

U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Katherine Callahan

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

Official School Name Mary C. Dondero Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 32 Van Buren Avenue

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Portsmouth

State NH

Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 03801-5830

County Rockingham

Telephone (603) 436-2231

Fax _____

Web site/URL

https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/school/dondero

E-mail kcallahan@sau52.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Zachary McLaughlin

E-

mail zmclaughlin@sau52.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Portsmouth School Department

Tel. (603) 436-2231

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. Nancy Clayburgh

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	60
1	53
2	49
3	68
4	48
5	48
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	326

*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 12 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 71 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 12%

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	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	22
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	41
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	349
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

Spanish, Portuguese, Tamil, Hindi, Pashto, Korean, French Creole, Russian, Burmese, Malayalam, Polish, Arabic, Gujarati, and Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8 %
27 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %

Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 18 %
Total number of students served 58

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>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>10</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>11</u> Developmental Delay	<u>23</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>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 0 %
Total number of students served: 0

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 13

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	19
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	15
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	12
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 18:1

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	92%	96%	97%	95%	96%
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.

To educate all students by challenging them to become thinking, responsible, contributing citizens who continue to learn throughout their lives.

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

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1klNm--sEdPR3a-_AwH7Htde4sdDamN-g/view

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

Dondero School is located in Portsmouth, NH in the Elwyn Park neighborhood. Students who attend Dondero come from varying socio-economic backgrounds which include students who live in single family homes, apartment buildings, government supported housing units and homeless shelters as well as some who live with a family or friend due to economic hardships. Our school community is also comprised of families that have different religious and political perspectives while at the same time demonstrating respect for one another. Working in collaboration with families, the faculty honors and celebrates the diverse community.

We believe it is our responsibility to teach children how to be good humans. Therefore, teaching character education traits is equally as important as teaching learners to be readers, writers and/or mathematicians. Beginning in kindergarten learners engage lessons that teach the importance of community, respect, responsibility, empathy, gratitude, perseverance, kindness, and cooperation as well as how to have a positive growth mindset. Each month, a trait is highlighted and celebrated at a whole school morning meeting hosted by learners. The faculty's responsibility is to model expected behaviors and when needed, redirect unexpected behaviors presented by students in a nurturing manner.

We believe that all students can learn regardless of a street address or learning difference. A shared responsibility model is a practice at Dondero that ensures that all learners, make adequate academic growth throughout each school year. Classroom teachers, interventionists, and special education case managers work in collaboration to educate the whole child. Weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at all grade levels create time and space to reflect upon student outcomes and to make changes in teacher instruction. Conversations at PLC meetings feed our Response to Intervention (RtI) learning model; a model that provides learners with multiple lessons or time using varying modalities to comprehend a concept. Additionally, weekly curriculum planning meetings support the models as they allow for collaborative intentional planning of lessons within each tier of instruction.

We believe in moving the curriculum beyond the cement walls of a classroom and school. All students engage in lessons in our forest classroom and school garden. Students tap trees to make maple syrup, keep bees to harvest honey, track bird migration, and plant and harvest produce. Teachers plan field trips to locations that provide hands-on learning opportunities that support content being taught inside classroom; with fifth graders ending their elementary career at a three night four day trip to Ecology School in Saco, Maine.

Dondero strives to offer learning opportunities beyond the core academics for all students; with scholarships being available to those in need. From offering indoor and outdoor space for sports programs to nature-based programs to hosting St. John's Church to offer choir school after school, students are able to participate in activities to support their interests. In 2020, Dondero helped pilot a program, ForestKids, a free after school nature-based program for learners from homes in the lower socio-economic bracket. Working in collaboration with classroom teachers, students who needed to further develop their sense of self, independence, confidence, and problem-solving skills as well as work towards displaying empathy towards others were selected to participate in two hour weekly program free of cost. Gear required to protect from the elements as well as snacks and transportation was provided. This program has become part of our culture as well as offered at the other elementary schools within Portsmouth.

We believe in partnering with parents/guardians to support learners and our school community. Dondero's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a vibrant part of our school culture as they help to empower parents/guardians to be actively involved in the school through volunteerism and fundraising to support students and teachers. Throughout the year, they host events that bring the community together that cost little to no money to attend. All fundraising endeavors are designed to raise funds to enhance student learning. In 2018, the members of the PTA led a playground campaign that transformed the traditional school playground into a nature-based playground. Today, students climb boulders to access slides, crawl through tunnels, balance on logs and perform on an outdoor stage.

We believe in collaborating with outside organizations to support learners and their families. For example, beginning in November 2021, Dondero collaborated with Seacoast Eat Local to pilot crEATe; a program which provides local food, recipes, and encouragement for families to cook together. During the program, regardless of socioeconomic status, students who committed to the program received a tote bag that included two recipes and corresponding ingredients for a family of four on a bi-weekly basis for six distributions. The ingredients and recipes were curated to include as many local, seasonal foods as possible. Teachers embraced the mission of crEATe and set aside time to provide demonstrations to students. Additionally, parent volunteers assisted in delivering bags to students and bus drivers were supportive in assisting the "littles" in getting their bags off the bus and into the hands of parents/guardians. We have also partnered with local businesses to provide additional support for families in need. For example, local banks support families by providing food and gifts throughout the holidays. They also donate snacks to classrooms for teachers to distribute to any learner needing additional food. Our local food pantry has worked in collaboration with Dondero to assist families new to America or living in crisis with food options that meet their dietary preferences. A local thrift store provides gently worn clothes and winter gear for students who may not arrive at school appropriately dressed for the weather.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Teachers incorporate various pedagogies to teach the ELA curriculum that is based on the Common Core State Standards. Using a Lucy Calkins' reader's workshop model, all learners are instructed by a well designed focus lesson that intentionally teaches a skill or concept, followed by direct instruction in a small group based on ability/outcomes and completing work independently to demonstrate an understanding of the concept taught. For reading, in Kinder-3rd grade, Foundations is taught with fidelity four times/week. In grades K-2, Science of Reading pedagogy aids teachers in using decodable text in addition to leveled reading content for every learner. Explicit phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is taught via Heggerty. Conferencing, Foundations and Heggerty assessments are analyzed during weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to determine what learner needs and future lessons. Learners in grades 3-5 receive whole group focus lessons to introduce a text feature/trait and are then instructed in small groups with texts that are at each learners' instructional level. Using leveled text at their independent reading level during time allotted for independent reading allows learners use their newly learned knowledge to complete assignments that is then analyzed during weekly grade level PLCs. All 1st-5th graders are assessed using Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessments three times per school year. Using a Lucy Calkins writers workshop model (focus lesson, guided practice, independent work), learners in the Kindergarten start by drawing pictures to tell a story and then as their letter sound association develops, move towards list writing and then sentence writing to express a thought and/or tell a story. First graders extend upon their work in Kindergarten; incorporating the proper spelling of Fry sight words into their writing as well as punctuation and capitalization. They write both fiction and non-fiction pieces of work as well as incorporate Picturing Writing; a technique that incorporates art into writing. Second-fifth grade extends what is taught in first grade by moving from sentences to paragraphs that have a clear beginning, middle and ending and write in various genres. Throughout each Unit of Study (UOS), teacher confer and provide feedback to learners. During grade level PLCs, all writing is reviewed to determine instructional changes as well as determining which students may need further instruction.

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

Math instruction has become more organic over the past few years with the emphasis being on students developing a conceptual depth and understanding of a concept. This design model encourages explicit delineation of what students must know, understand and be able to do. Using the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as a guide, teachers at all levels teach a targeted focus lesson on concept to the whole class. Through guided inquiry and use of manipulatives, students develop an understanding mathematical concepts while also developing confidence in their ability to solve problems of increasing complexity. In collaboration with Dondero's math specialist, teachers create written assessments that require learners to show their thinking and/or strategy used to accurately solve problem. In the upper grades, interim SAS modelulars are also used throughout the year as a form of assessment. Assessments are analyzed during weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to determine what learner needs and for teachers to determine future lessons. Special education case managers collaborate with classroom teachers to modify curriculum for those students who may require a slower pace, more time on a concept and/or an alternative way to grasp a concept.

When applicable, teachers also incorporate math into real-life activities. For example, first grade classrooms become bowling alleys to assist students in learning the math facts to 10. When the majority of students have demonstrated an understanding, they spend the morning at the local bowling alley. Third graders apply their mathematical thinking and understanding in the school garden; from building new beds (area and perimeter) to designing areas for growing plants. They also graph outside temperatures when collecting sap and compare it the amount of sap collected each day. Fourth graders applied their understanding of fractions to make a communal lunch.

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

Using Next Generation Science Standards as a framework, science concepts are taught both in and outside the classroom to satisfy the natural curiosity we are all born with. Teachers strive to make science as hands-on as possible through a project based learning model to teach students how to ask questions and develop scientific thinking, conduct research and test ideas, develop observation skills and draw conclusions, analyze data and present information and build STEM skills. Throughout each science unit, students demonstrate their knowledge through presentations or written expression.

Depending upon the grade level and/or the cohort of learners, the role of the teacher varies from being the instructor to the facilitator of learning. Some examples include a reenactment of the life cycle of an insect (kinder), becoming astronomers (first grade), an expert on local animals and their habitats (second), becoming ornithologists (3rd), and beekeepers (4th). In fifth grade, students learn science concepts in the classroom and then apply or enhance their knowledge off-campus through their Summit to Farm to Sea adventures; which are trips that start in the mountains of New Hampshire and end at Star Island. Additionally, fifth graders spend four days and three nights with teachers at Ecology School learning each May.

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

Social Studies content is often taught through the integration of ELA CCSS, classroom community conversations and initiatives, and unified arts units of studies including government, civics, economics, history and geography. Teachers strive to make social studies units of studies as hands-on as possible through a project based learning model; often facilitating lessons that prompt student inquiry and discovery that is then followed by student led presentations or projects showcasing their knowledge. Bringing organizations into the school and/or visiting locations that support the work that occurred in the classroom is also a practice that is supported by the PTA. Some examples include bringing in local community members to teach kindergarten students about civic responsibilities and duties to traveling to downtown Portsmouth to learn about the history of Portsmouth to visiting with NH Senators and Congressman at the Capitol in Concord, NH.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

All K-5 students participate in visual and performing arts for 45 minutes per week for the entire school year. Fundamental in a student's overall social, emotional, and cognitive development, the arts enhance reasoning, inspires creativity, and encourages critical thinking, self-discipline, problem-solving, decision-making, cooperation, and imagination.

In visual arts, students learn concepts of drawing and design. They build from the simplest ideas in kindergarten up to both two and three-dimensional projects in fifth grade. In a developmentally age appropriate manner, students learn about art history and artists and engage in projects that are aligned to the artist's style and era.

Like the visual arts, performing arts is a valuable aspect of every student's curriculum and our school community. Students are exposed to many musical styles, types and mediums through active listening and

movement. Students showcase their musical growth twice a year at all-school performances. Students in fourth and fifth grade may elect to participate in chorus which takes place weekly for 45 minutes during the school day. Fifth graders may also participate take a weekly, 45 minute instrumental lesson during the school day and participate in a weekly after school band lesson.

Both visual and performing teachers offer additional opportunities with students who are identified as needing additional social-emotional support and/or requiring an adaptive approach to the arts. Time within the designated space occurs during the school day. Additionally, teachers seek out opportunities to collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate a variety of curriculum content into the arts and the arts content into curriculum.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

All K-5 students participate in physical education for 45 minutes per week for the entire school year to develop their physical, emotional and social skills. Through various activities such as team sports, movement exploration and cooperative games, learners have fun in a safe environment where all can participate, develop locomotive movements and demonstrate a positive attitude of sportsmanship. The physical education teacher offers additional opportunities with students who are identified as needing additional social-emotional support and/or requiring an adaptive approach. On a trimester basis, students in Kinder-2nd grade also receive healthy mind and body lessons with an emphasis on proper nutrition and the body's need for movement.

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

Learners in grades 3-5 participate in an Italian class for 45 minutes per week. Although this is a pilot program for all three elementary schools in Portsmouth, the program strives to allow students to express themselves using the Italian language. Students also explore geography and practice map skills and discuss Italian culture and history.

2d. Technology/library/media

All K-5 students participate in a library class for 45 minutes per week for the entire school year. The school library is a welcoming place in which students can engage in self-discovery and self-directed inquiry. The library media specialist collaborates with classroom teachers to help supplement and extend the curriculum. Students learn how to conduct research and also how to assess the validity and reliability of the information they find. In the media, students take what they've learned and present it in meaningful ways, via many different technology applications. Students also learn how to use technology in a safe and effective way by learning about Internet safety, cyber-bullying, responsible and ethical use of information and privacy issues.

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

Dondero believes in extending the curriculum beyond the four walls of the school. All K-5 students spend time exploring the forest throughout the week. Learning in the forest creates opportunities for students' voices to be heard, students' interests to be pursued, and for teachers instruction to evolve to be more responsive and nourishing of wonder. With guidance from teachers, Dondero students also keep bees and process the honey, plant, tend to and harvest the school garden, tap maple trees and collect sap for making maple syrup, and track animals.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Dondero has integrated a tiered intervention model with our PLC model which allows grade-level teams and interventionists to engage in data-driven dialogue to identify learners who are not yet meeting expectations. Our teams consider data from district-wide, grade-level, and classroom-based assessments to initially identify learners who may need additional instruction.

Further diagnostic tools and conversations to consider anecdotal information are utilized to determine specific barriers to growth. Based on this, teams develop learning targets that are rigorous, attainable, and measurable and that will be the focus of the intervention cycle. Classroom teachers and interventionists develop a shared responsibility plan to ensure that Tier I and Tier II/Tier III practices provide differentiated access to the core curriculum as well as a research-based intervention to work toward closing the learning gap.

Classroom teachers and interventionists utilize a shared Learner Intervention Form to document the learning target, the frequency of intervention, the skills taught, and progress monitoring data. This allows them to be on the same page and to ensure that the plan is yielding the intended outcomes. Intervention cycles run for 6-weeks and are reviewed in collaborative conversations to ensure that progress is being made as well as to ensure timely adjustments in the event that the intervention is not working.

Our teams consider the whole child when it comes to how to provide what learners need to be successful at school. While academic interventions in the areas of reading, writing, word study, and math are a primary focus, it is important to also consider the social-emotional needs of our learners that impact their availability for learning. Partnerships with families, the school counselor, the speech and language pathologist, and the occupational therapist allow for targeted instruction in social skills, regulation, and fine motor skills when needed.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Dondero's intervention model also allows grade-level teams to identify learners who are performing consistently above grade-level expectations in an academic content area. Within classrooms, teachers implement a variety of instructional strategies to differentiate for these learners. In the area of literacy, book clubs are an example of a way for learners within and across classrooms to engage in more in-depth explorations of and discussions around the central message or theme of a text. Readers are encouraged to be agents of their learning process within these groups as they create their schedule and facilitate and contribute to group discussions. Teachers meet with these groups on a rotating schedule to review reader response journal entries and extend learning.

In the area of math, project-based learning provides the integration of previously taught skills with opportunities to expand learning to real-world applications. Collaborative partnerships and/or groups are given a rigorous performance task that requires them to be critical thinkers, analyzers, and problem-solvers. Learners explore mathematical practices and concepts while also strengthening their executive functioning and interpersonal skills. Teachers meet with these groups on a rotating schedule to hear about the learning process and offer guiding questions to further the learning process.

Classroom teachers also curate differentiated opportunities through cross-curricular work. For example, fifth graders put on a Living History Museum for the Revolutionary War. Learners engage in simulations about what life was leading up to and throughout the war in social studies, research a person or event connected to the war in reading, and produce an informational text using their research in writing. They also create a project with their families or school teams that allow others to interact with their topic during the museum. Part of the museum allows learners to create their own lines for a skit they perform.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Dondero's special education team, including related service providers and paraprofessionals, works collaboratively with classroom teachers to provide differentiated and/or modified access to the general education curriculum through specially designed instruction. Our educational teams develop IEPs that narrate who the learner is and how they learn best while also targeting specific goals and specially designed instruction. Building access points to grade-level learning, creating functional and incidental learning opportunities, promoting school participation, and teaching to the whole child's social-emotional needs promotes progress toward their goals.

Our teams utilize co-teaching practices in order to bridge together classroom learning and special education

with the intent of building the generalization of skills to promote independence. Case managers partner with classroom teachers to deliver high-quality instruction across the academic content areas. Case managers and related service providers also co-teach in an effort to ensure learners generalize skills from teacher to teacher and environment to environment. Co-teaching across the special education team also allows for integration of disciplines as learners work to integrate a variety of skills. For example, our speech and language pathologist and occupational therapist co-teach cross-grade level groups to implement a Dondero Coffee Cart. Their instruction focuses on strengthening functional communication, conversational strategies, collaboration, problem-solving, regulation, and self-concept.

Dondero's special education team works to establish partnerships with our families that are built on collaboration and mutual respect. Understanding that our families come from diverse backgrounds and school and life experiences is important as we work together to promote the best possible learning outcomes for their child(ren). These relationships have created open dialogue, trust, and home-school connections that are vital to the work we do. Our team recognizes that in elementary school we are creating habits for our learners and families that will build a foundation for their future school success as well.

3d. English Language Learners:

Dondero's ELL teachers work collaboratively with general education teachers to provide students whose primary language is not English with support in the general education classroom. ELL teachers co-teach with the general education teacher in an effort to ensure that learners are able to access the content by breaking down barriers such as vocabulary and lack of background knowledge. Teachers focus on academic language, literacy and vocabulary, learn about the learners culture and links it to their learning. Although some lessons need to be taught in a small group outside of the general education classroom, the student spends the majority of the time in the general education classroom with native English speakers. Building access points to grade-level learning, creating functional and incidental learning opportunities, promoting school participation, and teaching to the whole child's social-emotional needs promotes progress toward acquiring English.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The Dondero school community strives to develop self-determined, lifelong leaders who are innovative and collaborative problem-solvers with grit, integrity, and tolerance. Our learners will make a difference as stewards of their school, community, and world through empathy, advocacy, and activism. We cultivate this by believing that all learners can and want to contribute to their fullest potential toward rigorous goals, establishing core values of focus, integrity, respect, self-determination, and teamwork, celebrating differences and nourishing diverse talents and skill sets, creating learning experiences that ignite wonderment, enthusiasm, and growth, and securing a safe school environment that is based on trust, mutual respect, and collaboration.

Teachers develop proactive authentic relationships with all students in thoughtfully designed spaces to increase high expectations, mutual respect, subtle redirection, and nonverbal cues. Each morning, students and teachers in every classroom start their day by gathering together in a circle and interact with one another. During this time, they read a morning message, greet one another, share information about themselves or an event in their life, and participate in a movement activity that fosters group cohesion and helps students practice social skills. Throughout each day, social and emotional lessons are directly and indirectly taught and modeled in every classroom and every location of the school. Led by students, monthly whole school morning meetings replicate daily morning meetings within the classrooms as well as bring the school community together to highlight a character trait, share inner working at a particular grade level and highlight happenings within the school.

Teachers also intentionally create active lessons, filled with productive struggle, and relatable activities, that build natural engagement through inquiry, intimate teaching and learning, and authentic simulation. They create a culture of safety by collaboratively creating and holding high expectations of all members of the school community (adult to adult, adult to student, student to student), embrace intellectual risks, provide specific framing for feedback, create a culture of progress monitoring, and have opportunities to turn and talk about content. Teachers model and scaffold activities, both orally and physically, breaking learning down into small steps of increasing levels of difficulty with diverse resources.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Creating a collaborative partnership with families is a strength of Dondero's faculty. As previously noted, regardless of a street address, cultural or political beliefs, every learner is accepted, appreciated and honored. Open and honest communication is at the heart of every conversation. Celebrating successes is just as important as sharing mishaps or seeking parental assistance to support a learner. Connecting with families and connecting them to resources within the greater Portsmouth community is a regular routine at the teacher and administrative level.

Classroom teachers do an exceptional job at sharing their classrooms via pictures and newsletters through our online communication platform. Administration and the PTA also send weekly emails articulating the inner workings of school as well as a call for assistance; both in supporting the school or a family in need (ie. a child being granted a wish from Make-A-Wish or an Afghan refugee family seeking items to make a house a home).

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The model at Dondero is that the teaching staff is the heart and soul of what makes Dondero amazing. They are part of the decision making process including curriculum initiatives, scheduling, placement and whole school community events. Teachers work closely with colleagues at their grade level but also across grade levels and/or departments; with learners at the heart of every decision. Professional development opportunities are available during the school day, after school hours and during scheduled professional development early release days. When new programs are piloted and/or adopted, all teachers are invited to

participate and all participants voices are heard and valued. Open and honest communication is expected and appreciated; even when opinions differ.

4. School Leadership:

Although there is only one principal, a shared leadership model has become part of the culture and practice at Dondero. As educators have grown within their area of expertise and/or practice, they have also assumed more responsibility in guiding colleagues to grow as well. Reading and interventionists support learners while also coaching teachers in the designated area through co-teaching, engaging in PLC and curriculum conversations, providing professional development, and/or modeling instruction in classrooms. Special education case managers support learners but also aid one another and classroom teachers in differentiating instruction for identified and non-identified learners.

The principal encourages and empowers educators to take risks within their classroom, engage in professional development opportunities, and incorporate passions and interests into their classroom. Dondero's active beehive, school garden and forest classroom were the ideas of a teacher and supported by the principal which included providing time at faculty meetings to create interest from colleagues, writing grants to obtain funds and communication with experts within to greater community to seek a partnership.

Perfection is not expected but reflection is. When reviewing and analyzing student outcomes, the principal celebrates outcomes as well as provides support when outcomes are not as expected. Although instruction drives outcomes, allowing for self-reflection to modify a lesson or change how a lesson is delivered is not only encourage but expected. Additionally, demonstrating support when a student's behavior is not expected and/or negatively impacts the classroom community is a practice that empowers all engaging with learners to seek assistance from colleagues and administration, reflect upon the situation, and, if applicable, make changes to their practice.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

As previously mentioned, Dondero is comprised of learners from varying socio-economic backgrounds which include students who live in single family homes, apartment buildings, government supported housing units and homeless shelters as well as some who live with a family or friend due to economic hardships. Our school community is also comprised of families from around the world that have different religious and political perspectives while at the same time demonstrating respect for one another.

Ensuring that all students have access to opportunities offered during and after the school day, Dondero's PTA seeks scholarship donations as well as sets aside funds to support those needing financial assistance to participate in an activity. Outside organizations seeking to partner with Dondero to offer programming must also offer financial support to those in need. If clothing is needed, school administration has created partnerships with local stores to provide items at no cost to the student or family. Additionally, connecting families in need to food pantries, public transportation and mental health services is also a part of our school culture; including providing space within our building for counseling sessions with outside providers to take place.

Classrooms contain literature that celebrate and honor all humans regardless of race, color, religion or sexual orientation. Students are taught to celebrate and embrace differences. Families are invited into classrooms to share traditions, holidays and cultural beliefs. Students are encouraged to wear clothing that would be typically be worn in their native country.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Shifting to a practice of appreciative inquiry has had the greatest impact on Dondero's success. Everyone within the building is able to see, feel and hear what is working and how it positively impacts student engagement and outcomes. This practice has fostered a sense of trust among teachers as it has showcased the inner workings of classrooms in a safe and supportive manner. It has also allowed the adults to show vulnerability as they open their classrooms to colleagues and hear their colleagues share observations at faculty meetings and during professional development opportunities.

This practice has indirectly empowered teachers to create classroom environments designed for learners; no longer the teacher Desks have been replaced by tables and materials are now communal across all grade level as what works in the primary grades can certainly work in the upper grades. Common areas such as hallways, the cafeteria or office, showcase student work that is thoughtfully displayed and honors each individual.

Most importantly, this model has aided Dondero in engaging in thoughtful conversations about "what school could be" and defining what we want all students to achieve by the end of their elementary career. It has sparked a fire in all educators to want to do more for learners and to grow themselves as professionals.