

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[X] Choice

Name of Principal Mr Robert Groff

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

Official School Name PS 244 The Active Learning Elementary School (TALES)

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 137-20 Franklin Avenue

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

City Flushing State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 11355-3871

County Queens

Telephone (718) 445-5730

Fax (718) 445-5856

Web site/URL https://www.ps244q.org

E-mail rgroff@schools.nyc.gov

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Ms. Danielle Dimango

E-

mail ddimang@schools.nyc.gov

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

District Name NYC Geographic District #25 - Queens

Tel. (718) 281-7605

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Nicholas Woo

(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):
- 25 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 9 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
 - 46 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	36
K	128
1	111
2	90
3	84
4	0
5	0
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	449

*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
 - 90 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 1 % White
 - 1 % 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: 10%

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	22
(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)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	449
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Bengali, Burmese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Pashto, Punjabi, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 55 %
248 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 72 %

Total number students who qualify: 324

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 10 %
Total number of students served 43

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>6</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>1</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>5</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>31</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: 12

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.	20
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.	7
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 21:1

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	94%	98%	96%	97%	97%
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. 2015

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

To foster academic excellence in a safe and caring learning environment. Through a partnership of family, staff, and community, TALES strives to educate the whole child by meeting their academic, health and wellness, and social-emotional needs. We utilize a race equity lens to empower students to break up patterns of racism and become leaders in our world.

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

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/policies/non-discrimination-policy>

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

TALES is defined as a lottery school for Pre-K and Kindergarten only. Families fill out an application for these two grades which goes to the district and families are chosen in a lottery system that we as a school have no influence in. The district tells us who has gotten a placement offer based on the lottery and we enroll. Each year there are hundreds more applications than we can accommodate. For 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades this is not the case and we admit families throughout the year as space allows.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

P.S. 244, The Active Learning Elementary School (TALES) is an early childhood public school serving 449 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to 3rd grade located in the heart of Flushing, NY. Flushing, as a community, has a large number of Asian and Asian-American immigrants that speak numerous languages other than English. For many families, we are their first interaction with a school in the US. Since TALES opened in 2008, we have developed a strong reputation for academic success, social emotional support and a priority on working closely with families. As a result, there are always more families interested in joining us in Pre-K and Kindergarten than we can accommodate.

The students who attend The Active Learning Elementary School are eager young learners who often begin their education with us where English is a new language and cultural norms are different than where they spent the first years of their lives. We prioritize supporting these students in our early grades in particular and teaching them how to make lifelong choices for themselves. Our faculty focuses on developing close relationships with families that last long past their time with us graduating in 3rd grade as evidenced by our TALES college scholarship program.

As we continue to learn and grow, there are some key components that are unique to TALES that have helped us excel together. Among these is our use of the Responsive Classroom approach to community building, behavior, and discipline throughout the school. We utilize Thinking Maps as a visual language for organizing thinking and New Perspectives investigations in math as critical thinking models for students to emphasize explaining their ideas and processes as they come to solutions. We also place a heavy emphasis on English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, intervention and support. Fifty-two percent of our teachers hold ENL certifications; including every push-in teacher, who work alongside the classroom teachers for one period each day. We also have a full time Reading Recovery and Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETTS) teachers who serve as intervention specialists. Our ELA curriculum is also of particular importance as we create our reading and writing programs in house. A consultant from Queens College, teachers and administrators work together to pool ideas from a variety of research based, Next Generation Standards aligned models to build units that are flexible to our students' individual needs and are consistent throughout a grade and the school. Through our curriculum we have been able to weave in significant emphasis in ENL strategies, targeted vocabulary instruction, Racial Equity, Social Justice, Health and Nutrition and student voice which are all key components of our Mission/ Vision and Core Values and what makes TALES special.

Now in our 15th year, TALES has a lot to be proud of and we continually strive to improve ourselves as a community of learners. We have received numerous awards and recognitions from organizations such as the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the Humane Society, New York State, the NYC Department of Health, the NYC Chancellors' office, the Office of School Foods and the Office of School Wellness. In addition, we have received many different types of press from around the world for being the first non-charter public school in the country to serve a vegetarian menu and demonstrate the connection between teaching health and wellness and academic achievement.

We have been proud of our recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School since receiving it in 2015 and we have always had our doors open to anyone interested to see what we have to offer. We believe that the best model for school improvement is to learn from each other across schools and as a result of the Blue Ribbon Schools award we have been able to do more of that. Additionally, when families research schools in the area, the recognition influences their decision to seek admission with us which we are grateful for.

All of this work has been done together as a staff. Everyone in the school plays an important role and it is only through this collective approach towards achieving our goals that we are able to be successful. Our success is evident through NY State test scores, where we are regularly well above average in our district and across the city, but more importantly through evidenced student learning and family happiness. We hope to continue to improve and grow together for many years to come.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Our English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is unique as it is created in house and delivered through a workshop model approach which has shown remarkable academic results over the last 15 years. It is deeply connected to the lives of our students and aligned to the Next Generation Learning Standards with our high ENL population in mind. We understand that each child is unique and we tailor it to best meet their academic needs while also addressing social emotional growth and continually adapting to what is occurring in our world.

Teacher teams work with a literacy consultant who is a professor at Queens College to ensure that our curriculum contains texts that support student agency and voice while also promoting fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. We use an Understanding By Design model and develop a scope and sequence to align units of study for each grade and across the school. All of our curriculum is revised on a yearly basis to ensure that it is responsive, current, tailored to the needs of the students based on data and focused on creating a love for reading in our students. All of our students receive instruction through Independent Reading lessons, Shared Reading, Read Alouds, Guided Reading, Phonics and Phonemic Awareness, Writing Workshop instruction, Interactive Writing and other structures which support the development of English language acquisition, literary skills and reading and writing proficiency. In both reading and writing lessons, teachers make thoughtful decisions about text choice for modeling including utilizing authors of color as mentors, poems that introduce Black activists and unit aligned Books of the Month across the school to support Inclusivity, Racial and Social Justice, and Social Emotional Learning.

We believe that students progress as readers when they are able to choose books they want to read based on their reading level with opportunities to “stretch” themselves at age appropriate time frames to read independently and practice skills and strategies taught. Students are taught to select books that they are able to read with fluency, accuracy, and comprehension with the intent to create lifelong readers who have the habits of mind to negotiate a text with complete comprehension.

Our students write daily in the Writing Workshop, during which time they are guided through the process of getting ideas to drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, similar to the process that published authors go through. In this manner, we believe that writing becomes a more concrete and authentic production. We encourage students to write from their lives and hearts and we believe that having a choice in topics of interest from their own lives helps make writing an authentic form of communication.

TALES utilizes conferencing, end of unit assessments, rubrics, and peer reviews as modes of assessment regularly in both reading and writing. In addition, three times a year we use Fountas and Pinnell assessments, Phonics and Phonemic Awareness assessments, and IReady (in some grades) to monitor reading proficiency and make changes to our core curriculum and create interventions for students in need and extensions for those excelling.

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

In Math, we utilize New Perspectives Investigations as our curriculum developed by Cathy Fosnot and have worked closely with a consultant through the organization for 14 years. With our consultant, teachers work in teams to continually revise and modify the units of study to bring them closer to the lives of our students and support teachers in planning and in building mathematical knowledge. There is also an online platform for teachers with support guides, videos, strategies and professional learning communities organized by our consultant that can be specifically tailored to support individual teachers. Additionally, the importance of in classroom support for teachers in this structure cannot be understated as they work to build content understanding and how to support students both individually and as a group.

In this approach, there is a scope and sequence with sets of investigations that occur in each grade over the course of the year and build on the knowledge gained from year to year. The continual revision of the units has been especially important as we come through COVID to address the gaps students have from online learning. The program is aligned with our belief that the mathematical process and critical thinking that occurs during independent and group work is extremely important in students' understanding and unpacking of math concepts. This process hones in on fostering student development of conceptual understanding; something that differs from the mathematical methods of rote memorization and using algorithms and is set in a context for learning. A significant component of this curriculum is that there are no textbooks or workbooks utilized with students but rather a focus on contextual tasks in investigations.

We believe that in order for students to succeed in math, it is necessary for them to understand why math works as it does. As such, the math congress, or math share, is a critical component of enabling students to discuss problems and give each other ideas and feedback about how a particular problem is solved. Students are accountable for explaining how they arrived at a solution, not just what the solution is. Students discuss the efficiencies or a particular strategy and often come to a common understanding of what strategy works best for a particular problem. Students also have to show their thinking by sketching out the problem and showing a model that explains how they came up with their answer.

At the end of each math unit, teachers give students an assessment to evaluate their learning. These assessments come from the New Perspective investigations and are revised by teams based on unit objectives as needed. Additionally, conferencing is an important part of regular assessment to track and support students individually and in groups and we utilize a benchmark assessment three times yearly to track growth as well as IReady at the same frequency. This data is utilized to identify individual, class, grade and school-wide trends, form intervention and extension groups and create workshops for families to support students at home.

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

Our students develop a strong understanding of the design engineering process by utilizing what they learned to engineer solutions through application of real world phenomena and problems. Our science curriculum is based on New York State science and engineering standards, with a deeply rooted STEM philosophy. Students in Kindergarten through Third grade begin each science unit with a foundational phenomenon or problem and meet the science objectives through scientific observation and engineering.

In Kindergarten, students explore pushes and pulls, gardening and engineering with loose parts. First graders delve into states of matter, sound and light and space. Second graders explore earth materials, balance and motion and biodiversity through insects. Third graders research forces and motion, measurement, and water cycle and environmental racism.

Using the workshop model, the STEM curriculum is inquiry based. Students observe the world around them, develop hypotheses, think about problems surrounding the issue, conduct experiments and build solutions. For example, second graders study earth materials from the local community and then discuss how our environment is affected by pollution and gentrification. Students culminate the unit by thinking of what can be done by local blighted land then they create blueprints and write letters to the local councilwoman. Our youngest learners discuss where ramps could help others and engineer one that best suits their needs or the needs of the community. As third graders learn about the water cycle, their inquiry is founded on the demand for water and who has access to water. Students are not learning about scientific phenomena, they are figuring it out as they think of solutions.

Students are assessed through daily checklists, conference notes and end of unit tests as they are experimenting and discussing within their groups. Students engineer project pieces that they self and peer assessed through verbal reasoning and testing.

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

At TALES, English as a New Language is taught through the context of the Social Studies (SS) and Civics which is aligned to the NYC Social Studies Scope and Sequence utilizing the Passports curriculum as a base. This is an area in which we also purposely integrate ENL language talk structures, specific vocabulary strategies, partnerships and projects to be responsive to our high ENL population.

We also believe that field trips are a critical part of our social studies curriculum. Our neighborhood and our city are utilized as another classroom from which we can learn and cement understandings. Our students take frequent neighborhood walks to explore and learn from our community and look for solutions to problems that exist. This has created opportunities for students to present plans for area development to the city Councilwoman and create social justice projects around the need to clean up garbage, fundraise for an area children's hospital and plant flowers.

Teachers have also worked closely with a consultant who has expertise in SS to integrate racial justice topics into our units of study and Civics for All components into a school-wide environmental justice unit that launched in March. This school wide project will span across all grade levels and build upon concepts from the previous grade level. Students delve into current events, in particular those that affect their communities, as jumping boards for conversations involving civic action, democracy, social and racial justice.

At the end of the units of a study, students show their learning through engaging in a hands-on, collaborative project. The evaluation of their knowledge includes the use of gallery walks and peer feedback to provide students with valuable takeaways from the unit.

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

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

The TALES' Pre-K program is one that is play-based, Reggio-inspired, and also embraces a structured sequence to support the core knowledge sequence. We prioritize and provide a solid, coherent, foundation for the content that students will encounter in the following areas: Language & Literacy, Mathematical Reasoning & Number Sense, Social & Emotional Development. Movement & Coordination. History & Geography, Scientific Reasoning, Music and Visual Arts. With an emphasis and focus on developing this knowledge through purposeful play, our teachers create experiences and ask open ended questions that guide students through concrete, hands-on activities that enable them to achieve the end goals in the areas identified. This purposeful play, integrated into all aspects of our Pre-K curriculum, enables our school to embrace what is developmentally appropriate for children and set them up for but also lay the foundation for school readiness and success in Grade K-3.

We believe that children learn best through participating in meaningful activities that take into account what they already know. To achieve this, teachers provide opportunities for students to explore the world around them during outdoor play, neighborhood walks, trips to the Queens Botanical Gardens and elements brought into the classrooms. These experiences often spark their interests and lead to continued exploration in centers and the development of inquiry projects. Teachers build off students' knowledge and interest through manipulative, hands-on and concrete activities asking open-ended questions to guide their thinking and support them in seeing relationships and learning more. With appropriate guidance, these concrete hands-on activities gradually transform into more abstract and transformational activities they encounter in later grades.

Through these opportunities, our Pre-K students develop a readiness for Kindergarten and more direct instruction. In tracking our students through third grade, those children that begin with us in Pre-K tend to outpace those coming to us in later grades.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

At TALEs, we understand the importance and benefits of learning through the arts especially in early childhood education. Through music, taught from Kindergarten to 3rd grade, children are encouraged to move, sing, and dance together building a sense of community within each class. Students learn about the various styles of music from around the world, rhythm and rhyming, growing a love for dance, singing songs, playing instruments, and what working in harmony can produce.

Music is also infused into various parts of the regular school day throughout our school. Shared performances also build a connection and close gaps between grades. For example, 3rd graders were invited into Kindergarten to be an audience for a song they wrote and younger grades serve as an audience for 3rd graders culminating performances. Outside organizations also come in to perform for the school including dance, performing arts, puppetry, jazz musicians and numerous other opportunities.

Our partnerships with Paul Taylor Dance group, Magic Box and Carnegie Hall provide students with opportunities in dance, instruments, singing and technology based news reporting. In addition, we partner with Studio in a School to bring a 14-session targeted visual arts residencies to our Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd grade.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Since our school opened in 2008, we have been teaching health and nutrition as a core value through our Physical Education program and partnerships including Fitness and Nutrition for Kids (Fan4Kids) and The Coalition for Healthy School foods. TALEs became the first school in NYC to remove chocolate milk from our cafeteria, which was inspired by a student on our wellness council learning how to read nutrition labels and realizing the sugar content in it. With this as a starting point along with the fact that we had a number of vegetarian families, through several years of effort building community understanding, we became the first vegetarian public school in the US in January of 2013. We are now celebrating 10 years as a vegetarian school and NYC has added 4 other schools to that list and the entire city lunch menu is vegetarian Mondays and Fridays because of the work we have done in partnership with the Office of School Food and Nutrition. We are also proud to host a yearly TALEs health and wellness week with fitness events for students, workshops for families and a dinner night where our community can taste the foods being served in the cafeteria.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

The recent pandemic showed us how important technological literacy is for our students. As a school, all our students have access to either an iPad or a laptop for use at home. Each classroom is equipped with a state of the art SMARTboard, sound system, desktops and printers. We have several traveling laptop carts that go between classrooms. On top of the availability of technology for students, every grade has a unit on internet safety and second and third graders in particular learn coding through STEM and the foundations of game design. Second graders work through the basics of coding through the platform Code.org. As they are becoming familiar with sequential algorithms, students see their work in real time through a game. In third grade, students build on what they learned the previous year and take ownership of their coding by creating a variety of games. They develop their own game settings, game rules, ways for players to score, etc. Students have access to a variety of digital resources and libraries including Raz-kids, My-On, and Dreambox to name a few. Our staff have also created a digital homepage for students to access the school's curriculum when at home.

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

An important part of our school's mission is to empower students to break up patterns of racism and help them become leaders in our world. Our Racial Equity Committee leads this work across the school with strong buy-in from staff and an emphasis on working closely with families.

The majority of our student population are of color and as educators, we want to be responsive to our students and our community. Through our work with several support organizations, we have embedded racial and social justice throughout our curricula. Texts have been replaced with ones that are both mirrors and windows of the world for our students. Through texts, we hope students can create connections with empathy and feel empowered to take action using their own voices. Our math, science, technology and social studies curricula further embodies the ideals of social justice. Units are rooted in real world situations where answers are neither right nor wrong nor given, but up to the students to use their voices and ideas to figure out. This is an ever changing and growing area of our curriculum that has been challenging to navigate but of the utmost importance in our community.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a key component of our daily teaching for students below grade level and especially important when considering each year TALEs has 55%-60% English as a New Language students. While we have structures in place for math, often our data shows the need for specific focus in ELA given the percentage of ENL students we have.

The collection and analysis of data through assessments such as Fountas and Pinnell for reading, rubrics, unit assessments, IReady and Acadience, enables us to determine which students need to work with teachers in intervention groups for additional support. These students are then grouped for tier 2 instruction in guided reading, phonics, phonemic awareness, oral language or math with their classroom teacher, a push in ELA support teacher, Leveled Learning Intervention (LLI) teacher or with a teacher trained in special education. Student progress is monitored via an excel intervention tracker to determine next steps and student growth data is reviewed in 6-8 week cycles. If needed, students are referred to our pupil personnel team (PPT) for additional interventions and into tier 3 supports which include Reading Recovery (in 1st grade), at risk counseling or at risk Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS).

In addition, we run both before school and after school small groups and extended year options. Some of these groups are specifically designed for intervention. Morning classes are 3 days a week for 30 minutes before school starts, extended day classes are 2 days a week for 1 hour and summer supports are typically 2 days a week up to 3 hours a day either in person or online. We are able to further differentiate the work in these groups as we specifically invite students that need support in an area identified by assessments.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

We create opportunities for students performing above grade level to continue to grow. If a student is excelling, we assess their potential ability to visit a class in the grade above them for a particular subject. This especially is a focal point for reading instruction. Teachers focus on building differentiation into every lesson and we look for opportunities to move students to higher guided reading groups in the next grade when we see that they would be able to handle it academically and socially. Aside from literacy groups, students are also paired during math independent work. Students who are performing above grade level work together on math extensions with a real world context. These groupings also change and students performing above grade level also utilize their knowledge to assist students who may need additional support.

Additionally, we look for leadership opportunities for excelling children such as Student Council. In student council they are tasked with identifying a problem in our school or community and coming up with possible solutions for the issues where they can meet with administrators to consider how to improve the situation. Over the last year the problems have included issues such as bathroom cleanliness, good hygiene, garbage on sidewalks and playground safety. Students will also visit lower grades to conduct read alouds, present

information, and teach new skills to classes in lower levels. For example, we have had third grade students visit second grade classes to talk about Black Lives Matter week. Students showing exceptional Social Emotional Learning take part in the “Kindness Squad” and monthly meetings focused on our school core values which they take back to their classrooms to serve as representatives of that value.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Students With Disabilities (SWDs), and those who are identified as at risk are an important part of our Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). We organize supports with our Reading Recovery program for first graders and utilize Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) as a tiered intervention for our students in K through 3rd grade. We have established school systems that enable us to keep a pulse on all of our Special education students and all other student populations. We do this through regular data chats and the use of a school wide intervention tracker which teachers and all interventionists update weekly to keep track of the supports being provided for students and their progress towards goals and benchmarks.

TALES has a Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teacher who provides small group and individual interventions for our SPED students as well as those identified by our Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) as in need of Tier 3 support before an evaluation is considered. We also have 2 classes classified as 12:1 and 15% of our classroom teachers have a special education license. Additionally, TALES places an emphasis on training paraprofessionals to learn curriculum and SEL strategies to best support students and has made additional temporary hires to support special education students' learning gaps as we come through COVID.

Our School Based Support Team (SBST) consists of a school psychologist, family worker, social worker, guidance counselor and other service providers that meet on a weekly basis to students’ needs and recommend service to our students. They make modifications and accommodations on a regular basis based on students' performance and progress from interventions provided. This enables us to provide targeted instruction to Individualized Education Program (IEP) students who require additional services, and at-risk intervention for others who are struggling.

3d. English Language Learners:

TALES has shown clear and marked success in achievement with our English as a New Language (ENL) students as we prioritize how to serve them given the high percentage in our school. As previously mentioned, our ENL instruction is delivered through Social Studies as we believe it is important to contextualize the learning. Our ENL teachers push-in to every classroom daily to teach students through this content and also provide direct English language instruction within small group work. The groups are organized according to both language level and academic needs and has shown to be a strong support for our students in developing oral language and reading skills.

Our ENL team is a part of weekly grade level common planning and individually work closely with classroom teachers to adjust instruction to student needs and be responsive to their learning. Team members take part in district-wide training and attend workshops to utilize the most up to date strategies possible often turn keying that information to other staff in areas such as oral language supports. As a part of our school-wide focus on ENL strategies, our music and both STEM teachers hold TESOL licenses and incorporate these methodologies in daily instruction.

Additionally, for many years we have identified vocabulary as an area of need to be addressed as a precursor to comprehension. TALES continues to learn and incorporate many different vocabulary strategies taught to teachers during our weekly professional learning sessions by our consultant and highly qualified teachers. As a school-wide inquiry, teachers identify ENL students in their classes that are in need of additional support in vocabulary. These students are taken in a small group weekly, with a focus to build vocabulary around topics. We evaluate their growth every 8 weeks throughout the year to make adjustments to the groups and the teaching plans.

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

We have devoted resources both human and fiscal to providing additional enrichment opportunities that enable the type of school environment which results in greater student outcomes. This has been realized through close collaboration with organizations like Girls Who Code to provide coding instruction for students in recognizing the importance of technology in our students' futures. We also create programs with the Queens Botanical Gardens, Paul Taylor dance studio, Girls on the Run, Major League Baseball and a variety of other partnerships to support student growth.

Additionally, in order to provide vehicles for student voices in our school, the student government meets weekly with their advisor, teacher and administration to teach them how to be advocates for themselves and voice students' thoughts and concerns. These 3rd grade student leaders are empowered for decision making at the school level. They aim to create innovative ideas to instigate change within the school and the community of Flushing by coming up with civic action and service projects that they carry out. This opportunity helps them to develop leadership, improve reading and writing skills, gain experience in public speaking, and learn how to make a positive impact on school and community environment. These students are currently taking part in a participatory budget program where they will identify a problem and have a budget of \$2,500 to address a solution and are also taking part in the creation of a mural for the front of the school. As a result of this work, we want all of our students to know that their voice matters and can create change even at a young age. We have had numerous students come back to TALES in high school and highlight that as something they remember from their time with us.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At TALES, we strive to develop a warm atmosphere for all stakeholders and center who we are as a school in our Mission/ Vision and core values. We believe that all of our students possess leadership qualities and through a culture of respect and productive and ongoing teacher-student-family interactions, TALES strives to guide our students in becoming confident leaders.

We have had numerous structures in place to do this over our 15 year history including utilizing a Responsive Classroom (RC) approach throughout the school, engaging families in a wide variety of workshops including health and nutrition, how to support your child at home, understanding curriculum and racial equity conversations to name just a few.

The most significant change recently was that we were able to hire a full time Guidance Counselor and Social Worker for the first time in 2021 who partner closely with our Parent Coordinator and have strengthened our advocacy program to be responsive to the needs of each of our students and families. As part of our racial equity priority, we want our students to see themselves reflected in not only their classrooms and the school, but within our curriculums. With these new full time roles, we have been able to create more of a community school model supporting families with eye care, dental needs and a variety of other supports. As centerpieces of our SEL team, they support students and their families on an ongoing basis to make certain that all the students' needs are met so any impediments to their academic success is addressed. Students and family members have the opportunity to meet with the SEL team members to discuss social emotional issues while setting goals to improve academics. In their roles our counselor and social worker have also helped make our curriculum and supports more culturally responsive in partnership with outside organizations such as the Center for Racial Justice and Agiri Learning. Additionally, the creation of our Kindness squad, monthly core values emphasis and targeted conversions with students by our SEL team.

Through targeted opportunities such as Career day, guest speakers and specific integration of mentors in areas such as science, social justice, STEM and music that mirror the racial backgrounds of our students, we highlight that they can be difference makers in our society.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Our students' families are important stakeholders in our community. Several years ago when we revised our school's mission to incorporate racial justice and family members were invited to take part in the same Talking About Race workshop that staff attended and take part in the process on the School Leadership Team.

Our Parent Coordinator plays a vital role in family partnerships and encourages participation in our Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Our PTA meets with administration to voice concerns and opinions and holds a variety of events to bring together the school community such as a fall festival and a Lunar new year celebration. We utilize Google Forms to gauge families opinions, hold workshops and town halls on important topics and staff are always accessible in front of the school at arrival and dismissal.

Our school has developed strong relationships and partnerships with numerous community partners in order to support our students and families. One of the most important is one with our local council person. This relationship has also been leveraged to fund various needs for our school such as technology updates and playground upgrades. The Councilwoman has also visited the school to listen to our students' ideas and opinions concerning the nearby waterfront development.

Our school has a longstanding relationship with the Chinese American Parent Association (CAPA). We partner with them on community events and they run an after-school program within our school. We utilize our CAPA partnership as a training space as many of their staff become our substitute teachers which leads

to full time hire. Other community partnerships that TALEs has leveraged include Queens College (where our ELA consultant comes from, several of our teachers are adjunct professors there and we host at least 8 student teachers every year), FAN4Kids (Fitness and Nutrition for Kids), NY Coalition for Healthy School Foods, Little Flower Yoga, Queens Public Library, and Queens Botanical Garden.

We also believe in being responsive to our community especially during a time of need. The pandemic has deeply affected our families, in particular the rise of Anti-Asian sentiment. We held town hall meetings in conjunction with the Asian American Federation for community members to express their concerns and think of solutions to support one another and held workshops with healthcare professionals to discuss the vaccine and walked families through how to sign up for it.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Continuing and growing a culture of professional learning is an important aspect of our school. Collectively, we understand that we must be continually learning to best support our students and families.

As mentioned in previous areas, our partnerships with consultants is an extremely important aspect of our professional culture. TALEs utilizes consultants that are experts in ELA, Math, Early Childhood strategies, Social Studies and Racial Equity to support our staff. These consultants have grown to become part of the fabric of our school and have worked closely with us for many years. Their supportive relationship with teachers enables TALEs to have a continual growth model. We organize time during the school day for the consultants to meet with teacher teams and individuals for specialized support based on the administration's classroom observations.

Additionally, the Instructional Leadership Team works together to plan weekly professional learning sessions based on school-wide data and guide the school through inquiry cycles to support teachers to help target students improve vocabulary acquisitions. Weekly common planning meetings are held in teams to make instructional plans and address grade level needs. Teachers and staff have input into decision making through a variety of surveys on professional learning, social emotional learning and other topics for feedback, participation in learning walks and inter-visitation opportunities to learn from best practices.

An important part of our growth in the last five years (which came from staff) has been through racial equity and Culturally Responsible Education which has reshaped our curriculum and teaching approach. We continually support our teachers in their own journey with racial justice through monthly affinity groups with facilitators at the Center of Racial Justice, and the redesign of curriculum and approach with families. This work highlights our distributive leadership model and the belief that a collaborative approach is far more productive than a top down leadership model.

The seemingly small things come together to serve as the glue to this approach. Administration always has their doors open to work closely with staff, are always out front for arrival and dismissal and solicit opinions regularly from staff that give valuable insight into school areas of need.

All of the structures described are differentiated according to the needs of our teachers and staff. Our support systems also include mentorships, model classrooms, administration modeling lessons, dedicated planning and paperwork time for staff and supportive peer partnerships.

4. School Leadership:

Our principal was a co-founder of the school in 2008, serving as the literacy specialist and assistant principal before becoming principal in 2011. Our assistant principal is now in her third year at TALEs and has been an amazing support to the continued growth of the school.

Our leadership philosophy is rooted in the importance of being instructional leaders first. We place a high priority on being fluent in curriculum and instruction above all else and the belief that having a strong grasp on what and how we teach guides our school. Our staff know that administrators can and will teach to support in classrooms and understand how to support students. Our budget priority is to focus directly on in

instructional support for students at all times. This is reflected in our low teacher to student ratio, out of classroom support staff and small group extended day programs.

We also believe that a distributive leadership model is the best way to have staff members feel a vested interest in the constant improvement of the school. This comes in the form of mentoring, participation in the instructional cabinet, the hiring and interview processes, taking advantage of individual strengths and interests and enabling experienced teachers to pilot innovative teaching methods. We know that sometimes there are other people in the building that are experts in a situation than we do and utilizing their strengths.

It has also been an important focus of our school leadership to foster the interest in staff members wanting to grow professionally and personally. We incorporate their strengths into our school and help them find other opportunities for growth, even if it means moving on somewhere else. Over the course of 15 years, we have supported para-professionals in becoming teachers, teachers going back to school to gain multiple licenses, become counselors, assistant principals and district leaders.

In recent years the most important adaptation in our leadership roles have come in the form of developing our digital framework while maintaining our belief that students learn best from direct teacher instruction and leading through Racial Equity and Culturally Responsive Teaching. In both of these areas it has required our principal and assistant principal to continue growing personally and professionally. Administrators know just as we discuss with staff that continual learning is of the utmost importance. This is especially important in the New York City system as it is ever changing.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Since our inception, TALEs has been overwhelmingly made up of English Language Learners that are recent immigrants from China. Over 90% of students identify as Asian each year. With this in mind, it has been important to us to center Asian languages, cultures, and experiences in everything we do. This is present in our translations, celebrations, classroom materials, books and partnerships. That said, these should be the baseline expectation in any school with any significant cultural or racial subgroup.

We have always looked to hire staff that are from and reflect our community culturally and racially. Since we began this work we now specifically revise curriculum through an anti-racism lens, purchase books from authors of color whenever possible, and develop themes in our teaching to reflect the cultures within our neighborhood. Through these practices, we aim to provide windows and mirrors to our students.

What makes us special is that we have partnered with the Center for Racial Justice in Education since 2017 to investigate our implicit biases, understand racial impacts historically and develop systems and structures that reflect antiracism as a school which is evidenced specifically in how we lead through our Mission and Vision statements. We were the recipients of their Disturbing Racism award in 2019 and continue to work with them as consultants to help lead our affinity groups and train new staff within racial equity. We also partner with Malikah (a network of women leaders of color) and Maria Akinyele who serves as a consultant to support us in staff and family conversations and planning around race, culturally responsive teaching and equity.

We also prioritize our Book of the Month centering around Racial Equity and Social Justice with a team of teachers choosing very specific books with targeted lessons including vocabulary foci with our English Language Learners. We hold caregiver conversations with families to discuss race and race equity specifically and highlight the importance of talking about experiences with race and how we work together to teach our students. We also hold healing circles in partnership with Commission on Human Rights when traumatic events happen. This is especially important when there are Asian hate incidents in our community and nationally publicized events. As a school and as school leaders we look for opportunities to partner with the district office and other area schools to have these conversations and support the growth of culturally responsive teaching and learning.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

While there are many strategies that are important to the success of our school, one thing that we can point directly to that is vital to everything we do is the cultivation of our school culture.

Many people say when they come into our school that they can feel a warm and welcoming environment. There are numerous components in creating that environment. Personal interactions are a crucial part of the culture of support. Whether this is with parents, community members, supervisors or staff visiting from other schools, we want them to feel welcomed and free to ask questions. Additionally, we often feel that giving our time is what people want most. The gift of time and getting to know each person individually helps us create an environment that students, families and staff want to be a part of long term. Administrators give time to work on problems with teachers and staff. Teachers give time to work on concerns with students and families. Knowing that everyone is available to work together is a part of our culture.

Our continual learning approach is also a strong component of our culture. Learning about students, families and how to work best together, learning what each adult in our school needs to do their best work and most of all, always learning new and innovative approaches to teaching our students. Our Mission and Vision also anchors us in our focus on racial equity, gender conversations and inclusivity are also a clear message to our community of what type of culture TALES prioritizes.

The small things contribute to this culture. Administrators doors are always open for staff, personal contact information is freely given out to families and in person interactions are always valued over phone calls and emails. Inviting families into the school, classrooms and to participate in developing the culture helps to break down barriers and build trust.

The TALES culture is evident in everything we do. It is an overarching aspect of who we are, what we value and drives staff to look forward, always thinking about how to innovate. The development of this culture is what has kept seven of the original twelve staff members at our school as we celebrate our 15th year. It is also what results in a low turnover of staff and the tight knit staff that have grown together all with the purpose of supporting our students and families everyday.