

U.S. Department of Education
2023 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 Ms. Elizabeth Davis
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 28593 North Bradley Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Lake Forest State IL Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 60045-1154

County Lake County

Telephone (847) 362-2021 Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://www.rondout.org> E-mail elizabeth.davis@rondoutsd72.org

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Jenny Wojcik PhD E-mail jenny.wojcik@rondoutsd72.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Rondout School District 72 Tel. (847) 362-2021

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.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Scott Kopecky
(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.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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

☐ Urban (city or town)
☒ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Students
PreK	0
K	12
1	15
2	20
3	13
4	20
5	12
6	19
7	23
8	17
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	151

*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):
- 0.6 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 6 % Asian
 - 2.7 % Black or African American
 - 12.6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 68.2 % White
 - 9.9 % 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 2021 - 2022 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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	6
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	142
(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):

Arabic, Bulgarian, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Hungarian, Latvian, Marathi, Tagalog, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %
21 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9 %

Total number students who qualify: 13

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 26 %
Total number of students served 40

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>4</u> Autism	<u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>5</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>3</u> Developmental Delay	<u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>9</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. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 6 %
Total number of students served: 9

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 2

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	9
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	96%	90%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Rondout Elementary School is an independent public school district providing a well-rounded education to prepare students to be responsible, productive citizens.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1547/Rondout_SD_72/2355623/710_Equal_Educational_Opportunities.pdf

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Rondout School has a rich and robust history. It has been a fixture in Lake County since the mid 1800's. In the late summer of 1917, the school moved from its humble beginnings on Old School and Bradley Road to its current location. A new two room, red brick school building on Bradley Road opened up and continues to serve as the anchor of the current school campus. Rondout became and still is a beacon in the community, lighting the way to learning for generations of families who continue to attend Rondout School today, including some legacy families who are third and fourth generation families.

Rondout focuses on a personalized education, providing opportunities that speak to each child, and focusing on their individual needs not only as a learner, but as the whole child. Our staff keep students at the heart of all decisions, addressing not only their academic needs, but also considering their social-emotional wellbeing. Rondout is a microcosm of the larger society with racial, ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic diversity. With all grades kindergarten through eighth grade in the building, we are able to foster leadership and mentorship opportunities between older and younger students. Teachers take time to foster learning across the grade levels and provide experiences for students to find community within the larger context of the school building.

Academics, life skills and the arts are the three focal areas of the educational program. Preparing its students to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and unpredictable global future is at the heart of Rondout's mission and vision. Becoming critical thinkers, collaborators, problem solvers and effective communicators is essential with many opportunities to develop those skills embedded into the students' day-to-day experiences. The educational program is driven by our Commitment to Excellence. Staff, students and parents sign a Commitment to Excellence annually to demonstrate their support for the academic and behavioral rigor expected of all members of the learning community. We have developed Individual Student Learning Improvement Plans that not only record student progress on school based assessments over time, but also allow stakeholders to see trends in learning and further personalize the supports students may need. This robust assessment framework allows Rondout to measure and predict student achievement and success.

Parent partnerships are an integral part of the Rondout Elementary School culture. At the onset of each academic year, parents are invited to an Intake Conference, an opportunity to sit and discuss their child with classroom teachers in advance of the first day of student attendance. This conference allows for both parents and staff to start the year with open lines of communication as well as valuable information about student learners. We continue with our partnership through regularly scheduled zoom panels, family events, conferences and our weekly Falcon Flyer, a school wide digital newsletter. Through these channels of communication, we are able to address emerging questions, and be responsive to the needs of our school community. Opportunities such as Bedtime Story Night, and a Family Fun-Run have emerged as new events to bring our community together in shared experiences, and are a direct result from dialogue with families.

One area Rondout continues to grow is our living social studies program, "The Village", which simulates government in action. Students participate in one of eight departments with specific tasks to enhance life in the school community. For example, Parks and Recreation take time to inventory recess equipment, and brainstorm ideas for games at recess while the Health and Wellness department surveys students about the lunch options and provide mindfulness activities. Each department provides an opportunity for student voice and influence in their learning environment. This unique approach to student government engages all students in grades three through eight, and immerses students within the civics of local government.

Rondout staff seek to provide experiences that connect student learning with real life application. The district's "Green" agenda weaves work in sustainability, STEM, science and ecology into the curriculum. Students are able to engage in woodland restoration, grow their own vegetables, raise chickens and conserve the resources of the planet in their own "backyard". Families are encouraged to attend gardening parties throughout the summer, helping to harvest a bounty that is then donated to local food pantries. Our recently restored Rondout Nature Preserve includes an outdoor classroom, trails through the woods and newly restored wetlands ecosystem. Moving beyond simply recycling, service learning and conservation are embedded in daily life.

Rondout starts each day with a pledge to make respect, responsibility, honesty, and kindness part of our lives each day. As Rondout prepares its students for success and happiness in the years ahead, what will continue at the heart of life at Rondout will be a program responsive to the evolving world, driven by a commitment to excellence and a dedication to meeting the individual needs of each child while living life the Rondout Way.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Reading/English Language Arts instruction is provided daily in grades K-8. Students are organized into three instructional clusters with K-2, 3-5 and 6-8 working together sharing teachers and resources. Each cluster team addresses the Illinois State Learning Standards through the core curriculum of ReadyGen by Savvas/Pearson in grades K-5 and through MyPerspectives in grades 6-8. Staff review curriculum resources on a regular basis, consulting leading research on best practice, reviewing the research regarding neuroscience and cognition to guide their practice and support their consideration of curriculum approaches and developmentally appropriate practices. The core English Language Arts curriculum, is enhanced with a toolkit of other research based programs available to use as needed based on the learning profiles of the students. When developing lessons for literacy, Rondout utilizes a variety of types of text, each with a specific purpose to address grade level standards. Differentiation strategies support students working across multiple grade levels of standards to foster individual student growth. Staff develop projects and assignments that encourage the analysis and synthesis of information. They also consider the students in their classes, their interests and passions, and work to make connections between the content while providing student choice. Small reading groups are formed to address needs which emerge from both formal and informal assessment data. This provides an opportunity to engage in specific, data driven instruction with groups of students, while other students engage in independent practices within established routines. Reading and writing are taught in the content areas, which provides opportunities outside of the literacy block to develop and apply skills. Staff integrate technology into the literacy curriculum, embedding videos, interactive review, and technology based projects to reinforce content. Staff have access to a variety of online resources that enable differentiation within classrooms, from leveled texts to vocabulary videos. Rondout utilizes Lexia, a virtual program in tandem with the core curriculum. Lexia is an individualized online reading program that adapts to the needs of individual students reinforcing skills and proactively addressing any potential gaps in learning with teachers monitoring student growth and retention.

Formative assessment of student progress is maintained through regular review of student performance using both formal and informal strategies. Staff review student work and progress, adapting as needed to address misconceptions and re-teaching skills. Formatively, curriculum resources, rubrics and anecdotal observations provide immediate feedback to staff within the classroom. The standards based report cards for grades K-5 embed a continuous assessment of skill development while the assessment tools within the My Perspectives program provide the Upper School (Grades 6-8) staff with measures of progress and mastery. All students participate in the Fountas and Pinnell reading inventory, until they have demonstrated proficiency at the highest level. In addition, students in grades three through eight are assessed with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, as well as writing inventories to assess needs specifically associated with written composition. Students participate in the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, which assesses English Language Arts skills of students across the state. Rondout staff are able to confidently track student progress in Literacy, and communicate areas of strength and continued growth to parents through parent conferences, trimester based report cards and shared assessment data throughout the year.

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

Rondout students engage with math content daily within the classroom. The Illinois Learning Standards for Mathematics are addressed utilizing the McGraw Hill math programs: MyMath and Glencoe Math. When planning for math instruction, staff develop opportunities for students to not only practice the skills, but apply and explain the key mathematical concepts that support their deeper understanding rather than simply rote learning of math facts. Connections to the real world applications of math and highlighting math across the curricular areas are an important component of the math experience for our students. We encourage students to be able to “talk math” and to see the connections to STEM topics and projects. Differentiation is seamlessly integrated into the classrooms, with opportunities embedded to provide re-teaching, modifications, or accommodations as needed to meet student needs. Staff integrate technology resources

into their math instruction. Videos with engaging songs to remember processes, interactive math tools, and reinforcing math games provide an enriching math experience for our students when engaging with the content and development of skills. Within the Upper School setting, grades six through eight, Rondout students are able to progress through pre-algebra skills. Based upon their aptitude for pre-algebra readiness, we provide a variety of courses that address the math skills needed to transition students to high school. Building connections to authentic experiences using math is highlighted by activities such as running the school store and engaging with individuals whose work is grounded in math through such programs as Engineers Teaching Algebra. Making math come to life is a driver in planning for instruction.

Staff utilize a variety of assessment tools to monitor student progress and mastery of math skills. All students participate in the STAR Math assessment at three points in the school year. This program allows us to monitor specific skill attainment and provides feedback for conversations about student support. Students in grades 5 through 8 participate in the Algebra Aptitude Test, which gives an indication if students have a strong base of foundational skills to begin learning more advanced mathematical concepts. Students participate in the Illinois Assessment of Readiness each spring, which assesses math skills, concepts and applications expected by grade level standards. In addition, staff have developed a repertoire of formative and performance-based assessments, from exit slips to unit assessments, which provide not only opportunity for students to show mastery, but also a variety of methods for students to demonstrate their learning.

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

Inquiry based learning is the foundation of the Science program at Rondout. Next Generation Science Standards along with The Illinois Learning Standards for Science are addressed through our STEMscopes curriculum which utilizes the 5E (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate) model.

Students are engaged with science in the world around them. Conceptual understanding is built along with life skills such as problem solving, perseverance, and team work. Staff work collaboratively to plan, teach and assess student learning. Digital resources build deeper understanding through gamification, virtual simulations and virtual field trips. Technology supports differentiation through UDL (Universal Design for Learning) tools to support access to the science experience for all learners. Project based learning experiences are also interwoven into the learning agenda.

Students build their science knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding through authentic experiences in Rondout's Nature Preserve. The outdoor classroom is a living laboratory expanding eco-literacy skills with first hand experiences in the role each of us has in protecting the planet. From seed gathering in our Bird, Bee and Butterfly Garden, through collecting water samples in the wetland area, to removing invasive buckthorn in our woodland area, students are engaged in real life "citizen science". Virtual field trips, after-school clubs and activities such as Green Club, MATE underwater robotic program (Marine Advanced Technology Education) and collaboration with local naturalists at the Wildlife Discovery Center and the Lake County Forest Preserve District extend learning beyond the walls of the schoolhouse, helping make connections to science in the real world.

Science is assessed through written, digital and performance based assessments. The curriculum provides a pathway of resources for follow-up should intervention or acceleration be warranted. Standardized science assessments are also administered at the state level in grades 5 and 8 each year.

Self-reflection is also a key tool and rubrics provide frameworks for review. Starting in kindergarten students begin to utilize the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning process which provides a strong foundation of scientific analysis and writing.

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

Social studies instruction comes to life in many ways at Rondout. Students engage with social studies concepts through direct instruction utilizing the TCI curriculum, through project based learning, through real world experiences leveraging the availability of rich cultural resources locally and digitally, exploration of current events and through the living social studies program, "The Village", created by Rondout nearly 15

years ago.

Within the TCI curriculum, the instructional focus begins with community roles, and as they grow the content expands to a global perspective. As students progress into the Upper Grades, they take a more historical approach, learning about the events that shaped our state, nation and world. Students learn about the Illinois Government, as well as the Federal Government. In eighth grade, students travel to Springfield, Illinois to see our state's capitol in action. In addition, after completing their study of World War II and the atrocities of the Holocaust, students in eighth grade visit the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. This powerful experience brings to life the importance of learning about the past, and how we, as citizens, can use that information to shape a better future.

"The Village" simulates life in a town with eight departments. Each of these departments plays an authentic role in the operation of the school. Students across the grade levels are grouped based on interests and meet weekly to carry out the work of their departments mentored by faculty advisors. Student voice and leadership are developed and each Friday students lead a town meeting to share the work of the departments and engage as a school community.

Assessment tools are both informal and formal and include the use of project based assessments along with rubrics, self-reflection, peer feedback, written assessments and oral presentations. Students also engage in self-reflection about their participation in the Village and how well they are meeting their responsibilities. There are currently no standardized assessments utilized for the social studies program.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

Rondout provides opportunities for students to engage in the development of life skills that will support multiple pathways to life success in the future including college, vocational or unique career pathways. Critical thinking, problem-solving, communication tools, media literacy and design thinking experiences are embedded across the curriculum in the Upper School (Grades 6, 7 and 8). Aligned with the understanding of the adolescent brain, Rondout created a class for students in grades 6, 7 and 8 called Lifestyle Literacy. The school social worker teaches this class weekly for each grade providing strategies for supporting mental health, stress-management, executive functioning skills, building a growth mindset, navigating social interactions and making good choices. This class also engages students in conversation about their goals for their future including career paths. This year we created and initiated a new career awareness program called "World of Work" for our 8th grade students. The conversation with students now include partnerships with local businesses that allow students to explore potential employment paths. A variety of employment avenues were included from banking, to technology, cybersecurity, manufacturing and media production. Students visit the workplace, engage with employees at all levels and reflect on the experience when they return. This goes well beyond a career day format. This first year has been very successful and we look to expand these opportunities to spiral through the grades.

As a K-8 building, being an Upper School student brings an expectation of leadership and modeling for the younger students. Upper School students volunteer in many ways including helping with the K-2 lunch period, leading the Village Town Hall Meetings, being peer tutors, supporting special activities like serving as storytellers for Bedtime Story Night and assisting during curricular activities in the elementary grades. Student leadership and student voice are valued and celebrated as our Upper School students rise to the occasion afforded by the K-8 environment.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The Arts program is vibrant, strongly supported by the school and a cornerstone of the whole child focus with direct instruction in art twice a week and in general music twice a week.

In art, students work on developing the confidence and skills an artist needs, from color theory to texture, and line. Students are encouraged to make art, to be creative, providing an outlet for ideas, thoughts and feelings resulting in a finished product to be shared and celebrated. Projects vary based on student interest, from designing sneakers, to building line castles and sculpting Alebrijes, students create breathtaking work to showcase their inner artist. The artifacts from the program are woven into the fabric of the building with rich displays both permanent and temporary, showcasing student artists.

Rondout's strong music program begins in Kindergarten and continues through 8th grade with a focus of understanding music theory, tone, dynamics and pitch. Students engage in creative work, composing pieces that integrate voice, instruments and movement. Our performances are exceptional, showcasing student learning and highlighting original compositions. Students engage with a variety of instruments, from drums and mallet instruments, to recorders and wind instruments. All students participate in the band curriculum in fourth grade and band continues as an extra-curricular program starting in fifth grade. The annual Arts Night, where our visual and performance arts meet, is a powerful display of movement, color, shape and sound and evidence of the learning in the arts.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

All Rondout students (K-8) participate in physical education five times a week. Students are exposed to a variety of physical fitness skills, from team sports to lifestyle activities and mindfulness strategies. The physical education program is structured to encourage the value of team work and problem solving. Students are given the tools to settle disagreements independently and foster a collaborative environment where movement is a priority and everyone is able to be successful. While addressing the Illinois State Standards for physical education and health, students experience golf, volleyball, floor hockey, and mat-ball. Younger students focus on the fundamental skills, proper form and body placement relating to different positions and actions. Students also participate in Fitness Testing, which monitors their overall health and fitness during the school year. Extracurricular sports activities focus on building young athletes' skills, mindsets and teamwork.

Rondout partners with outside experts in health education to address key health topics for students as their bodies change and grow. We work to create a safe environment for students to learn about themselves and some of the challenges they may encounter as they mature. Social emotional learning is embedded throughout classes, and curricula at Rondout. Learning strategies to support mental health, manage stressful situations, navigate peer relationships and make good choices are all key components to supporting our students' overall health and wellness.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

Students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade participate in daily Spanish Language instruction. Rondout's foreign language program provides opportunities to communicate in Spanish and to gain a deeper understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures in Spanish speaking countries. All Spanish instruction is completely immersive, integrates TPR strategies and staff use only Spanish during instruction. While our youngest students focus on the fundamentals of acquiring a new language, older students receive an in-depth analysis of language mechanics as well as a comprehensive survey of different cultures and traditions. The sounds of music, Spanish conversation and special school-wide activities vibrate through the hallways of Rondout, fostering an excitement for the language across the grade levels. Enrichment is provided for native speakers and extensions are available for all who could benefit. The Spanish Language program also influences a variety of school wide experiences for students that vary over time. Students have taken field trips to the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, and visited exhibits showcasing Alebrijes statues. As students leave our language program for high school, they complete a placement exam, where their hard work in language acquisition is highlighted and celebrated with students generally placing in advanced levels of Spanish at the high school.

2d. Technology/library/media

The Rondout Library Media Center is an interactive oasis, where students are immersed in the world of print and digital media in an inviting environment with every nook and cranny filled with things to stimulate enthusiasm for learning. While the library is open at all times, students in Kindergarten through fifth grade have a dedicated time once a week to learn about the wonders of the library and work on research and media skills. The rich collection of books and resources makes checking out books a highlight for students. Our full time library media director, supports student choices through introduction to authors, different genre and digital resources. Recently, Rondout has an increased focus on supporting digital citizenship, equipping students with the critical thinking and cybersecurity skills necessary to be engaged as safe digital citizens.

One-to-one technology is embedded into the program with all students having dedicated devices that are appropriate to their developmental level. They interact with digital resources seamlessly throughout the day. As students' progress through the grade levels, they learn to type, manipulate document layouts and interact with the variety of online platforms each day. Staff have a variety of digital tools and subscriptions to utilize when planning instruction, such as projection equipment, learning applications and programs.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

Social Emotional learning is a key component of our life skills focus. As early as 2010 Rondout was identified as a leader in the field of social emotional learning having been identified as a State School of Character in Illinois and recognized for its promising practices in character education for the work in developing The Village Program. The Second Step Program has been the foundational curriculum for Rondout's SEL work and was selected based on a review of the CASEL select programs. The curriculum supports instruction to help students learn explicitly how to resolve conflict, manage emotions, and interact with their peers. In addition to teaching the social emotional curriculum, teachers have expanded on the concepts, including calm corners, and mindfulness strategies into their classroom routines.

Many classes begin with daily affirmations, setting an intention for the day and encouraging a growth mindset for students as they take on academic challenges. Providing a specific, common language for students and staff to express their emotions, feelings and challenges has strengthened students' ability to overcome barriers they may face throughout the day, and equip staff with strategies to help guide students. Rondout's focus and vision for SEL set the stage for its long-term partnership with Rush Neuro-Behavioral Center in its work to develop social emotional assessment tools with Rondout piloting early versions of the current SELWeb and VESIP assessments.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Rondout has developed a strong systematic approach to monitor and address student growth, progress and needs including reviewing student achievement, problem solving intervention initiatives and monitoring the interventions implemented. Each week's cluster team meetings include discussion of individual student concerns as well as finding trends in behavior and skill attainment. The student support team meets to discuss specific cases, calling on an extensive library of research-based interventions that can be applied to meet student needs through the use of the Education Modified program. An essential component of meeting the needs of those students who are performing below grade level is Rondout's ability to support students through instructional groupings in core academic areas. These groupings are flexible and may be short or long term. Both intervention and general education staff have access to a wide variety of curricular materials to customize instruction for individuals or groups of students. Students in these small groups are able to access content at their instructional level, and specifically target any significant gaps in reading or math. For example, staff may use a curriculum specifically designed to reinforce phonics skills with students who continue to struggle with decoding. In addition, the reading interventionist may teach a group of students for literacy who are all performing below grade level. Response to Intervention is embedded within the cluster structure.

The support systems in place for all Rondout students includes interventionists, cluster support teachers, the social worker, school psychologist and other members of the student services team in collaboration with homeroom teachers. Parents are also included in the conversation to be informed and they may also have specific roles to play in supporting their student. The whole child focus brings together these human and instructional resources to curate specific plans to personalize instruction. One successful strategy has been the implementation of adaptive online programs in literacy and math which provide individualized review. These platforms generate specific feedback to students within the school day, but also provide independent opportunities outside of school for students to access skill building resources with parents.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Rondout students who are performing above grade level, are also discussed and supported through the weekly team meeting process. Given the robust nature of the curriculum utilized at Rondout, there are opportunities to seamlessly further student learning and enrich their academic experiences. Providing choice of topics and projects offer one avenue for incorporating student strengths. In addition, they are challenged with opportunities to not only explain their thinking, but connect their studies to other areas of content and provide multiple pathways to a singular goal. Students who demonstrate exceptional academic aptitude may also be placed in an accelerated course of study within our cluster system. As students matriculate through the grades, Rondout has partnered with outside entities such as Illinois Virtual School and Academy, our local high school and community college to offer advanced courses of study to meet student needs. Rondout staff stand out in their ability to focus on the whole child. When discussing students who show abilities above their grade level, conversations also include strategies to support their social emotional well-being, in addition to their academics. When exploring opportunities to extend learning for students, staff also consider leadership and mentorship projects. With all grade levels housed within one building at Rondout, there are opportunities for students to showcase their learning with other grade levels, or share passion projects. Our goal is to provide all students the opportunity to develop their talents and interests. The cluster system and differentiation utilizing the core curricula support us in meeting that goal.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Rondout strives to maintain an inclusive learning environment for our students with disabilities. We work diligently to provide an environment that will allow students with disabilities to be part of the mainstream and remain in their home school. The general education and special education teams share the responsibility for the educational program for our special education students. Students at Rondout with disabilities have curriculum, instructional practices, and a variety of intervention strategies available to them to meet their diverse needs. Special education staff frequently collaborate and plan with homeroom teachers and special subjects teachers to ensure the processes and products are accessible to students with disabilities. The embedded cluster support structure is essential to providing developmentally appropriate instruction at the students' levels. Special education staff have an advanced knowledge of not only the content taught in classes, but the unique teaching styles in each course, which coupled with a plethora of resources and strategies, allows for the creation of targeted, informed and effective interventions, modifications and accommodations. This expertise is designed to supply students with the tools, strategies and re-teaching necessary to access their education. Special education students also may receive dedicated resource time, which targets their identified goals, and provides a space to work on their specific needs. Rondout's structure, size and expert staff allow for students to have flexible schedules if needed, and the ability to support students with a wide breadth of needs within the home school setting. One area of recent focus for Rondout as a result of supporting students with more complex needs, is the expansion of time for inclusion meetings, where teams of staff are able to consistently dedicate time to discuss success and challenges specific students face throughout their day. These regular meetings are adaptive to needs that may arise throughout the school year. The Rondout special education team's philosophy is to focus on the whole child, acknowledging that students are more than their test scores or challenges, and all students have an area of strength, which should be amplified. Rondout staff have a deep understanding of the connection between academic success, and the overall well-being of a child and work to address social emotional needs and provide spaces for students to feel connected and heard. Parents are key members of their child's team and are encouraged to be active participants in their child's educational journey through a variety of means

including check-in meetings, communication logs, mentoring as well as the legislated annual reviews and progress monitoring communication.

3d. English Language Learners:

English Language Learners at Rondout receive a variety of supports throughout their day. The English Language Learner teacher regularly collaborates with staff, providing input on strategies and accommodations that will make learning accessible to their students. Students who are new to the country, may use technological tools to help them maintain their content acquisition as they attain knowledge of the English language. Students may also have accommodations to allow for different modalities of assessments, providing information in a different way, or opportunities to review and revisit questions on assessments. The English Language Learner teacher also has specific times to meet with students, addressing skills that may need reinforcing, or reviewing and previewing content from the classroom. The teacher has a flexible model, pushing into classrooms as needed to provide support in the moment for students. Students within the program also have access to an online English acquisition program, which is self-paced, and fosters their understanding of vocabulary and grammar within the English Language. The consistency of support staff throughout a students' years at Rondout mean that the ability to adapt and support individual needs over time only grows as students and staff work together. Throughout their time in the program, students' home languages are respected and celebrated. Connections with parents are a key to the success of the EL program and wrap around support is provided by our support staff and EL teacher to assist EL families outside of school. While the goal of the program is to encourage attainment of the English language, we value the rich histories of each family, and unique perspectives they provide that contribute to the Rondout community.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Students are at the center of the Rondout universe and key to the strength of the connections within that universe is the sense of community, feeling of family and the mutual respect between all those who call Rondout home whether they are staff, students or families. Due to our size and philosophy, every student has at least one or more trusted adults that they can connect with. The administration also knows every student by name and there is no anonymity. Empowering students' voice, building connections and demonstrating genuine interest in student's needs and interests is at the heart of engaging our students in the community of learners. No one gets lost or falls through the cracks. Students are treated with respect and they respond in turn. We strive to make every child feel safe, secure and valued.

Teaching as we would want our own children to be taught is a part of the ethos of the building. Our expert and dedicated staff utilize their knowledge of the content and knowledge of students to create meaningful learning experiences for each student. Each day, students begin with the Pledge of Allegiance and committing to the Rondout Way; Respect, Responsibility, Honesty and Kindness throughout our day. While occasionally students need reminders of school expectations, students live into the culture of kindness that Rondout has fostered. We are a school without the need for locks on lockers and restorative instead of restrictive discipline.

Rondout staff carefully craft their lessons to engage and motivate students. They continuously seek opportunities to engage students in meaningful and authentic learning, cross curricular experiences and real world connections to their learning. Classes regularly embark on field trips, both virtual and physical throughout the year. From virtual visits to the Rainforest with the Shedd Aquarium, to experiences with museums, staff and administration partner to bring information alive for students. Connecting with the real world highlights pathways to future career choices and opportunities.

Beyond activities within the classroom, students are able to genuinely engage in the life of the school through The Village. Within Village, multi-age groups of students assume responsibility for a variety of aspects of school life. From purchasing, stocking and running the school store, to creating and performing morning announcements, organizing random acts of kindness and surveying students about lunchroom preferences, each student has influence, voice and engagement with their environment. The Village program empowers students to share their ideas, and students are free to share ideas for change and improvement which in turn creates a culture of student investment and engagement.

Student perspective is honored and valued. It is not always possible to bring all the ideas to fruition, but students certainly know that we are thoughtfully listening and care about each of them.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parents and the community are critical partners in Rondout's journey to achieving excellence. Rondout administration believe that when a community comes together to support the common goal of creating the best educational experience possible for our students, not only do academic successes emerge, but also improvements in social emotional well-being. Staff at Rondout maintain open lines of communication, which begin with Intake Conferences before the start of each school year. Before students start their first day, parents have an opportunity to meet with their child's teachers and share their hopes and dreams for their children as well as how they perceive their child as a learner.

The momentum of engagement continues, with administration and staff providing consistent and varied opportunities for families to come together as a community. Most notable, Rondout has a strong emphasis on service learning, implementing Family Days of Service. These days are centered on the notion of giving back to the community. Families make blankets, sort donations, and participate in other specific projects for local non-profits. Partnerships with the Lake County Forest Preserve Education Department, local food pantries and area schools illuminate Rondout's connection to the larger community. From small scale events

such as regularly scheduled Zoom coffee hour with administration, to larger endeavors such as Family Reading Night and music concerts, Rondout creates a community where families feel connected, ask questions and communicate freely with staff.

There are many opportunities for parents to be actively engaged within the school community. Staff and parents partner to create memorable event days such as Cozy Day before Winter Break and Special Seniors Day in the spring. These events allow parents to see learning in action, providing context and connection between the home and school setting. The website, digital Falcon Flyer, and the Rondout mobile app keep parents connected through a coordinated communication approach.

In the Rondout community, business partners have collaborated with Rondout on larger scale projects. The restoration of the wetlands and the creation of the Rondout Nature Preserve, an interactive nature experience with an outdoor classroom, pathways in the woods and an elevated wetlands viewing walkway, which involved a collaborative effort between administration, staff and corporate partners. This impressive project has allowed Rondout students to have hands on experiences with nature, and direct application of skills as scientists and naturalists. Rondout staff continue to find authentic opportunities to include families and communities within the learning process and solidify Rondout as the center of the community.

Rondout works closely with the Rondout Parent-Teacher-Student Association which focuses on enriching the student and family experience. The PTSA provides veteran family mentors for new families whose children are entering kindergarten or who have recently moved into the district. Parents along with School Board members and staff serve on The Excellence Committee which meets annually to review and update the Commitment to Excellence. Parent connections are also strong and their engagement is welcomed and encouraged.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Rondout Elementary School is a school where everyone's learning is a priority. It is not only a place where students are engaged in inquiry, but also a place where staff love to learn and strive to continue their own professional development. The professional culture sets the bar high, as meeting our commitment to excellence is part of our shared vision of growing hearts and minds. Through a structured system of times for collaboration, staff have consistent opportunities to discuss successes, challenges and supports needed. The school year begins with a week of professional development, reflection, planning and collaboration. One of the days is devoted to the parent Intake Conferences. This concentration of effort allows for more sustainable professional development and the opportunity to spend meaningful in-depth time as a professional community. Monthly staff meetings and quarterly school improvement days also provide conversation around collaboration, and continued professional learning. Rondout staff engage with a wide variety of professional development opportunities. As a whole staff, there are development sessions that address common needs, such as resources or strategies that benefit students who struggle with learning, ways to explicitly teach and encourage public speaking skills, or collaborative efforts to learn more about specific learning profiles. Staff are also provided the resources to seek out professional development opportunities that are specific to their position. Professional development centers on understanding learning as a science, and how brain development and function drive understanding and learning. This cultural shift to studying the act of learning, beyond skill attainment, has fueled discussion at a meta-cognitive level. Staff are offered opportunities to engage in professional learning throughout the summer, participating in book clubs that center around expert texts, or exploring new technology tools that provide new ways for students to interact with information. Study groups are formed to explore best practices, including neuroscience and cognition and other short and long term topics.

Rondout staff recognize the accomplishments of their peers, celebrating successes and finding moments to lift each other up. Staff regularly collaborate on projects, relying on the expertise of others to plan innovative lessons and support the needs of students within the classroom. Their voices as professionals in education are respected and valued. When faced with opportunities to brainstorm solutions, staff members bring unique perspectives and ideas for further exploration.

inquiry/reflection years which supports professional growth and engaging teacher voice in choosing professional development activities based on their needs and interests.

4. School Leadership:

Rondout Elementary School is grounded in a commitment to servant leadership. As a one school district, the superintendent and principal work together closely to provide context and vision to school initiatives and keep the day-to-day operations running smoothly and responsively. As the only two administrators in the district, collaboration between the principal and superintendent allows for innovative programming and strategizing to meet the specific needs of students and staff. These partners are aligned in the philosophy that all decisions should be student centered, and all pathways to a solution have value. The principal and superintendent believe that understanding Rondout students and investing in relationships with families strengthens the ability to identify student's challenges and strengths and provide targeted support for students in all areas of their life as needed. The administration is easily accessible to parents, staff and students. Working side by side, with offices next to one another, they are able to collaborate, maintain the pulse of the school community and manage the multiple roles that each one plays in the educational program.

The structure of leadership at Rondout Elementary School allows for flexible and responsive practices, with the ability to provide both tangible and intellectual resources throughout the year to address needs that may arise.

Administration actively participates within the school day, welcoming students, observing in classrooms, and helping with instructional and non-instructional duties. As instructional leaders, the principal and superintendent provide vision for learning discussions, incorporating their knowledge of teaching styles, best practices, cognition, organizational culture and knowledge of the students, staff and the families.

Dialogue between administration and staff is open and frequently involves face to face conversation due to the proximity of the administrative offices, which are central within the facility. Students and staff are welcome to engage and the doors are open to those interactions. As a K-8 building long term relationships are built with the administration, who have the opportunity to watch students as they matriculate from K through 8.

School leadership extends beyond the administrative team to include teacher leaders. While more informal in structure, teacher leaders emerge in areas of interest and skill which provide additional supports to colleagues and students. The power of teacher (staff) voice is valued and aligned to student centered discussions as well as professional conversation and reflection. There are multiple models of leadership to inspire our emerging student leaders each day.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Culturally responsive teaching resonates with the school and district's core belief that we are preparing our students to be active and thoughtful participants in a global society who embrace change, value differences and collaborate with others. We continually seek ways to celebrate the unique perspective, culture and history that each family brings to the Rondout learning community.

Engaging in culturally responsive teaching and learning is an on-going component of our work together as a school community. As we reflect on our practice, materials and methodology, we seek to understand what makes each stakeholder unique, and how we are collectively stronger by celebrating diverse perspectives. Each year we find new ways to celebrate our diversity and engage our students and staff in activities that highlight and grow the depth of their understanding and related actions to support diversity, equity and inclusion.

This school year, Rondout has received a competitive grant through RAILS (Reaching Across Illinois Library System) which was focused on building connections and deepening understanding through enriching and enhancing our library collection resources to focus on celebrating and advocating for equity,

celebrating diversity and illuminating the power of inclusion.

Working with faculty and staff the grant activities are providing them with tools to identify implicit bias, explore personal perspectives/biases and for selecting books and materials that are congruent with best practices relative to culturally responsive materials and resources.

This school-wide initiative targets staff, students and parents. The project is providing a springboard for quality conversations in classrooms, to increase the diversity in the texts taught within existing units of study, to provide more equitable and diverse texts for student choice and support gains in student empathy, feelings of inclusion and engagement at school, along with a greater sense of community and connection. Teaching resources will better reflect the diversity of our students as well as the larger society.

In tandem with this work is the student led initiative related to the Peace Crane project. Creating and sharing origami paper cranes with schools across the globe will culminate in a celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace next September with the paper peace cranes becoming part of a permanent installation in the school. The Global Ambassadors department of the Village is spearheading this effort and is also focusing on building an understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Our student ambassadors have been invited to join the National Global Citizenship Ambassadors Program sponsored by MEG Languages.

One of the key stars in the unique constellation that is Rondout is our diversity. Though small in size, we are enriched by the diversity of our school community and continue to acknowledge the commitment to our mission and culturally responsive teaching and learning.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

We believe that at the heart of the journey to excellence is Rondout's dedication to a focus on the whole child, including academics, life skills and the arts. Focusing on these core dimensions of our students' lives has allowed us to individualize each child's educational experience, to be responsive to who they are, and the gifts and challenges they bring to the learning journey.

The success of Rondout Elementary School is a result of the collective efforts of students, staff, parents, and community stakeholders. While there are many factors that contribute to community feeling, academic achievement of students, and focus on continuous growth, addressing the needs of the whole child has been most instrumental to Rondout's success. Emphasizing the whole child shifts the lens of conversation from a solely academic or data discussion to the power of incorporating skills that generate life success, along with those creative abilities linked to the arts that build capacity, bring joy and in turn impact the learning brain.

This holistic and essential shift in the conversation about what is most worthwhile to know and experience has allowed Rondout staff and parents to broaden their perspective, and look at what makes a difference for each child's learning journey. While academics are critical and related assessments are gatekeepers of future opportunities, each dimension of the whole child is interwoven. Students are not a sum of data points but are thinking, feeling, developing human beings. Achieving excellence comes through understanding the strength and power of the relationships between the dimensions of the whole child and how their interdependence impacts our efforts to create a personalized, engaging, and responsive educational experience, which fuels a passion for learning.

Acknowledging the power of these connections, reminds us that supporting students is not a singular path and impacts every dimension of the school environment including the space, place, experience, climate and culture. The focus on the whole child is driven by the Commitment to Excellence that is at the core of our work with students each and every day. Growing hearts and minds the Rondout Way allows us to pursue excellence in all our endeavors, to prepare students to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and thoughtful human beings who find meaning, purpose and happiness in their lives.