

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Oyster-Adams Bilingual School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2801 Calvert Street, NW  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Washington State DC Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 20008-2666

County District of Columbia

Telephone (202) 671-6130 Fax (202) 671-3087

Web site/URL https://oysteradamsbilingual.org E-mail Mayra.Cruz@k12.dc.gov

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Lewis Ferebee E-mail chancellor@k12.dc.gov  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name DC Public Schools Tel. (202) 442-5885

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Ruth Wattenberg  
(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**

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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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

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

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

| Grade                 | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>PreK</b>           | 12         | 28           | 40          |
| <b>K</b>              | 41         | 45           | 86          |
| <b>1</b>              | 48         | 38           | 86          |
| <b>2</b>              | 44         | 43           | 87          |
| <b>3</b>              | 32         | 38           | 70          |
| <b>4</b>              | 38         | 42           | 80          |
| <b>5</b>              | 31         | 38           | 69          |
| <b>6</b>              | 31         | 45           | 76          |
| <b>7</b>              | 35         | 28           | 63          |
| <b>8</b>              | 45         | 33           | 78          |
| <b>9</b>              | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>10</b>             | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>11</b>             | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>12 or higher</b>   | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| <b>Total Students</b> | 357        | 378          | 735         |

\*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
  - 2 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 56 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 33 % White
  - 5 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 6%

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

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

| <b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>   | <b>Answer</b> |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year   | 30            |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year | 13            |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 43            |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018   | 706           |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.06          |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 6             |

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

Spanish, Amharic, Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, Italian, French, German, Portuguese, Arabic, Korean, Romanian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 27 %  
200 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 19 %

Total number students who qualify: 140

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %

76 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>6</u> Autism                  | <u>9</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>10</u> Deaf-Blindness         | <u>20</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</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: 6

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:

|  | <b>Number of Staff</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| Administrators   | 5                      |
| Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.  | 38                     |
| 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.   | 18                     |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 7                      |

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

| <b>Required Information</b> | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 | 2014-2015 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance    | 96%       | 96%       | 96%       | 96%       | 95%       |
| 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 2019.

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

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

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2006

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

Oyster-Adams Bilingual School is an inclusive community of learners dedicated to academic excellence and creativity that develops globally responsible leaders who are bilingual and bi-literate in Spanish and English.

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

Washington, DC Public neighborhood school, we serve students from all 8 wards. Half of our students enroll through neighborhood boundary and half enroll through city wide lottery. Oyster Adams is one school, one mission, one principal, but we do happen to be in two different buildings about a mile apart from one another. Oyster houses our PK-3rd grade and Adams houses our 4th-8th grades. Both campuses follow the same boundary zone, enrollment and lottery process.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Oyster-Adams Bilingual School is a PK-8 dual-language school located in Washington, DC, that serves a diverse student population. Around 60 percent of students come from Latino/Hispanic households, 38 percent qualify for free or reduced meals, and 13 percent receive special education services. Half are neighborhood students and half enroll through a randomized citywide lottery, creating a student body that represents all eight of DC's wards. To fulfill our commitment to diversity in general and to serving English Language Learners (ELLs) in particular, we reserve 90 percent of our PK4 lottery seats for Spanish-dominant students who serve as Spanish-language models through 8th grade. All other neighborhood students then enroll in kindergarten to help achieve our goal of a 50/50 two-way dual-language program. Alongside the children of diplomats and best-selling authors, we also serve newcomer students at all grade levels, most recently accepting dozens of students who have experienced interrupted schooling due to time spent on the border as unaccompanied minors or in immigration detention centers. Regardless of their background or how they come to us, every Oyster-Adams student receives a high-quality dual-language public education in the Nation's capital.

At the heart of Oyster-Adams is our schoolwide dual-language program, the longest-standing such of programs in DC and one of the oldest in the nation. Oyster-Adams is a national flagship for bilingual education that prominent researchers have studied and featured as a leading example of dual-language excellence. We know that all students, regardless of race, class, gender, or circumstance, can achieve bilingually at high levels, and it is our firm (research-based) belief that a high-quality bilingual education can work for any child and help close achievement gaps for our most marginalized populations.

What makes Oyster-Adams stand out from many dual-language models is that we are not a strand program but a schoolwide model where all aspects of our academic, socio-emotional, cultural, parent engagement, and data-driven programs are bilingual. For K-5, we teach math entirely in Spanish and science entirely in English. Specials such as library, technology, music, art, and physical education are in Spanish, per our PK-8 language allocation plan. We offer intervention and special education services in both languages. Even some sports teams are coached entirely in Spanish. The Center for Applied Linguistics' Guiding Principles of Dual Language truly guide the design and implementation of our schoolwide model.

And our approach is working. Over the last five years, we have made real progress toward our goal of closing achievement gaps, according to DC's annual PARCC assessment: Black students have grown 33 percentage points in English language arts (ELA) and 35 in math; Latinx students have grown 22 points in ELA and 7 in math; ELLs have grown 12 points in ELA; "at-risk" students (as defined in DC) have grown 33 points in ELA; and students with disabilities have grown 24 points in ELA and 11 in math. Overall, Oyster-Adams is currently the District's highest-performing bilingual school, one of its top overall PK-8 campuses, and home to DC's highest-performing middle school readers (English and Spanish).

The pattern at Oyster-Adams is clear. We raise the bar, our students meet it, and then we figure out how to raise it again.

For example, we are preparing our students for college and career before they even enter high school. Last year, our eighth-graders achieved a 97.6 percent passing rate on the Advanced Placement Spanish Language exam, with 40 students earning a university-level Spanish language credit in middle school. Nearly 70 percent of these students are students of color, and nearly half qualify for free or reduced lunch. We have raised the bar on multilingualism, too. Our students take Mandarin as a third language starting in 4th grade as a special and expanding in 6th as a core content area. Eighth graders are consistently outperforming their high school peers on the Chinese STAMP exam.

While we are extremely happy with these results, we know that our students' brilliant minds cannot be captured through standardized tests alone and that real-world exposure and problem-solving matters most. Accordingly, our students also have the opportunity for both domestic and international programming including homestays, international exchanges, and, in middle school, trips to China, Spain, and Costa Rica. All students experience these trips regardless of their socio-economic status. At Oyster-Adams, we empower

our students to use their bilingualism to take pride in themselves and empathize across differences to help fashion a more equitable world.

We were awarded the National Blue Ribbon in 2006. There have been dramatic changes in the education landscape and at Oyster-Adams over the past 14 years. Most significantly, shortly after receiving that honor, we expanded from one PK-5 campus to two campuses that span PK-8. Building on our strong historical foundation, we have created a highly effective schoolwide dual-language middle school. At the same time, we have adopted and adapted more rigorous academic standards, new curricula, and lessons from bilingual brain research and the science of learning and development and increased international travel. 2006 was three principals ago.



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

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

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

Founded 50 years ago on the core belief that dual-language schools promote bilingual literacy and math proficiency, we believe any content can be taught effectively in any language. We are confident in our experience and capacity to adapt our instructional style to meet our student’s needs, applying the appropriate strategies to make content comprehensible regardless of language level. We are teaching rigorous academic content in a second (and for some students a third) language. To accomplish this within a standard school day, we work efficiently and creatively to maximize student learning.

Based on Jim Cummins's research on the bilingual brain, we intentionally build both Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) via a PK-8 language allocation plan that we implement with 100 percent fidelity. In PK and kindergarten, we follow a 90/10 Spanish immersion model, where 90 percent of all instruction is in Spanish and 10 percent (specifically, Art and Library) are in English. This model is supported by extensive research about dual-language early learners. All other grades follow a language allocation plan of 50/50: humanities is taught in both languages, math in Spanish, science in English, Chinese as a third language beginning in 4th grade, and truly bilingual specials throughout.

Across grades and content areas, we plan and revise unit plans, weekly plans, and daily lesson plans yearly based on student data needs. We designed our curriculum and instructional approach based on Wiggins and McTighe’s Understanding by Design (UbD) planning templates, Common Core-inspired shifts, dual-language research and best practice, and DCPS curriculum and instruction requirements. In addition, we have a robust bilingual Responsive to Intervention (RTI) model and schoolwide data driven practice that informs cohort rosters, bilingual interventions, enrichment and support courses in the elementary and middle school level.

#### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

We plan using Paired-Literacy Humanities Unit plans, based on Beeman and Urow's extensive research for the Bilingual Unit Framework, where dual-language learners' literacy skills are learned through thematic units and paired standards while never teaching the same standards at the same time in the opposite language. Our ELA curriculum is thus paired with Spanish language arts (SLA) in grades 1-8, with social studies standards embedded across both the ELA and SLA curriculum, as described more fully in Part IV.1.e.

We also pay special attention to deeply unpacking literacy standards to identify and share clear content and language objectives for every single class. The content is that "what" derived from the standards’ subskill and the language is the "how" that focuses on the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. We teach with precision, one subskill at a time, and use student work and formative assessments in weekly data meetings to drive all instructional decision making.

Because we believe that modeling is key to comprehensible input for students, we use exemplars in ELA/SLA as a way to provide both “feedforward” and “feedback” as well as normed rubrics across departments and grade levels for all three writing genres (expository, informational, and narrative). Our educators regularly use a variety of instructional modes depending on student need and the particular sub-skill being taught, including direct instruction (including all facets of reading comprehension), shared reading, novel-based instruction, close reading, guided reading, and inquiry-based and guided discourse.

Our bilingual language arts curriculum also undergoes constant revision to ensure that our units center on provocative essential questions that are relevant to students' lives and cultures, are rigorous according to data for each class and college and career readiness, and responsive to world events that our students need to

understand and discuss. Most recently, we extensively revised our primary grades curriculum (1st-3rd) including updating text selections for units of study to ensure our students' textual lineage included more Black, Latino, Asian and indigenous voices, characters, stories, and authors. At the 4th-8th grade levels, we have increased the rigor of our English and Spanish text sets given that over the past five years, our students have grown 20 percentage points in reading and on average are 350-450 Lexile levels higher. Our current ELA/SLA work focuses on norming our writing rubrics across the middle school and developing anchor exemplars of student writing to ensure we are providing rigorous, vertically aligned content and conventions to graduate our 8th graders ready to engage in honors and AP level classes in both languages upon entering high school.

If any visitor were to walk into our ELA/SLA classes, they would find children who are working on related themes, but in different languages, across precisely collected CCSS standards. For example, in a third grade classroom, you would see students with their research on Ruth Bader Ginsburg written and collected in Spanish on their table as they write first person narratives from Justice RBG perspective in English.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Over the past six years, we have worked hard to implement the Common Core Standards in Mathematics (CCSSM) both in our instructional approaches and our curriculum (Eureka), which we teach entirely in Spanish except for 7th grade. (In that "middle grade" of our middle school, we switch the language of instruction for math and science to support bilingual bridging of pre-algebraic vocabulary before high school.)

We are committed to heterogeneous grouping at all levels of math in K-8, never separating students into honors or advanced classes or tracks. We instead use daily data-driven instruction and technology to provide effective differentiation during Tier 1 instruction and, where necessary, Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, all in collaboration with SPED and ELL teachers. We also have clear content and language objectives for each lesson, accessible explanations and modeling, a significant time for students to practice and apply math concepts, skills, and strategies through meaningful activities. In every Eureka math lesson, we also emphasize language development through explicit instruction and multiple daily opportunities to use math language and vocabulary and fluency practice.

Our math program emphasizes two particular instructional strategies: high-quality student discourse and meaningful math projects aligned with the UbD framework. For two years, we invested in significant professional development on facilitating high-quality math discourse, so our teachers would learn the math talk moves that place students' thinking and talking at the center of each lesson. At Oyster-Adams, students do the heavy lifting in math and always have more talking "air time" than their teachers to practice their Spanish mathematical vocabulary. A focus on high-quality student-to-student math discourse also allows students to learn to express their thinking, connections, and disagreement in cooperative groups as they build their own understanding of the math concepts at hand. If you were to walk into any of our classes during math instruction, you would hear loud discussions among students as they work in small groups to figure out math concepts and explain their thinking. You would see manipulatives in some students' hands as they create and draw models while others sit on the floor/carpet/beanbags with work on clipboards, contributing to a group poster with markers and engaging in dialogue completely in Spanish without teacher prompting.

The focus on math projects using the UbD GRASPS framework is comparatively new to us, as we recently noticed that students' experiences in math did not include the really rich projects they were pursuing in the humanities. As an example of our emerging project-based approach to math, our third graders worked in groups over multiple weeks to create a budget and gala plan for our school's 50th-anniversary celebration. Students made floor plans for the banquet hall using measurement and multiplication arrays for seating. They also worked to create budget spending plans for food, music, entertainment, and then did a cost analysis to see if their efforts would actually result in a net gain for the school by developing projections for likely donations. Students presented to themselves, their teachers, their parents, and the school administration. We are developing, implementing, and improving similar rich project-based learning experiences throughout our math curriculum.

#### **1d. Science**

Our school's science program is innovative within the district in part because, as a PK-8 school, we have the opportunity to mold our students' science thinking over the course of 9-10 years. Teachers on both of our campuses collaborate to create high-quality science units and lessons that push not only scientific concepts and skills but also creative thinking and global responsibility.

Teachers in our early grades deliver rich hands-on lessons full of high-quality student discourse. Our youngest students are taught how to think and talk like scientists, to ask questions, and to analyze data prior to drawing conclusions and crafting solutions.

In upper elementary, we have departmentalized, so that student scientists are taught by science teaching specialists as a core subject every day. These grades focus on bridging the curiosity that the students bring with more rigorous content. They merge the use of technology, principles of design engineering, and hands-on experimental labs.

Our middle school is the only in our district that has replaced the traditional science courses (life, physical and earth sciences) and instead uses an integrated model. We chose to pioneer this approach because it aligns well with dual language practices and our desire for students to integrate their learning to help improve their communities. Middle school students receive instruction in both English and Spanish, with each teacher emphasizing language development in science class to help build rigorous academic vocabulary in both languages. Science class regularly involves making deep connections with the content from students' other content areas through rich and evidence-based written and oral discussions. Throughout the school year, students also tackle design engineering challenges that relate to actual problems in our world, supporting the Oyster-Adams value of thinking globally. Our integrated approach prepares our students to become the global science leaders of the future.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

To ensure our students' social studies education is cohesive, meaningful, and articulated across both languages, we follow a "paired literacy" humanities approach (Escamilla, 2010), also described above in Part IV.1.b, which embeds grade level social studies standards into our ELA and SLA units. Unlike "parallel literacy" programs in which the two languages are taught identically, "paired literacy" programs like ours encourage students to recognize the symbiotic nature of their two languages through thematic units with strategically paired CCSS standards. This allows for greater articulation across languages as students explore the same historical time frame but from different angles in each language. This approach also ensures that content and skills build upon and support each other, across classrooms, without repetition.

By pairing the two language arts and embedding social studies across both, we also help our students develop into the "globally responsible leaders" envisioned in our mission statement. As we explore social studies standards in the American context in our ELA humanities unit, our paired SLA unit teaches the same social studies content (e.g., a particular time period or historical pattern) but in the context of a different part of the world. This approach provides our students with the opportunity to develop metalinguistic awareness by allowing them to think critically about language, analyzing the similarities and differences between Spanish and English within the social studies content. For example, one 5th grade ELA unit explores Westward Expansion in the United States and its impact on Native Americans. At the same time, these students' SLA unit focuses on the Spanish conquest of Indigenous populations in what is now called Latin America. Similarly, our 8th graders study WWII and the Holocaust in Spanish while they explore Pearl Harbor and its impact on Japanese internment in English. What brings this paired bilingual social studies unit together is the Black American soldier helping liberate concentration camps in Eastern Europe only to come home to find Japanese-Americans interned and himself still unable to be served at the same counter as his white fellow veterans.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

On the academic side, our middle school curriculum tracks DC's rigorous standards that are aligned to college and career readiness and, as described in Part III, also prepares students to pass the AP Spanish Language test and outperform high schoolers on a Chinese language assessment. As we close achievement gaps and continue to see improved outcomes across all our student groups, we are confident that Oyster-Adams students enter high school prepared to achieve at high levels.

Just as (if not more) important, we prepare our middle school students for postsecondary success through all the ways we support their social and emotional development and, in particular, their executive functioning skills. Each middle school student belongs to an ALDEA (Spanish for little village) of a dozen students with one teacher. ALDEAs meet weekly for discussions about relevant topics including bullying, positive decision making, current events (such as gun violence in schools), and organizational skills. They also consult with their ALDEA teacher about their grades, plan when to attend content teachers' office hours, and communicate by email with their teachers. Our middle school administrators, counselors, and mental health professionals collaborate in a variety of other ways to support students through these formative years, so they enter ninth grade prepared to succeed in and out of the classroom.

Additionally, our international programming also supports their postsecondary preparation. Middle school students experience trips to China, an exchange program to Pamplona and Granada, and a three-week home-stay service experience in Costa Rica. To prepare for these experiences, students participate in cultural sensitivity training, safe traveling training, and weeks of preparation before traveling the world as bilingual ambassadors. For students who for some reason are unable to participate, we also provide rich domestic travel experiences. Finally, all 8th graders must complete at least 10 community service hours in a community organization of their choice in order to be promoted to high school.

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

Our vision for our pre-kindergarten program is to prepare our students to be socially and academically ready for a Spanish immersion kindergarten experience and a 50/50 bilingual experience in 1st-8th grade. Our four-year-olds acquire social skills through structured experiences and play. They are challenged and supported to become caring friends and emerging bilinguals. They persevere as they learn to negotiate social settings with their peers, with only as much adult support and scaffolding (such as modeling language) as is necessary, so they build independence through doing this hard social "work". In practice, this means we encourage peace building and encourage them to say things like, "How can I make this better?" when they make mistakes.

PK uses the Spanish version of Creative Curriculum, a research-based early childhood curriculum that uses play and theme-based units to integrate social-emotional skills, literacy skills, number sense, and other domains of early childhood development. Each unit incorporates indoor and outdoor experiences and ends with a culminating project or experience called a "WOW" moment. One example is the clothing unit where they sorted in their laundromat center, graphed clothing sizes in their math center, and engaged in extended dramatic play in their clothing store. For their culminating experience, the students planned a fashion show, created invitations for their families, organized themselves into the four seasons, and proudly walked the red carpet to show off their clothes.

We also host a districtwide Early Learning Support (ELS) special education class for children aged 3-5 years old whose IEPs call for full-time placement. The ELS program offers early intervention for students who have a developmental delay or other delays in cognition, communication, social/emotional, and/or motor and adaptive skills. We use research-based interventions and structured lessons to prepare students for a less restrictive environment, adapting Creative Curriculum for their context. It is also mission-aligned as one of the only bilingual options in DC for students with special needs who are non-verbal but whose families only speak to them in Spanish at home.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

### Arts

We are completely committed to the arts and all PK-8 students have art and music classes 1-2 times a week each. In visual arts, students learn to take risks, explore their creativity, and use multiple methods such as 2D, 3D, sketching, sculpting, computer design, painting, chalk, and watercolor. Student art consistently adorns our hallways, enriches schoolwide celebrations, and even raises funds for the school at an annual auction. Art is taught in English for PK-3 and in Spanish for 4-8. We also have music teachers at both campuses, and students have multiple opportunities to perform for the school and families. Our biggest arts highlight is our annual middle school musical that combines performing and visual arts.

### Physical education<sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>[sEP]</sub>

All PK-8 students have physical education 1-2 times a week, taught entirely in Spanish. Our PE curriculum focuses on healthy movement, skill building, and healthy life choices rather than a traditional focus on sports-based play. Our PE classes are fun and sweaty. Students come prepared with water bottles, sneakers, hair ties, and fitbits, and they know they will be winded by the end of class. Visitors to our PE classes hear Spanish music blasting and students counting, singing, giggling, and encouraging one another. The PE department also sparks interest in sports and aligns with our 4-8 grade coaches who have helped lead our student-athletes to city championships in many of the sports we offer (soccer, basketball, volleyball, track and field, cross country, swimming, and baseball).

### Foreign language<sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>[sEP]</sub>

Spanish and English are our core dual languages, so our foreign language is Chinese. We start in 4th and 5th grades with Chinese as a special focused on listening, speaking, and sparking interest in learning this third language. In our middle school grades, Chinese is a daily core content class that builds on listening and speaking and begins to introduce students to reading and writing. As noted above, our students have the opportunity to travel to China and have the highest Chinese STAMP test scores across all four language domains (speaking, reading, writing, listening) in DC.

In the past, with only one Chinese teacher, we have required middle graders to be on grade level in SLA, ELA, and math. Students who were not would engage in additional core content enrichment rather than participate in the Chinese program. However, we have redesigned this approach to be more equitable. We have invested more resources, so we will have multiple full-time Chinese teachers with whom we can now offer Chinese to all students, including in a “zero” period before school. Our students are natural language learners and deserve access to every opportunity even while getting all the additional academic support they need to succeed.

### Library/Media<sup>[[1]]</sup><sub>[sEP]</sub>

Our commitment to literacy richness includes two full-time bilingual librarians and the largest bilingual library collection in DC. All PK-8 students attend library/media class 1-2 times a week. We have trained and empowered students and parents to check out books and now circulate an average of 1,936 books per month. Our primary campus librarian has hosted a bilingual book fair for 25 years that is so well-regarded that other DC schools sometimes bring their students on field trips to buy books.

Even now, during distance learning due to COVID-19, our specials continue to play an essential part of our students' education. In addition to weekly assignment trackers and small group supports for 100% of our students in all core content areas, all students continue to access weekly art, music, foreign language, library and PE classes. Our specials teachers (like all core content teachers) have developed effective asynchronous video lessons, assignments, and feedback mechanisms. Students are proudly taking pictures of their art, practicing their Chinese skills, and even inviting their parents to join them for PE video workouts.

passing out laptops and hotspots early, even when the rest of the district struggled to get devices out quickly enough. We transitioned our entire school, specials included, into a virtual bilingual school serving 741 students across ten grades and three languages. It of course has not been perfect, but we are all trying our very best, and our best is beautiful. Our best is trilingual, arts-infused, student and family-centered, and equity-driven.

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

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

For students performing below grade level, there are interventions starting at kindergarten and spanning all the way up to 8th grade. Our goal is to remove these scaffolded supports over time in a thoughtful, data-informed process that helps us eliminate our achievement gaps.

In PK-3, we have invested in having an instructional aide in every classroom. This tier 1 intervention allows our educators to spend more time in small groups tailored to students' needs. Because aides serve such a pivotal role, we have very high expectations for candidates interviewing for these positions. As discussed more in Part V.3, our aides are often working toward their teaching certification. Aides really own their role as educators, taking responsibility for effective instruction of our curriculum. Most importantly, our students see them as a second teacher.

In grades K-5, there are five Targeted Academic Growth (TAG) teachers who lead small group pullout instruction to support students struggling with reading in either English or Spanish. TAG teachers also support students with math in Spanish. TAG groups meet a minimum of three times per week for 20 minutes. Each group of students receiving TAG support has specific data-driven objectives for the support cycle, and we track their progress toward those goals before exiting from the group. TAG has proven to be a powerful driver of our success in bringing so many students up to grade level in ELA, SLA, and math.

In middle school, students receive content-based intervention instruction through support classes that are integrated into the daily schedule. Students who are currently below grade level in math, reading, and/or science receive an hour of instruction, five times per week, focused on the skills needed to reach proficiency. These small classes are taught by their general education teachers, but we change every nine weeks to allow for movement in and out of support classes based on student need and current readiness levels.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

It is important that all of our students feel both supported and challenged, and for that reason, our small group instruction, from K-8, and middle school support classes also center around enrichment for students performing above grade level.

Data drives all instructional decisions made by our teachers. Assistant principals and instructional coaches meet with the teachers weekly to analyze student data and plan instruction. When teachers analyze their data, they are looking at the gaps and planning reteach lessons and they are also looking at mastery to plan extension lessons for those students. Because small group instruction is a focus at Oyster-Adams, all students can get more of what they need and less of what they already know. For that reason, students performing above grade level also receive regular small group instruction. In ELA and SLA, this looks like student-led literature circles and book talks for above-grade level students while other students may receive guided reading support. Or teachers will provide streamlined pathways for students who have mastered some building-block standards to proceed directly to a culminating writing task. In math, this looks like moving straight to application and real-world problems while other students may work with the teacher on conceptual understanding and fluency first.

In addition to consistent, small-group instruction in all classes and grades, enrichment classes are offered in grades 4-8. One hundred percent of 4th and 5th graders take Chinese, and many of them go on to take Chinese 1-3 in middle school. By the time some students graduate eighth grade, they are able to read, write,

and hold conversations comfortably in Mandarin. The middle school also offers enrichment during our support block while other students are getting targeted intervention. Enrichment classes are offered in all the content areas, based on student need, and are taught by the general education teachers. They include journalism, literature studies, extended math, and engineering.

### **3c. Special education**

Over the course of the last five years, we have increased our focus on closing the achievement gap for students receiving special education services. Our PARCC scores made clear how much this was a critical priority for our school. In 2015, 55 percent of all Oyster-Adams students were considered on track for the next grade level (scoring levels 4 or 5) in reading, but only seven percent of students with special education services were.

Special education teachers participate in grade-level team meetings, professional learning communities, and are key thought partners in curriculum development and revision. Middle school general education teachers have received extensive training on differentiation and specially-designed instruction. Our administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers are committed to continuous reflection on and refinement of their instructional practices to improve service delivery for all students and especially for students with IEPs.

Multidisciplinary teams collaborate to develop student-specific plans that consider an appropriate level of support, whether pull-out and/or push-in, while embracing all students as equal members of the community. We have also evolved our hiring practices to help us secure the most talented teachers for our students with the highest needs. For example, we now employ bilingual special education teachers to support dually-identified students (ELL and SPED) and expand our services to Spanish-language courses. Once they join our staff, all new teachers receive rigorous coaching in IEP development, parent/family communication and relationship building, and research-based instructional practices and interventions.

Following several years of this sustained focus and best practices, we can see progress in our students' PARCC scores. Students with IEPs increased from seven percent proficient or above in 2015 to 31 percent proficient or above in 2019. This is also 25 percentage points higher than the districtwide average. While we have made significant progress with this vulnerable student group, we know we still have work to do.

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

Undergirding our approach to supporting ELLs is the following core understandings: every single student in our community is a language learner (whether they are learning Spanish, English, and/or Chinese), and every single Oyster-Adams teacher (regardless of content) is a language teacher.

We have adopted as our central supportive structure language learners the two-way immersion education (TWIOP), which focuses on coordinating instruction in the two instructional languages to facilitate a transfer of skills and promote language and literacy development in both languages. Through thematic units and the development of paired-literacy curricular materials, teacher teams design learning experiences in which the English and Spanish courses coordinate standards-focused and cross-linguistic instruction to maximize student comprehension of rigorous content. Teachers develop both content and language objectives as the daily driving force for instruction. Teachers also implement dual-language best practices, including the use of visual aids, hand gestures, recognition of cognates, language stems for thinking and talking, repetition, examples and non-examples, wait time, appropriate rate of speech for comprehensible input, and structured pairs/groups for high-quality discourse.

To support students who may still struggle with language acquisition, we have invested in a team of full-time TAG teachers, who are dedicated to supporting students through small-group language development support in literacy and math. TAG support is offered in both English and Spanish, and we are currently expanding it to our older grades with a specific focus on students who have experienced interrupted schooling or have been long-term ELLs. In our middle school, we also have an ELL teacher who provides support through co-teaching in the general education setting or through sheltered instruction as needed.

Sheltered instruction enables the teacher to differentiate lessons that provide language-rich grade-level content in a manner most comprehensible for ELLs.

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



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

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

Oyster-Adams tigers/tigres are brilliant, bilingual and beautiful. They are absolutely the heartbeat of our school. They take pride in themselves, show a tremendous amount of poise when confronted with challenges, and love one another so much. The majority of our students have known each other for 9-10 years by the time we promote them to high school. An 8th grader said it best recently when he was asked why he would recommend our school to his peers: “It’s a place where you are loved for just being who you are.”

Our biggest shift and success in positively engaging students have occurred in the past two years through our journey to becoming an official Conscious Discipline school and adding a meditation room to our middle school floor. Through Conscious Discipline (CD) and meditation practice in the middle school, we are aiming to build a resilient and warm school family that focuses on safety, connection, self-regulation, and problem-solving. Our faculty and staff have learned from CD experts specific strategies to help move students from being physically aggressive (survival state) or verbally unregulated (emotional state) to become more integrated, so they can consistently learn and use problem-solving skills (executive state) in and out of school. We are intentionally generating a sense of belonging for all students that helps sustain them in moments of calm, tantrum, and crisis.

A visitor to our primary campus will not see traditional public behavior charts or point systems on the walls. Instead, they will see students making and reflecting on daily commitments, framed pictures of children and their families, feelings buddies dolls, the “wish well” strategy in action, and safe spaces with self-regulation and breathing exercise tools for students to use. When the visitor arrives at our middle school, they might encounter a meditation circle or students practicing yoga on a Friday afternoon during club time.

Our faculty has bought into CD theory and practice. Our instructional coach recently shared, “I believe in Conscious Discipline to the core. The more I learn about it, the more I am able to respond effectively to the needs of my students, co-workers, children, and those close to me. A teacher’s reflection illustrates our school’s commitment to effective professional development: “I learned what is happening to students when they are upset in class and what specific things I can say/do to help them. I was able to have time to practice what I would say or do in different situations to help students feel loved even while in crisis.”

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

Oyster-Adams families are fervent believers in our mission, philosophy, and model who generously support our faculty and students often for 9-10 years. They are diverse in all aspects (e.g., ethnicity, race, income, educational levels, documentation status, and family structure) and support our embrace of diversity. We believe our families are critical partners in our students’ education and have multiple systems for deeply engaging them in that joint mission. Our family engagement program is grounded on trusting relationships with grade-level teachers, administration, and front office staff. Effective communication with families is important to us and we make sure that school/home communication is two-way, consistent, and accessible to all our families (i.e., everything is translated into Spanish).

Parents receive weekly newsletters from the principal and weekly grade-level teacher newsletters in addition to more real-time communication through various mobile applications. In addition, parents receive weekly reminders on the month’s activities giving families an opportunity to make arrangements to participate. To encourage participation from all types of families, we offer engagement opportunities that require various levels of commitment (e.g., volunteering at single events, organizing the Black History Month celebration, chaperoning field trips, serving as room parents liaisons, and serving on year-long committees).

We elevate parent voices when making critical financial, systems, and academic decisions through monthly meetings of our Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), which includes the principal, eight parents, and four teachers. Additionally, membership in our parent-led organization, Oyster Community Council (OCC),

reflects our diverse school population and is focused on raising discretionary funds to support our school's goals and help meet our unique needs. OCC has been transformational in our ability to support our most vulnerable families during the current crisis. OCC's response efforts included re-designating funding and raising an additional \$40,000 (so far) to ensure that every child has a tablet and to provide weekly financial support directly to families who need help with housing and food costs. Overall, we see our families as a fundamental extension of our school community, and we know that our school thrives because of the support and partnerships we have with them.

Since 1979, we have implemented our own after-school program through a close partnership with a homegrown non-profit organization, Oyster Creative Activities (OCA), to provide high-quality bilingual after-school programming. OCA, which is housed onsite, charges program fees according to a sliding scale that ranges from free to \$360 a month per child. The slide scale helps us ensure all students have equitable access to after-school opportunities from 3:30-6:30 every day. Our sliding scale is public, and our community agrees with our approach.

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

Oyster-Adams is a school that prides itself on continuously promoting a culture of equity and excellence amongst our staff in a variety of ways. We are proud that 88% of our teachers are rated effective or highly effective through DCPS' rigorous evaluation system, and we know that with our coaching and PD support, all teachers can reach these levels of excellence and continue to grow throughout their careers. Our staff recognizes the positive, professional culture we continue to build. Results from our two most recent administrations of the Insight Survey, a national instructional culture index administered anonymously by TNTF, has placed Oyster-Adams in the top quartile of all schools in our district. We also have retained 94% of our effective and highly effective faculty over the past four years.

Shared leadership and decision making are hallmarks of our professional culture. All major decisions are vetted through various stakeholders, such as our Academic Leadership Team (ALT), along with OCC and LSAT, all of which have all been created with diversity at the forefront. Oyster-Adams educators are given opportunities to grow personally and professionally by becoming grade-level leads, department heads, RTI leads, committee leaders, and new faculty mentors. We are also committed to being a training ground for effective dual-language teachers by mentoring, developing, and coaching our instructional aides. Over the past six years, eleven of our aides have transitioned successfully to teacher roles. Our reputation as a great place to teach is further evidenced by having over 80 applicants last year for only five faculty vacancies.

Differences and languages are at the core of Oyster-Adams and our staff culture. We are proud that our staff is 42% Latino/Hispanic, 23% white, 11% Black, 2% Asian, and 1% mixed race, and that 22% are immigrants and English Language Learners. Staff are encouraged to express themselves in their most comfortable language during interviews, staff meetings, and collaborative planning sessions confident they will be understood. We deliver professional development in both languages. We actively recruit teachers from around the world (often paying for VISA sponsorship to allow them to join our faculty), and currently employ staff from nine Spanish-speaking countries and five continents, as well as English-dominant teachers from all across the United States. Additionally, we have faculty members who serve as leaders and role models in the LGBTQ and disability communities. They lead by word and example, ensuring our students, families, and staff all know that Oyster-Adams is a safe space where all are welcome and all can thrive.

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

Oyster-Adams' principal wakes up every day with the intent to close the achievement gap. It is an intent she articulates to her staff, potential hires, and families. The reason for her transparency is to ensure everyone is working toward the same mission — academic success for each and every student — so that it is clear that all decisions center on that goal and with the hope that all decisions made by our community will too. The principal's mission to close the achievement gap through bilingual education manifests in every aspect of her leadership. The learnings, discussions, and decisions at staff meetings, ALT Meetings, LSAT Meetings, and even grade-level meetings are all focused on this goal.

At Oyster-Adams, when we talk about the achievement gap, we talk about our students, treating them as people and not data points. The principal, instructional coaches, teachers, and aids all know the names of the five ELL students, the two students with IEPs, the nine Latino students in their class who are not yet performing at the same level as their white and/or general-education counterparts. Closing the achievement gap means targeted academic intervention, but it also means thoughtful social-emotional support. And that can only be achieved by truly knowing our students.

Overall, leadership is distributed because work this challenging and complex cannot be done alone. The principal sets the vision and works closely and empowers the assistant principals and instructional coaches to create the systems — professional development for teachers, academic intervention and social-emotional support for students, family outreach, and hiring — to help advance toward it. The assistant principals and instructional coaches implement the work directly with teachers, who then assume leadership roles with their fellow educators and enlist the students in pursuing our shared vision. On each of these levels, decisions are informed by data, but the key question is always, “What is best and most equitable for our kids?”

In addition, we distribute between instructional, school culture and operational leadership in order to meet the unique challenge of leading 10 grades over two campuses. The director of strategy and logistics is what we like to call, “the principal of all things non-instructional” and ensures that teachers have the systems and protocols to succeed and that parents in particular experience excellent communication and customer service. This allows the principal to focus on instruction and faculty development. In addition, the Dean of Students at the middle school keeps a constant pulse on student support services and manages all domestic and international travel for students, teachers and parents.

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

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The key to our success is the Oyster-Adams dual-language program. Developed and improved over 50 years of pedagogy, development, and academic success, it is the reason why so many families (and educators) seek out the school. Our PK seats were the most sought-after seats in the citywide lottery with 300 applicants per seat. As a dual-language school, we are teaching more than other schools. To accomplish this within the standard school day, we have to work efficiently, achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort, expense, or physical space. We create an environment of high accountability for all members of the community (students, parents, and staff) to implement a rigorous, standards-based curriculum in Spanish and English that will prepare all students for success in academically rigorous high schools.

As dual language becomes more popular across the country, many schools are relying on research on how to make it work; however, what emerging schools need more than anything is to see an effective model in action. Oyster-Adams is such a flagship school, where students outperform comparable monolingual schools on annual assessments and where we are proving that opportunity and achievement gaps must and will be closed. We often provide coaching to and host visits from other schools on our language allocation plan, how to maintain a 50/50 two-way student population, staffing/budget, dual-language curriculum, best instructional practices, and approaches to bilingual assessment.

This year alone, the school hosted educators from within and outside DC, and we have also hosted international site visits from Panama, China, Peru, and Spain. We have sent an assistant principal and teacher to coach a dual-language school in rural Honduras for a week. Our principal has directly coached dual-language principals across DC and has delivered professional development to district leaders for the NYC Department of Education. We are already approved for a study with University of Maryland researchers who are examining the bilingual brain's ability to multitask.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the greater dual-language education movement because we believe that a high-quality dual-language education is the best option for any type of student. For our achievement and our progress, Oyster-Adams has been recognized as setting a standard of excellence and equity. But we find the greatest validation of our model and our efforts in the life-changing moments our students experience. We know our strategies for excellence and equity are working when newcomer ELL students who arrived here as unaccompanied minors assume a position of expert for at least half of the day, and everyone knows that our learning community is successful because of and not in spite of them.