonates with passion, commitment and dedication by all stakeholders. The community is a mix of cohesive and split families; with 25% of them being economically disadvantaged. The parents and guardians also represent a balance of blue and white collar employees. Several students reside with family members other than parents; and we have a handful of homeless families. Radix truly represents the spectrum of diversity that enriches our school community. The community is predominantly white (71%); 12% are Black; 3% Asian; 5% Hispanic; 9% are more than one race. Four percent of our students/families require ELL services, supporting 10 different languages.

The student population consists of preschoolers through 4th graders. We have a robust Preschool Disabilities program, with seven classes of three and four year olds. We also have two integrated preschool classes, with both typically developing four/five year olds and students with an IEP. Our preschool population enriches our school community.

Although we emphasize student achievement at all levels, we balance that with concern for the social and emotional well-being of the students who are a bit diverse, not only in race, socio-economic status, culture and ability. Other than the preschool disabled students, all students are taught in an inclusive environment. Support is provided in classes, as needed, for classified students, general education struggling learners, ELL students and gifted students. Holding all students accountable for their academic progress and having high expectations is a philosophy embraced by all staff, so providing students the tools for success is critical.

Radix has, for years, ascribed to the "Bucket filling" philosophy. The school counselor regularly teaches lessons on character development, empathy, tolerance and making good choices. These lessons are thought-provoking and very engaging, often accompanied by a character in costume to make learning come alive. Students are recognized in various ways for "just doing the right things." Contributing to the positive school culture, we have a well-established student recognition program designed to motivate students and to promote good decision-making: Student of the Month Program recognizes students in 3rd and 4th grade for achievement, attitude, effort, and respect- all domains hold equal weight. In addition, we acknowledge Student Council Members of the Month and Safeties of the Month, for their commitment and reliability. The assistant principal hosts monthly "Lunchtime Stars" for students in grades 1-4 who are nominated by their teachers for making good choices, being a "good" friend, showing kindness toward others, and putting forth good effort. The students have lunch with the assistant principal and principal in the office of the principal and receive small tokens of appreciation. "Gotcha" tickets are also awarded for students and adults caught doing something above and beyond-random acts of kindness. Each month, a "Gotcha" ticket recipient name is drawn and the class of that student/teacher is granted a reward, such as extra recess, or a movie.

In addition to emphasizing "bucket-filling" the teachers promote a growth mindset. Several classrooms boast bulletin boards reminding students that failing simply means another opportunity to learn; mistakes are "okay" and part of the learning process. It is not uncommon for students to talk about having a growth mindset and their own willingness to persevere in order to "get it." The positive attitude of students is modeled by the adults in the building- ALWAYS!

As a school community, we promote a multitude of opportunities to ensure that students feel connected to the school; namely, some of our traditions include daily and annual activities. On a daily basis, students are greeted by our very energetic and positive school counselor over the PA who makes fun announcements each morning including: music, birthdays, special events, and our school menu. He and student volunteers lead the school in the Pledge of Allegiance; then all students together recite the Radix Pledge reminding them of their goal to work hard each day. Students are reminded of our "bucket filling" philosophy. Throughout the course of the school year, we host: "Week of Respect;" Dr. Seuss Week (Read Across America) with daily themes; Digital Citizenship Lessons; Spring Fair; Field Day; Walk-a-thon; 4th Grade Farewell Awards Ceremony; Winter and Spring concerts; Fire Safety assembly; Reading Restaurant (school-wide reading event); just to name a few.

Nearly 25% of our student population is economically disadvantaged. The school community has always embraced all families who need assistance. Each year funds are raised to sponsor families for the holidays, offering meals and gifts to ensure that no child goes without. In addition, we work with community partners like the local Toyota dealership and AOK (An Opportunity Knocking) a local non-profit organization, to sponsor additional families.

Finally, a walk through the halls of Radix is quite telling…there is much pride displayed in student work, special projects, and positive messages throughout. Students and staff show great school spirit and pride.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. **Core Curriculum:**

1a. Reading/English language arts:

The curriculum reflects the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). We spiral learning that begins in Pre-K and Kindergarten with a focus on phonics development and early literacy. The emphasis on reading, literacy and writing is carried out in 90-120 minute blocks of instruction for first through fourth grade.

The teachers work tirelessly planning and delivering masterful lessons geared toward the mastery of ELA standards and student needs. As a rule, they differentiate to best ensure that individual learning goals are met. ELA is taught in a student-directed fashion, with more small groups and centers than whole group instruction. Beginning in our pre-school classes, students are exposed to Fundations, a phonics program that is taught through 2nd grade. This research-based program, promotes early literacy and is taught with fidelity, providing additional support (double-dosing) during a daily period of reading instruction, provided in small groups based on student needs/levels, known as WIN (What I Need). In addition, our reading series, Wonders, offers materials that allow the teachers to address multiple learning styles and levels within the classroom, since there is access to leveled readers, assessments, and activities. For our most struggling readers, we offer Wilson reading instruction. Classroom instruction is supported by Basic Skills instructors or Special-Education co-teachers for students identified as struggling learners (or with an IEP). We believe in inclusive education for all.

Multiple measures are used to determine student levels and their needs, whether remediation or enrichment, assessment data helps make the decisions. In the primary grades, we monitor students through our RTI program using FAstbridge, a universal screener and progress monitoring. Those results identify students for tiered intervention groups. Running Records are administered to determine student levels and to help group students accordingly. Teachers also give Fundations and Wonders unit assessments, as well as review student progress with on-line resources (Exact Path, Learning Ally). Once groups are formed early in the year, WIN begins to reinforce the specific skills each group needs to focus on in order to build their foundational reading skills. The groups are fluid throughout the year, and as students begin to master ELA skills/standards, they are regrouped.

1b. Mathematics:

We have a well-developed scope and sequence for each grade level following the NJSLS. All grades emphasize mathematical practices. In the primary grades, there is a focus on basic numeracy and developing number sense. As students progress, they learn place value, operations, problem-solving, geometry, algebraic equations, and are expected to use their understanding to think critically.

Six years ago the district adopted My Math, after vetting several mathematic programs. The adoption committee, comprised of teachers from various grade levels, decided that My Math best met district elementary needs since it addresses grade level standards building upon a progression of learning. It has a fairly traditional, sequential lesson structure (hands on, try it, talk about it, practice it, and apply it) which was readily accepted by teachers. It includes guided practice and independent practice before going to problem solving and test practice. Because of all the resources, teachers use a centers-approach, with groups practicing math in a multitude of ways: using manipulatives, computer programs, problem-solving, etc. My Math also aligns to mathematical practice standards that can be found in every chapte, and promotes extension activities for more advanced practice.

My Math has an online component: ConnectEd. Teachers can access extra resources online, such as videos, manipulatives to display on SmartBoards, differentiated practice worksheets, etc. The My Math program includes enrichment and reteach pages. Students can access the text online through ConnectEd platform. We use ST Math (Spatial Temporal) and ALEKS as technology-based supplemental resources.

Assessments used to support My Math include the Fastbridge, Universal Screener (used to tier students and get them the support they need both in and out of the classroom) for grades K-1. We also use LinkIt Forms B and C to see how our students are progressing towards meeting grade level standards. LinkIt also is an indicator for how our students will do on the state assessment, thus it guides instruction. Lastly, we use the LinkIt benchmarks as a measure for identifying students for Basic Skills Intervention.

PARCC results for grades 3 and 4 historically have been used to determine weaknesses and gaps in curriculum/instruction so they can be adjusted; it also helps indicate areas of strength for our school. We also use local common assessments/program unit tests to determine how our students are progressing towards mastery of grade level standards.

1c. Science:

When the Next Generation Science Standards were adopted, the district selected a new science program, NCI- a hands-on, inquiry-based science program. NCI supported the district goals of having students more richly connect to the world, since it is an interactive program with various on-line resources. It has successfully helped students meet the goals of the (newer) NJSLS- providing students multiple opportunities to conduct scientific investigations and to learn how the engineering design process works through various STEM activities.

The K-4 curriculum covers similar themes (energy, matter, living things, weather) annually, with the concepts increasing in complexity. In Kindergarten, students learn about weather, push vs. pull, and basic needs of living things. First graders study light and sound, plants and animals, and the sun. These followed in 2nd through 4th grades with more depth: forces in motion, life cycles, plant and animal structures and adaptions, changes of the Earth. The scope and sequence of our curriculum supports a deeper understanding of the major science themes, inclusive of STEAM concepts.

Science lessons are introduced with videos and thought-provoking questions. Following the whole-group introduction, students work in small groups to discover key understandings. Students use their Chromebooks to conduct research, watch videos, and conduct virtual experiments. Many assessments are based on conclusions relayed in student work, and project-based outcomes as they relate to the NJSLS. Rubrics are used to evaluate student learning and to help make instructional decisions. There are also formal assessments provided with TCI.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

All grade levels cover the same four themes: 1) civics, government and human rights; 2) geography, people and environment; 3) history, culture and perspectives; and 4) economics, innovation and technology. As with all content areas, the depth of study, rigor and expectations increase from first to fourth grades.

The Social Studies standards are often addressed in a cross-content manner. Teaching Social Studies during the course of ELA instruction is becoming increasingly important. We've identified stories in our reading anthologies, Wonders, that incorporate content aligned with the Social Studies standards; with ELA skills being practiced.

Unfortunately, we lack Social Studies resources. The teachers, however, reference the standards and create lessons that allow for extension of what they may read during reading time. Students at all grades conduct research, create projects, and work with peers in a centers' approach to learn the social studies content. For example, our first graders read a story called "The Lemonade Stand." Extension activities are related to grade-level appropriate content about economics. Other stories focus on community helpers; those Social Studies extension activities revolve around student understanding of their community. Similar lessons exist at each grade level. The 4th grade curriculum also includes New Jersey history, which is an important unit that teachers make come alive with both virtual trips around the state, and a trip to our local historical sites.

We have created a 4th grade Social Studies common assessment which students take using LinkIt. This helps us determine what standards students are mastering, and what standards need to be better addressed,

instructionally. We are currently in the midst of creating common assessments for grades 2 and 3, so we can continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our Social Studies instruction.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

The preschool standards provide the framework for our young learners, both classified and general education. Students are exposed to developmentally appropriate programs aligned with the kindergarten curriculum. ST Math and Fundations (K-2 programs) are used to promote early literacy (ie: letter-sound recognition) and math sense. The preschool teachers plan lessons that promote peer interaction, sharing, socializing, and appropriate play all within a supportive and positive learning environment. Learning centers offer a variety of opportunities to interact with content.

Strong routines and structures are in place to support the learners. Teachers and support staff (paraprofessionals, speech therapist, OT, PT) in the Preschool classrooms reinforce and teach language-usage, development and articulation. Students have access to technology, including ipads and an interactive table. Lessons are enhanced by the teachers' use of technology, as used for leading songs, dances, and modeling skills.

An indicator of success, is the number of students being declassified prior to them attending kindergarten. The Child Study Team (CST) monitors those students who maintain their classification, with the goal of mainstreaming, if possible. CST, parents and teachers collaborate to discuss the success of students and the program. Teachers assess with a deep understanding of their students' special needs, learning style and developmental levels. They are able to indicate progress made regarding specific IEP goals, throughout the year, and make decisions about program placement. We document areas of strength and weakness for each. As a matter of course, our general education preschoolers are assessed once they enter kindergarten. The data, in most cases, shows that the preschoolers are well-prepared for kindergarten and are not later identified for RTI or basic skills support.

2.   Other Curriculum Areas:

The special area disciplines at Radix help prepare students for the next chapter of their educational journey, while initiating a life-long love and appreciation for the visual and performing arts as well as health, wellness, and literacy (library).

Library/Media Center
Our school library is more than just a collection of excellent books. It's a media center with print and electronic materials that support student learning, promote literacy and build a culture of readers. The Media Specialist supports the classroom curriculum in grades 1-4 (weekly), reinforcing skills taught in class. Students have the opportunity to check out books to extend their learning, to investigate an interest, or simply to read for enjoyment. In addition, teachers check out books to support their lessons in all content areas. During Media Center lessons, students are taught grade-level literacy skills, how to evaluate various resources (text and on-line), and they learn to be "responsible consumers of information."

Physical Education and Health
The goal of our Health and Physical Education program is to promote positive and safe learning experiences, maximizing student participation in all activities, and creating an environment for each child to have the opportunity to be successful and develop a lifetime of wellness. We stress the importance of being physically active, developing healthy relationships and having respect for one another and each other's differences.

Students are exposed to a plethora of skills in grades 1-4 (twice a week) during individual and team sport units. We teach our students not just technical skills of a sport, but give them a brief history so they get a

deep understanding and appreciation for sports. For example, during the basketball unit we provide wooden peach baskets and explain to students how James Nay Smith saw similar baskets in a field across from the gym where he worked and cut the bottoms out of some and nailed them to wall on each end of the gym-thus the birth of basketball!

We have an extracurricular club for any interested students - the Running Club. In an effort to improve fitness levels of students and to provide a healthy family activity, Running Club meets twice a week each spring, after school. Students and family members learn: proper warm up/cool down techniques, proper breathing and pacing, stretching and agility, endurance and interval training, etc. We hope to instill a love for running. The culminating activity for the year is two mile Fun Run.

We also plan a school-wide Field Day annually that allows students to have fun, demonstrate their skills and compete against classmates.

Music
During music (grades 1-4, weekly) students learn a variety of skills including proper singing techniques, rhythm and notation reading, music terminology, improvisation, and composition, and are exposed to numerous genres of music and instruments. Music class also incorporates movement and dance, improving motor skills and coordination.

Fourth graders have the opportunity to join chorus, where they learn fun vocal warm-ups, tongue twisters, and perform engaging and challenging repertoire in a winter and spring concert. Performing (both individually and in ensemble settings) helps the students improve independence and gain confidence and experience as they continue their study of music and the arts.

Through their involvement and dedication in music and chorus at Radix elementary, students learn leadership skills, responsibility, perseverance, and accountability.

Art
The Art Classes (grades 1-4, weekly) teach essential skills and concepts to build a strong foundational understanding of art. These techniques include drawing, painting, sculpture and printmaking. Students also develop an appreciation for Art History and experience Art from around the world. Through research, production and critique, students learn to analyze, interpret, and discuss a variety of art styles and famous artists throughout history. Students get to show pride in their work, as they see it displayed throughout the school.

Technology
Technology is also an integral part of our curriculum. With a 1:1 computer assignment, we strive for a balance of instructional strategies that include the computers. We have adopted many computer-based applications and programs that promote student (standards) mastery and higher order thinking. Teachers use programs like ST Math (Spacial Temporal Math) to have students practice their mathematical reasoning skills. Similarly, we use Extra Math, Exact Path for ELA, and TCI for interactive science. Our students get creative using WIXIE, as well as a variety of other apps. The computers provide opportunities for research and extension activities that broaden the scope of our students' academic experience. We have a "Day of Coding" annually to introduce students to the world of computer programming.

3. **Special Populations:**

For students performing below grade-level, we use Basic Skills Instructors (BSI) to either push into a class to support students during academic lessons, or the BSI pull students from more than one class and work with them in a small group on specific skills that have been identified as an area in need of improvement. Students with an IEP (grades 1-4) are all instructed in co-teach general education classrooms, each with a general education teacher and a special education teacher. This method of instruction allows for flexible grouping to meet the needs of the students. For both groups of underperforming students we use multiple measures to determine the groups and content to be reinforced: running records are used to indicate students' instructional levels of reading comprehension; Fundations unit assessments help to gauge specific

phonics deficits to be reinforced; and Exact Path, a computerized adaptive assessment informs teachers of the skills needing remediation. Linkit benchmarks inform decisions regarding mathematics, along with ST Math and Extra Math, a computerized math practice program.

A great example of how the achievement gap was reduced with our special needs population can be seen when comparing the recent ELA PARCC data. In 2016-2017 the grade 3 students with disabilities only met/exceeded expectations at 16% rate. So during the 2017-2018 school year, 4th grade teachers increased the expectations for the same group of students and as a result, they (SE students) met/exceeded expectations at 48%, which was significantly closer to the non-disabled students (86%), than in the previous year.

There are English Language Learners in each grade K-4. They are in general education classes with teachers who are SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) trained and are equipped to meet the needs of the students. In addition, there is a dedicated ELL teacher on staff who works with all designated students daily in small groups. The ELL teacher collaborates with the assigned (SIOP) classroom teachers to determine the areas of instructional need, in addition to following an ELL framework (vocabulary, expressions, etc.) to help students assimilate into our culture.

Another special group of students are our TAG (Talented and Gifted) students. They require a different type of intervention- enrichment, with the opportunity to extend their thinking and creativity. Students are not formally identified for TAG until the winter of 2nd grade, then each year subsequent to that. For students in K-2, the TAG teacher provides resources for the classrooms for students who need enrichment activities. The students formally identified are pulled out twice a week for lessons with the TAG teacher. The lessons are project and exploratory based, with a rich connection to engineering and problem solving. In addition, ANY student in grades 3-4 is encouraged to participate in our annual "Invention Convention" to showcase their creativity and propensity for problem-solving.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

Upon entry to the school, one is immediately able to discern a positive attitude that resonates throughout the school. As students arrive to school daily, they are warmly greeted by staff, some outside and others in the halls. Seeing kids getting hugs by teachers as they make their way to their classes each morning, is a common occurrence at Radix. The school community is one where all students are shown acceptance and value, often in overt ways, but always in classrooms with high expectations and encouragement to do one's best. As we begin each day with positive and upbeat morning announcements, students are motivated and encouraged to do their best, academically and socially/behaviorally. There are inspirational posters around the school, and reminders of our "bucket filling" philsophy.

Within the context of the classroom, student success and academic progress is an expectation. To that end, we provide support for struggling learners, differentiate instruction, and promote a growth mindset. We have Basic Skills instructors that push into classrooms to assist during key instructional times to work with struggling learners. We have an ELL teacher who pushes in and pulls out our students for whom English is a second language. We ascribe to a co-teach model for our classified students so that all classified students in K-4 are in the mainstream with both a general education teacher and a special education teacher all day, so that they have support and necessary modifications and accommodations for all academic subjects. There is a commitment to meeting students where they are (academically and emotionally), to ensure student achievement. To further achieve that goal, each morning, all students in grades 1-4 engage in a 45-minute "WIN" period of explicit and leveled reading instruction to promote reading mastery, and build necessary foundational skills based on individual student needs. All building staff (even special area teachers) participate as WIN instructors, so that the student groups are small and the students have the opportunity to shine within a group of same-ability peers.

Staff efficacy and morale are important, and a priority of the principal. She meets regularly with staff in grade-level lunch meetings. The informal setting promotes camaraderie, and promotes the opportunity to discuss school issues (curricular, assessment, program, students, etc.) that impact each particular grade level. The teachers are given a voice in decisions. The principal's perpetual "open door" allows for staff to just pop in to discuss whatever is on their mind, whether it is student related, or personal. Additionally, the staff is encouraged to have fun while at work. We have casual theme days most Fridays, celebrate special holidays and events together in the faculty room, dress the part for Dr. Seuss week and Halloween, and offer door-decorating contests.

The principal often shares successes and happy news in her weekly "Declarations", acknowledging staff for their contributions to the school community (i.e., organizing the door decorating contest or pie palooza for the entire staff). She often shares good practices and experiences of highly effective teachers with other more novice teachers, and encourages collaboration. Monthly faculty meetings provide the forum for acknowledging staff, also. Monthly we acknowledge those staff members (teachers and paraprofessionals) who have perfect attendance. They get a free jeans day and one lucky winner gets a Wawa gift card.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

Families/Parents are an integral part of our school community. They are encouraged to be active participants in their child's education, and thus are very involved. There is an active PTA that brings the community together on several occasions: Ice Cream Social, Tricky Tray event, Spring Fair, Candy Bar Bingo, student dances, large Halloween event, and a spring dance-a-thon called "Move and Groove." They promote literacy by hosting a book fair and free book give-aways twice a year. They sponsor various fundraisers to be able to provide the students assemblies, and assistance with school projects. In addition, we have a pool of parent volunteers who provide valuable support in classrooms and during school events. The PTA has many FaceBook followers, who count on them to share upcoming information regarding events and activities.

The principal hosts PACE (Parents Caring about Education) meetings 4-5 times a year, on Saturday mornings, where parents are invited to discuss school issues regarding the school community in an informal setting. The principal provides the donuts, parents bring their own coffee and there are discussions regarding academic programming, grading, school security, ways to support the "whole child" and to teach tolerance. As a result of the PACE meetings, a new family club was established last year, The Radix Caring Kids Club. The focus of the club is to provide students an opportunity to "give back" to their community. Several events, including students and their families, have been held after school. We've participated in a beach clean up and school beautification project that transformed the front and back of the school. We had over 30 families participate, along with two local landscaping companies, in order to succeed. Plans to extend outreach are in place, and have yielded opportunities for students to make snack packs for chemo patients and to play Bingo with the elderly at an assisted living facility.

Involving families as key stakeholders is a priority. The principal publishes a monthly newsletter for parents, keeping them abreast of important information, school highlights, critical dates, etc. The principal uses the Remind App to communicate with parents, making relevant announcements periodically. Families are invited to school for holiday concerts, class parties, and for the 4th Grade Farewell ceremony. In addition, the principal makes positive phone calls home to acknowledge students who have stood out, usually for showing improvement, or doing something remarkable. These calls go a long way to build trust and relationships. Twice a year parent-teacher conferences afford an opportunity for parents/guardians to discuss their child's school progress. These face to face meetings are necessary for building partnerships between school and home.

It is significant to note that in October, 2017, an elementary school closed in our district due to mold. The Radix principal worked closely with the displaced principal to relocate their kindergarten through third grade at Radix. Because of the Radix principal's strong leadership, the other school's teachers, students and families were immediately embraced by the Radix community. Although classes had to be doubled-up; special areas had to be taught in the classrooms, and every inch of the building was used for instruction-the tone in the building remained positive. The Radix principal consistently welcomed all members of the other school's community, while at the same time making a concerted effort to help the Radix staff continue to focus on student achievement. There were more grade-level lunch meetings to discuss new challenges (the crowded building that didn't allow for small group pull-out remedial instruction). The goal of the Radix principal was to support the entire school community to ensure that we did not get derailed by the uncomfortable situation and the public hysteria that surrounded the other school being closed due to mold. The other school's students were also embraced by the Radix PTA, so students and parents were included in all activities sponsored by Radix. The other school's parents were invited to participate with the Radix principal at the PACE meetings, as well as PTA meetings. The other school's second and third grade are still housed at Radix.

3. **Professional Development:**

There has been a commitment to provide teachers PD directly related to what they need as related to district goals: 1) to build capacity in aligning instruction and assessment with NJSLS; 2) to enhance understanding of the Marzano evaluation instrument in relation to Achieve NJ, to improve instruction; and 3) to build capacity to collect and use data to adjust instruction and assessment and to monitor programs for effectiveness. The PD has been designed in a hybrid fashion, bringing in experts to share insights and strategies, and to use our own staff to share expertise with colleagues. The experts have included A.J. Juliani and Robert Marzano who spoke about student engagement, one of the key elements of our evaluation model. We also regularly bring in consultants from the instructional programs (ST Math, Edmentum, Wonders) we use to meet with teachers during their prep to get clarification on program use and how best to impact learning in a positive way. This type of personal and meaningful PD has been beneficial for the delivery of instruction.

In addition, we recognize that among the staff, we have resident experts in a myriad of instructional practices, and capitalize on those. Two PD days are designed so that the teachers attend their selected workshops led by colleagues, regarding topics related to the use of technology, curriculum, and program practices. At the building level, teachers are provided time for articulation meetings with grade level

colleagues and those of the grade level above or below to ensure an alignment of instruction, standards, and assessments. At the end of the school year, teachers are given the task of grouping students for the next year, based on class performance and assessments- this is a powerful activity for teachers. Helping teachers understand assessment results is a key component of PD.

The approach to PD has been one with the goal of engaging the staff and empowering them to enhance their pedagogy. Another practice we use is to invite staff members to be part of curriculum writing and decision-making. They serve on committees to select academic programs; they spend time in the summer amending curricula to align with standards. Having teachers serve on these committees, allows for consistency throughout the district, and provides building-level leaders that can support colleagues as curriculum is implemented. The building principal believes and supports the development of teacher leaders; often referring staff to collaborate with colleagues.

4. **School Leadership:**

 It is apparent that the building principal is an effective and strong communicator, who is very passionate about the entire school community. The principal writes a weekly memo ("Declarations") to the entire staff highlighting the forthcoming week's events, as well as sharing research articles or instructional advice that may be relevant on a particular week. She demonstrates a willingness to tackle any topic or concern when it is in the best interest of students and/or staff. She is a strong advocate for those for whom she is responsible. She is quick to compliment, always shows care and concern, gives everyone respect, and can be counted on to be fair and consistent. These qualities go a long way when dealing with staff, students and/or parents. Formal observations are not dreaded (like in many schools); they are considered opportunities to discuss teaching and learning in a meaningful way. Many robust conversations occur in the context of post-observation conferences. Because the tone is positive, when critical feedback needs to be discussed, it is well-received and accepted as a way to grow as a professional.

Clearly, the principal believes in distributive leadership, as she often turns to teachers for advice, feedback and help with critical decisions.

Teacher-leaders have emerged amongst the staff and are encouraged to take an active leadership role. Of the Basic Skills staff, there is an ELA lead who manages the budget, materials, and supports staff. She also helps establish the BSI schedule, RTI tiers, and end-of-year assessments. She has been encouraged and supported to participate in Fundations Facilitator Training to be in a position to best support our primary teachers as they instruct students in Fundations. Another Basic Skills teacher takes the lead with mathematics. Both teachers help craft team meetings and help review data for grouping purposes. There are two other teachers who have taken the lead for all State testing. They are trusted to establish an effective and comprehensive testing situation for the grade levels testing. Although the principal is consulted on all aspects of assessments and programs, the teacher-leaders are given the support to carry out the required responsibilities. Having teacher leaders helps keep our focus on student achievement; as they work with colleagues, review data regularly, and report to the principal. This information helps craft meeting agendas, evaluate programs and resources, and make changes to best meet the needs of our students to ensure academic success.

Because teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles throughout the year, they are very invested in the collective success of the students/school. They have been empowered which makes for a strong sense of community. This leadership takes several forms: some take responsibility to consult with grade-level colleagues to arrange for class trips; while others, take on establishing budgetary needs for their colleagues; yet other teachers work with core-mates to decide on assemblies and/or activities.

One of the teachers provided the following, "A true visionary should inspire others with foresight and imagination. Our principal continues to do just that. Whether we are building a school garden or raising funds for a child in need, she leads by example and encourages us to reach our full potential as educators. She has helped unify our school community and continues to empower us to be the best we can be."

The part-time assistant principal also ascribes to the philosophies of the principal, supporting her in every

aspect of the school. They often conference with staff together, showing a united front. In the context of Robert Marzano's teacher evaluation research, teachers are aware of the need to engage students in learning as it is connected to the learning goals based on the NJSLS (NJ Student Learning Standards). Holding students accountable for their own learning is powerful- and reinforced in the classrooms at Radix. Post-observation meetings with teachers provide many opportunities for deep and rich conversations about teaching and learning, and ways we can best help students master grade level standards. Student achievement is a priority, however, it is couched in the context of helping students be the best all-around students they can be. In addition, at faculty meetings we discuss student achievement, share data and highlight successes at each grade level. Not only is there emphasis on learning, but we also support the social and emotional well-being of each student.

Prior to PARCC testing, the principal hosts an academic pep rally for students. Students are reminded, in a fun, rowdy environment that they matter; they have what it takes to be successful; they only need to try their best; and they can "rock the test." Then each morning of testing, the principal visits each room shouting, "What are you going to do?" and the students reply, "Rock the test!" It is important (to the principal) that students know she believes in them. In addition, the principal gives each child a gift that reminds them to do their best and that she believes in them. The principal takes every opportunity to show she cares AND to focus on achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

As the question implies, there are many practices and educational strategies that lead to student success, including considerations for supporting the "whole child." Our success is attributed to more of a philosophy rather than a practice that has been ingrained in the school culture, that of accountability and high expectations. It is frequently communicated to staff (during staff meetings, grade-level meetings, even paraprofessional meetings, in weekly principal "Declarations" to staff, during in-service days) that we all have a stake in student achievement, and thus must hold students accountable for their learning by engaging them in rigorous lessons. Teachers are reminded that even our most struggling learners must be exposed to the rigor of grade-level standards. As classroom teachers differentiate instruction and use small groups to reinforce concepts, they are able to ensure that all students (whether gifted or struggling) are set up to master the standards in a way that is meaningful to them; thus, building opportunities for success.

District supervisors and administrators review lesson plans regularly to provide oversight and to ensure that lessons include the appropriate developmental rigor. In addition, when we evaluate, we are certain to provide feedback to teachers regarding student engagement and rigor; administrators and teachers regularly review test data and determine areas needing greater attention, and yes- rigor.

As support staff work with students, whether during character education lessons, during counseling, or even during assemblies, we provide encouragement and support; however, we also take each opportunity to remind them of their responsibilities as students- making good choices to be the best student they can be, and to ascribe to the "Growth Mindset". Additionally, when we recognize our Students, Safeties, and/or Student Council Members of the Month and Lunchtime Stars- we acknowledge student efforts, and highlight the good choices they have made while in their learning environments.

Parents are also informed about our expectations during parent meetings, including Back-to-School Night, PACE meetings and New Student Orientation. Each month, the principal writes a newsletter that includes recommendations and information for parents, providing guidance for working with students at home to further support learning and achievement.

There is never a doubt that the Radix school community values rigor and high academic expectations. For that reason, we have been successful promoting academic growth and making strides at closing the achievement gaps that have existed.