

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name The Academy For Excellence Through The Arts  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 10855 69Th Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Forest Hills State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 11375-3982

County Queens County

Telephone (929) 467-6200 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL <https://www.aeaps303q.org/> E-mail bleto2@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.

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

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Tammy Pate E-mail tpate@schools.nyc.gov  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name New York City Geographic District #28 Tel. (718) 557-2738

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Barbara Leto  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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

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**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):
- 50 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 15 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 73 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	70
K	96
1	88
2	75
3	78
4	35
5	31
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	473

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 38 % Asian
  - 4 % Black or African American
  - 16 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 35 % White
  - 7 % 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: ≤1%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	0
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Russian, Ukrainian, Mandarin, Spanish, Japanese, Polish, Hebrew, Japanese, Cantonese, Bengali, Korean, Italian

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
6 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 23 %

Total number students who qualify: 107

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 10 %  
Total number of students served 48

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>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>11</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>27</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>8</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: 2

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 15

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.	21
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.	4

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

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	97%	96%	95%	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.

We believe that all children are gifted and have a natural desire to learn, imagine, explore, and create.

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

It is the policy of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to provide equal employment opportunities in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and without regard to actual or perceived race, color, religion, creed, ethnicity, national origin, alienage, citizenship status, age, marital status, partnership status, disability, sexual orientation, gender (including actual or perceived gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy/conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), military status, unemployment status, prior record of arrest or conviction, caregiver status, consumer credit history, predisposing genetic characteristics, salary history, sexual and reproductive health decisions, or status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual offenses, or stalking, and to maintain an environment free of harassment on any of the above protected classifications, including sexual harassment and retaliation.

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This policy is in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Section 503 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Fair Labor Standards Amendments of 1974, Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Civil Rights Act of 1991, New York State and City Human Rights Laws and Provisions of Anti-Discrimination in Collective Bargaining Agreements of the Department of Education of the City of New York.

Chancellor's Regulation A-830 sets forth the procedures for employees, parents of students, students and

others who do business with the DOE, work with DOE employees or students, use DOE facilities or otherwise interact with the DOE to file complaints of unlawful discrimination, harassment by DOE employees or individuals who are not employed by the DOE but who work with DOE employees or students, or retaliation based upon such complaints. Complaints may be filed by contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management (OEO) or by filing with one of the agencies identified below. A copy of Chancellor's Regulation A-830 may be obtained from OEO or on the legal page.

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

AEA is a choice school following the New York City Department of Education Admissions Policies. Most admissions processes and programs use an open or zoned admissions method. This means that students' academic records are NOT seen or used in admissions and all families need to do is list that program on their child's application. For admissions, each applicant is also assigned a random number. If there are more applicants than available seats and not enough seats for all applicants in a priority group, these random numbers determine who gets offers, as in a lottery.



## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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The Academy for Excellence through the Arts (AEA) is a proposal school that opened in September of 2008. The “Little Red School House” earned its nickname from the physical building’s rich history. The landmarked building is the site of P.S. 3, the oldest public school in the borough of Queens. Over the years, the building has also served as a district office before becoming AEA in 2008. Upon its opening, AEA served a population of 101 students in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. Throughout the years, AEA has grown to serve Pre-Kindergarten through 5th Grade, with a total population of 473 students. A large construction project completed in 2019 opened an extension to the original building, adding space for four classes in each grade from Pre-K through 5th grade.

Nestled between the residential homes and apartment buildings in Forest Hills, AEA is close to bustling urban areas, such as Austin Street, and just a short train ride from Manhattan. It also benefits from rich historical sites, museums, and beautiful city parks within reach. The school serves students from a variety of neighborhoods. As a choice school, parents are given the chance to apply for lottery admission, which draws in students from neighborhoods all over Queens. Families at AEA represent a wide variety of cultures, languages, races, and more. A common bond between all, however, is the shared love, appreciation, and investment in the rigorous academics and the benefits of the arts in education.

The small size of AEA gives our school a unique chance to form a family within the school. Many staff members have been at the school since its opening, others have stayed until retirement, and new teachers brought in all have a skill set that adds to the vision of arts in education while consistently maintaining strong academic standards. Our students continue to come back years after graduation, to visit, volunteer, speak at events, and more. The bonds between students, teachers, and families formed at AEA last long past the classroom years.

The school’s mission statement focuses on the belief that all children are gifted and have a natural desire to learn, imagine, explore, and create. Our school is unique in that we strive to offer our children an academically rigorous program with a well-balanced Theater Arts program consisting of drama, dance, music, and art. Our teachers, parents, and the community at large have high expectations and are committed to the personal, academic, and social emotional growth of all our students. At AEA, the arts are as important as math, science and English Language Arts, and even help our students in their academic subjects. Movement and music are incorporated into math lessons, with students using concepts like musical beats. Students study spotlight artists to learn about the work and historical context of famous artists. Material from traditional academic subjects is also integrated into the arts. In preparation for a performance of a rent party, mirroring the parties of the 1920s and 1930s, students studied the history of the Harlem Renaissance. During the performance, students were in character as various historical figures from the Harlem Renaissance like Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes. They danced, sang, told jokes, recited poetry, and discussed the lives of the people they were impersonating. Students contributed to every stage of the performance development, from choreography to set design.

Since its inception, AEA has been a strong community based institution with a dedicated staff, highly involved parent community, and students who are eager to learn. The Academy for Excellence through the Arts prides itself on nurturing the wonderful school community that we have built over the last fifteen years. Teachers, parents, caregivers, and students alike work hard to maintain academic excellence through ongoing professional development led by faculty, parents, and community based organizations. Some of the strategic collaborations that have contributed to the continuous development of our school include partnerships with community based organizations such as NY POPS, 92nd Street Y, Cultural After-School Adventures Program (CASA), Juilliard, and NYT Historical Society. The ability for school leaders to identify, encourage, and nurture talent from within our own school community has led to the implementation of after school Enrichment Clubs, “On Stage” meetings with administration, parent led workshops for both teachers and parents, and professional learning facilitated by in-house staff.

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

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

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

Reading and Writing at AEA is taught through a workshop model. Lessons begin with a teacher modeling a skill using engaging, culturally reflective texts, and then students are given the opportunity to practice the skill by sharing their thoughts and ideas with their peers. Independent or partner work time is focused on the continued practice of the skill modeled in the mini lesson. A typical classroom at AEA will have students involved in guided reading groups, reading centers, reading conferences, and independent reading during the workshop model.

Units of study for each grade have been carefully designed, implemented, and revised over the years to reflect the changing needs of the students. Students will learn through thematic units, including an in depth study of the ocean in 1st grade, the mysteries of the rainforest in 2nd grade, a biography and living museum study in 3rd grade, and a multi genre study of the American Revolution in 4th grade. Across the grades, routines and structures stay consistent in both reading and writing, and are taught through the study of multiple genres such as realistic fiction, expository texts, historical fiction, folktales and fables. Through their immersion in the genre, students gain the skills and confidence they need to grow as readers and writers.

Grades K-3 supplement their Reading and Writing English Language Arts units with phonics based reading instruction. Foundations and the Sadlier Phonics program are used to provide instruction and practice for phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, decoding skills, sound-symbol correspondences, and manipulating and building words.

In addition, grades K-5 also implement the “Words in Action” Vocabulary Program. Words in Action is a program that supports building vocabulary for students. The “Words in Action” program uses authentic picture books as a guiding text for students to learn the meaning of words by hearing them in context and then using them authentically with their partner. Synonyms, antonyms, multiple meanings, idioms, and shades of meaning are a few examples of the word-study focus of the program. Students are then expected to use new vocabulary in both conversation and in their own writing.

In order to ensure that all students are learning the material, and to adjust instruction accordingly, comprehension assessments are given at the conclusion of all units to monitor the students’ understanding and application of the reading and writing skills taught. Students are also assessed throughout the year using benchmark texts to determine their independent reading level. In addition, iReady diagnostic assessments are given three times per year to monitor student progress. Using the results from a variety of assessments allows teachers to consistently analyze data to adjust planning and student grouping, as well as allow teachers to make decisions about how to best support students as the year progresses.

Finally, in alignment with our vision of integrating the arts throughout the curriculum, students engage in a variety of ELA activities in conjunction with the drama curriculum. Students work closely to read, analyze, and write scripts, as well as writing, producing, directing, and performing a monthly news cast with original segments and scripts.

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

At AEA, we established a priority focus on math for the 2018-2019 school year that we continue to deepen in our mathematical practices. Our focus is to promote student perseverance in math by building and deepening teacher capacity in demonstrating the use of scaffolds, modeling perseverance and using math language to explain their thinking. As pedagogues, we set clear goals for teachers and students, including becoming more mathematically fluent in concepts and mathematical language. Teachers model perseverance when completing mathematical tasks through rich, “low floor, high ceiling” problems. The use of scaffolds

and strategies supports all learners in a math classroom. Teachers continue to revise our Understanding By Design Framework Curriculum Maps (UBDs), lessons, feedback, and expectations to ensure that mathematical fluency is built into the lessons and part of the grade expectation. All grades from K-5 use real world situations and models to encourage student discussion and writing about math. Teachers continuously monitor and work to ensure students become comfortable with calculations, as evidenced by their automaticity in number fluency, both oral and written explanations, and the regular use of math vocabulary.

A crucial part of our mathematical philosophy is our five established “AEA Absolutes”. These are things you will see in all classrooms in all grades during math lessons and any math learning in content areas. First, students are actively engaged and on task during mathematical learning. This means teachers strive to create meaningful learning experiences in a variety of modalities. Second, teachers meet the students where they are performing academically. Through baseline assessments, exit slips, teacher observations, and other formative assessments, teachers work to scaffold, support, and enrich mathematical learning. Third, teachers model perseverance by supporting students in using math tools and strategies. Students are encouraged to try to solve problems in different ways, and to work through challenges by demonstrating perseverance in math. Fourth, students explain their thinking and model their reasoning. Students are encouraged to work in groups and with partners to articulate their thinking and model the various strategies used. Fifth and finally, teachers model math vocabulary that students use to express their understanding.

AEA follows the Go Math program. This curriculum addresses all the Next Generation Learning Standards for grades kindergarten through 5th. The Go Math Program develops a coherent K–12 progression to help students connect concepts across and within grade levels. It has both print and digital pathways, which provides the rigor required for success with the Next Generation Learning Standards.

Math is taught through a workshop model. Lessons begin with problem-based situations and then build to more abstract problems. All along the way, students use multiple models, manipulatives, quick pictures, and symbols to build mathematical understanding. Within our math routines, students also engage in center activities using technology, partner and group games to reinforce concepts, and problem of the day activities. Students also engage in number talks, geared to build number sense and fluency.

Teachers use formative data from baseline assessments to differentiate instruction and form groups for each mathematical unit. Once groups are formed, teachers continuously work to assess students through the use of exit slips, online assignments, and teacher observations during lessons. At the culmination of each unit, students take content based and performance based assessments. Results from these assessments help to adjust differentiation and scaffolds necessary as students progress throughout the school year.

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

AEA takes a hand-on approach to teaching science. Teachers use the Amplify Science curriculum, which blends hands-on investigations, online simulations, and literacy-rich activities that empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers. Each unit begins with a real world scientific question to investigate. Students are guided through the investigative scenarios, where they must read and research to explore a specific scientific issue, such as why cliffs are disappearing, and then work through investigations using the scientific process to reach conclusions.

In addition to printed books that students engage with during each science unit, The Amplify Science curriculum includes virtual simulations that students can use to discover new science concepts. During a fourth grade investigation into rock formations, students were able to simulate thousands of years of geological history, while altering factors such as weather and water levels, in order to create theories and draw conclusions. The engaging, hands-on simulations increase student understanding through the visual models and the rich discussions that emerge from the experience.

Science is also an opportunity to incorporate the use of visual illustrations into the classroom. Students across the grades are able to express their understanding of different science concepts through artistic renderings of landscapes, animals and weather. AEA’s emphasis on the arts permeates all subjects and is included in planning across curricular areas.

AEA's commitment to STEAM education is evidenced by our full time STEAM teacher, who integrates science content through project based investigative learning. AEA has a STEAM lab, entirely dedicated to the development of our students' STEAM learning. The STEAM lab is home to scientific equipment such as 3D printers, coding bots, microscopes and more. Students follow the engineering design process in order to develop their creative problem solving skills and develop their ability to collaborate in a team. Recently, the first graders created mazes using the engineering design process. They collaborated, created, tested, revised and persevered to create the best version of their maze possible. Third graders participated in a unit to learn how to code. They used DASH robots and OZO Bots in order to explore the concepts of coding. Using critical thinking skills, students are able to participate in hands-on learning throughout the year with our STEAM curriculum.

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

At AEA, teachers use multiple sources to teach social studies. Through read-alouds and inquiry, students in grades K-5 start their social studies units by asking questions, then exploring the topic through texts, images, videos and artifacts.

A key focus of the Studies curriculum at AEA is the integration of the Five Forever Factors. These factors are woven through all themes of social studies, and are a guiding lens in which to study the ten social studies themes. Teachers participated in a professional development series with Paul Longo, who developed the Five Forever Factors, and have since been turn-keying that knowledge to new colleagues across grade levels.

Students in grades 3-5 begin a study of "The Harlem Renaissance" that progresses over the course of 3 years. Beginning in grade 3, students learn about "The Great Migration," using artists such as Jacob Lawrence as a lens of focus. Later, they learn about the time period in which the Harlem Renaissance was a cultural revival of African American music, dance, art, fashion, literature, and theater in New York City, taking place through the 1920s and 1930s. This study culminates in 5th grade with a celebration, which has taken the form of a "Rent Party" and "Night at the Apollo," in which students portray historical figures from this time period through performances and artwork.

The teachers also coordinate social studies lessons and experiences with the work of the parent led racial equity committee. Together, teachers and parents plan learning experiences for students that expose the students to different historical perspectives and experiences. For example, students in the younger grades have partnered with ShadowBox Theatre to compare folktales from different cultures. Students in older grades study important historical trends through visits to cultural institutions like the Lewis Latimer Museum, Museo del Barrio, and more.

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

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

AEA is a part of the NYC Division of Early Childhood Education, which has developed a series of interdisciplinary Units of Study for Pre-K for All. This research based curriculum was created in collaboration with researchers and supports student learning in all domains using developmentally appropriate practice. There are 10 Units total, each designed to last about a month. Units assist in nurturing inquiry, language and problem solving skills through their organization of the classroom environment, interactions with students, use of purposeful play, incorporation of books, other texts, new vocabulary, and family engagement practices. Units include Welcome to PreK, My Five Senses, All About Us, Where We Live, Transportation, Light, Water, Plants, Babies, and Transformation.

Units provide opportunities for content exploration and skill-building that are aligned with the NYCDOE Kindergarten Social Studies and Science Scope and Sequence. These pre-K studies provide important

foundational knowledge for students and support their growing understanding of self and the world around them.

At AEA, we have noticed that attending PreK within our school provides students with an educational advantage as they move into kindergarten and then the primary grades. The students that remain at AEA for their schooling easily assimilate into kindergarten with readiness and are successful as they move through kindergarten units, building on their foundations from PreK.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

### **2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

The arts are an integral part of our culture, and as such, we believe that students benefit from exposure to a variety of artistic experiences. Through our Spotlight Artist curriculum, students in all grades PreK-5 participate in weekly lessons that incorporate visual arts into their school day. Each month, the school highlights a different, and historically significant, period in the art world. Students learn about a range of artists from diverse backgrounds, historical periods, cultures and countries. Through this curriculum, teachers guide them as they read about the historical context of the time period, the personal life events of the artist that inspired them, and the environmental influences the artist may have experienced to inspire their style. Teachers guide students to explore the connections between artists, art styles, and the evolution from one style to the next. Students then create works in the style of each artist, often modeled after notable art pieces, exploring the media each artist used to create their work. It would be typical to walk through the halls of AEA on a Friday afternoon and see students creating sculpture, watercolors, collage, mixed-media arts and much more. We value the creativity this brings to the classroom, as well as the exposure to fine arts that our students receive on a regular basis.

To complement our Spotlight Artist curriculum, AEA also hosts after school enrichment clubs for students who are interested in the arts. Our Artist in Focus club meets twice a week to learn about an artist and work to create artwork inspired by that artist. The first and second graders who participate have studied artists such as Louis Comfort Tiffany, Sandra Blow, Yayoi Kusama and Rasheed Araeen. Performing arts enrichment clubs are also offered to our third through fifth grade students. Our Junior and Senior Dance Troupe meet once a week to explore a variety of dance formations and techniques, and then apply it to a choreographed routine. The Junior and Senior Dance Troupe culminates with an end of year performance, during which time the entire school community, including students and parents, are invited to celebrate the efforts and resulting performance. Students in grade 5 are also able to join the after school orchestra program, in which they learn to play a musical instrument under the direction of the music teacher.

In addition to the after school enrichment programs, all students in grades K-5 are exposed to Drama, Visual Art, and Music as their specialty classes on a rotating grade basis. These classes meet either weekly or twice weekly, and follow curricula that has been designed by the speciality teachers by grade level, based on the Blueprint for the Arts.

### **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Our school follows the physical education guidelines as set forth by the Department of Education. In alignment with the Five Thematic Categories, students learn and participate in various activities related to Safety and Management, Community Building, Locomotor Skills, Rhythm and Educational Gymnastics, and Manipulation. Grades Kindergarten through fifth participate weekly in a physical education class with a cluster teacher. During physical education classes, students have the opportunity to engage in active cooperative learning experiences as they learn about different types of exercises. Classroom teachers also incorporate physical activity in the classroom using Move to Improve initiatives. Teachers use visual aid cards that display movements that can be done in place to help get students moving during academic instruction. The fifth grade also participates in a field day once the weather permits. On this day, students

engage in a number of physical activities and games to not only celebrate the culmination of their time in elementary school, but also to stay active and engage in healthy competition with peers.

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

**2d. Technology/library/media**

Technology and Media play an important role in the AEA community. Each month our 4th graders work with our Drama teacher to put together a monthly news segment that we call “AEA News Reel.” The students work together to create the segments and script. Some of the monthly segments include a mindful movement which showcases exercises and yoga, motivational quotes, segments that showcase artwork around the school, and interviews with staff and students. The students are also in charge of interviewing staff and students and filming the segments.

AEA also hosts after school enrichment clubs for students who are interested in technology and media. Our coding club focuses on unplugged and plugged coding. Students develop an understanding of computers and their processing of commands as they use the Evo Ozobot color codes and Dash Blockly codes to create algorithms. Students are given opportunities to be creative as they create their own algorithms and they are also provided with opportunities to problem solve and collaborate as sometimes codes may have bugs, or errors, and students are tasked with debugging, or finding and fixing an error in the code. Students are not only building their knowledge and experience with code, but they are also strengthening life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborating.

The technology and media club teaches students about the different technology we have now and how it has changed over time. The students compare and contrast different technological eras throughout history and focus on how technology has evolved to enhance every day activities. The students also learn the difference between hardware and software and how they interact to create new technologies. Some of the exciting projects our students have worked on were creating a blog post about something that was of interest to them. They were able to write, edit, and format a digital blog that was published online to share with their families. The students also learned how to create an audio file and combine that file with pictures from a book to create their own audio books. The students practiced using audio and video recording software. Then, they were able to independently import these files into an editing software in order to put together the final read aloud style video. The students are excited to share these audio books with the younger grades as a read aloud.

In addition, AEA is 1:1 with student devices. Every student is assigned an iPad for school and classroom use. Students are proficient at using Google Classroom, and work in various subject areas to create presentations, documents, and projects. Students in upper grades also use FlipGrid and Canva for presentation purposes. Technology also plays a role in reinforcement of skills in small groups and centers through the use of online websites. Engaging sites such as Kahoot and Factile are also used when reviewing for tests. Furthermore, students also utilize sites such as Prodigy, iReady, IXL, and Splashlearn to practice skills aligned to state standards.

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

Over the years, we have made it a goal to incorporate innovative ideas into our curriculum. The thought behind these innovations is total immersion into a content specific project. One example of this was an eight week long science study about the rainforest ecosystem. Students pondered an essential question about how plants and animals in an ecosystem are connected by studying the rainforest. After some light research on the topic, each student chose an animal to study in depth. Teachers incorporated both reading, writing and math into the science unit by guiding each student through the writing of their own “All About” book on their animal, as well as the creation of a life-sized artistic rendition of the animal they chose. For the culminating event, an empty classroom was turned into a rainforest, complete with a running waterfall that the students figured out how to create. Students formed a path through the classroom by hanging painted

canvases floor to ceiling. Students used what they learned about measurement to create life sized and accurately detailed animals. They were all displayed accurately within the structured four layers of the rainforest: emergent, canopy, understory, and forest floor. The projects included a boa constrictor made from pantyhose, a red-eyed tree frog made from felt, an Australian King Parrot made from model magic, a sugar glider made from fur pieces and even a gorilla made from an upcycled costume.

Another example was when students participated in a unit of study centered around the essential question of how do the components of our solar system move and interact with one another? During that study, a classroom was turned into outer space. The students used paper mache to create the solar system. The walls of the room were covered in black tablecloths covered with silver stars. Using their newly acquired math skills, planets were made to scale so that Jupiter was the largest, with all of the others descending in size. Students also created research papers on their selected planet. All of the students had an opportunity to tour and become immersed in the “Solar System”. In both of these examples, the intersection of academic areas utilized to create these projects were a powerful testament to the success of curriculum planning that happens at AEA.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

Students performing below grade level are identified through formative and summative assessments across content curriculum areas as well as benchmark assessments such as iReady Diagnostics. Using this data, students that are identified as such are provided with small group instruction and mini-lessons that target specific areas in need of growth. For example, students that may struggle with certain skills like the relationship between addition and subtraction, are assigned targeted lessons through iReady for review and monitoring. Using our Guided Reading Level Assessments, students that fall one or more levels below grade level can be referred for further assistance in RTI. Students that are approved for RTI services are assessed more in depth for their reading level using the American Reading Company.

This intervention allows the teacher to find gaps in their phonemic awareness ability. It allows the intervention teacher to provide key information for the classroom teacher in order to support the student during the school day. The intervention teacher uses targeted mini-lessons for various skills across grade and reading levels in order to meet the student where they are and begin to bridge their learning to the next reading level. Students are placed into groups according to the American Reading Company levels and reading goals. Small-Group lessons include decoding practice, text specific questions, spelling, and phonics lessons. After a 6-8 week cycle, students are assessed on their progress made and whether a second cycle of RTI is needed. Another service provided for students who are performing below grade level is the Breakfast Club Program. This is a before school program that works with select students across grades to address areas of difficulties in math and ELA. This program provides a review of previously taught skills with explicit modeling and allows more practice for students.

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

For students performing above grade level, teachers work together to differentiate the activities done during independent work time within lessons. Students may be given extension questions to discuss with their peers in relation to the topic being studied. Enrichment problems may be used to deepen understanding of the topic. Across all academic areas, teachers collect data from baseline assessments, and align their lessons to the needs of the class. Whenever possible, lessons are designed to be “low floor, high ceiling” experience that can be accessed by students at multiple levels of understanding. This allows students performing above grade level the opportunity to engage in rich, thoughtful tasks and apply their deeper level of understanding. During a lesson, students are given the opportunity to show they understand the material, and then move on to enrichment or higher level work. For example, a teacher might choose the problems that demonstrate mastery of a topic in math. If students can correctly solve those problems, they can move on to an extension activity, while other students continue to practice the skill. Math League and Newspaper Club are opportunities offered to students in order to continue to enrich their learning experiences.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Students with disabilities are identified and provided with a set of achievable goals in which progress is monitored by the special education teacher.

When planning for lessons, teachers incorporate specially designed instruction in order to make the curriculum accessible for all students. For example, students that require repetition of skills as well as explicit instruction have been provided with an iPad to access content videos created to review skills for math. This provides a valuable resource that students can also use at home to support further review of skills. If a child requires more support, the special education instructional team will meet to review progress made and determine if additional services like Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) or compensatory services are needed. Students with disabilities also had the opportunity to participate in Recovery Services to address deficits in their learning. This program utilized iReady Diagnostics data to drive lessons and instruction for this learning.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

Historically we have had less than one percent of our student population designated as English Language Learners. Our ELLs are afforded every opportunity to be successful members of the school community. All mandates are met with regard to required minutes, teacher certification, and parent outreach. We employ duly certified teachers in the lower grades to assist our ELLs with minimal disruption to their daily schedules. We incorporate a push in/pull out model that is tailored for each child in order to maximize support as they grow in their language acquisition. Sessions are created to focus on the academic needs of the students. This includes work in phonics, vocabulary and pronunciation. Aside from the academic needs of our ELLs, our school community strives to create a supportive environment by cultivating an appreciation of diversity. Our curriculum, as well as our classroom environments, honor and reflect the lives of the students. Having a classroom library with all of the children represented in the available texts is a first step in creating a culturally diverse environment. Additionally, incorporating the specifics of the students' lives (sport teams, clubs, national cuisine, etc) allows for an all inclusive feel to each class.

In our experience there has not been any significant achievement gap between the general population and the ELL students. With the supports put in place and the specific needs of each child being addressed from the moment they enter our school, we have seen great success with the way in which we differentiate instruction and the progress made by this population.

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



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

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

At AEA, we strive to motivate and engage students by creating a learning environment that is nurturing, safe, and fun. Students have a number of individuals that they can approach for support and advice. Everyone on staff, whether the school nurse, the school safety officer, the office staff, the teaching staff, or the administration, plays a pivotal role in students' school lives.

As far as academics, all grades plan field trips to supplement curriculum and give a hands on, real world experience. From kindergarten children visiting a local pizzeria in conjunction with a "how to" writing unit, to 3rd graders taking in a performance of "Gateway to a New World" related to their immigration ELA unit, to 5th graders extending their mathematical thinking at a visit to the MoMath Museum, students enjoy taking time to explore the world around them outside the classroom.

In addition, teachers strive to plan activities for lessons that are engaging and student led. During a visit to a 3rd grade classroom during math, you may witness students engaging in an "Array Bakery" activity, where they are using cereal pieces to fulfill doughnut bakery orders in mini boxes representing multiplication facts and arrays. Visit a few months later, and those same students are using Cheeze-its' to model and calculate area and perimeter of shapes, or are hard at work creating presentations for a living museum event during an ELA biography unit.

When it comes to students' social emotional learning, teachers create classroom communities where discussion, problem solving, and conflict resolution are encouraged and practiced. AEA uses the Harmony SEL program to develop these life skills. Within the Harmony program, students learn to recognize and appreciate one another's similarities and differences, develop empathy, practice communication and problem solving, and learn about friendship, consequences of bullying, and how to best support their friends and classmates.

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

Engaging the families of AEA is of utmost importance. We understand and value the importance of our collaborative partnerships with families, and work hard to maintain positive relationships throughout the larger community. In our 2022 New York City School Survey, 96% of parents think that the school makes an effort to reach parents. Through our strong collaboration with our Parent Teacher Association, AEA is able to offer community events such as ice skating events, movie nights, potluck dinners, MLB stadium outings, and end of the year field day/picnics.

Throughout the school year, families are welcomed into our school for a variety of events and volunteer opportunities. Students showcase their writing work through "publishing parties" where students are able to celebrate their successes by sharing their completed writing work at the end of a writing unit, while reflecting on their process. Each year, AEA hosts a Holiday Cultural Fair. Families are invited into each classroom as a guest teacher to represent a holiday or tradition that is reflective of their own culture. In these ways, students and parents are all given the opportunity to take on the role of educator and take pride in their learning and their cultures. Recently, AEA started a parent partnership to recruit lunch volunteers. A rotating group of parents are scheduled to participate in student lunch and recess activities. The parents help supervise, take care of, and monitor the students during lunch time, providing more opportunities for the students to play and socialize.

We have also hosted a parent book club in which selected parents and staff met once a week to discuss the book "Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain" by Zaretta Hammond. This book club had parents and staff work together to discuss the reading and see how we could input some of the ideas into our own curriculum and teaching. This allowed the parents and staff to have a safe place to discuss racial equity in our school.

Our community partnerships help to enrich our curriculum and offer valuable experiences to our students, and help to engage them in their learning while deepening their understanding of curriculum topics. Our partnership with the Cultural After-School Adventures Program, also known as CASA, has allowed us to bring in cultural performances such as Korean Drums and Mexican Dance, and an after school dance program. Funds for CASA are allocated by City Council members and administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs, and we are fortunate to have been granted this opportunity each year.

To enrich our social studies curriculum, AEA has partnered with the New York Historical Society to provide in-school lessons about various historical topics. This year, our fourth graders had the chance to be transported to the 17th century without ever leaving their classroom! Through our teaching partnership with the museum, we were able to bring history alive as they were able to touch artifacts such as beaver fur and candle molds that would have existed in the 1600s.

As the arts are a central focus of our student experience, AEA has also partnered with Juilliard to bring their Morse Teaching Fellows program to our school. Through our partnership, students in grades 2-5 have been able to experience the music of the Ivalas String Quartet as an in person concert. In addition, classes are taught by Juilliard fellows who bring their musical expertise and passion into the classroom. In addition, AEA has also partnered with NY Pops. A teaching artist works weekly with students in Grades 1-2, for a two year loop of learning about musical theater, song, and choreography. Families are invited to an end of year performance as a culminating event, and are invited several times throughout the year to see the NY Pops perform outside of school hours.

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

Creating a school community where teachers feel valued and supported is a priority for the AEA leadership team. The administration at AEA fosters leaders within the school community in order to build capacity amongst staff by encouraging teachers to pursue their career passions. Teachers take on leadership roles in a variety of ways at AEA. Administration encourages and fosters an environment where teachers and staff members can share their knowledge and expertise, and are given opportunities to explore areas of interest, and then turnkey to colleagues.

Our current technology needs are met by a third grade teacher with a passion for connecting students with technological tools to support their learning. She attends professional development, turnkeys important information, organizes and catalogs the school's devices, and assists teachers with their technological needs in the classroom.

The leadership at AEA believes that having a central focus is an important part of engaging staff in professional development. Throughout the years, there have been different learning objectives such as a year long study to improve teacher practice in the area of mathematics. Knowing and valuing the importance of math discussions in the classroom, teachers at AEA engage in math professional development, working to build math routines and practices that will improve number sense and abstract mathematical thinking. A current fourth grade teacher with a passion for math and extensive training in elementary school mathematics has taken on the role of facilitating this year's math professional development. Through monthly meetings, teachers meet to explore their own practice and learn from one another.

In addition to the collaborative effort between the Parent Association and the school-based Racial Equity Committee, a committee of teacher-leaders are also engaging in a partnership with the new Citywide Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education (CRSE) Professional Learning Communities (CCPLCs), facilitated by the Office of Equity and Access and The Metro Center at New York University. The goal of the Professional Learning Community is to offer tailored support on current implementation of CRSE standards, practices, and mindsets within schools.

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

The main leadership philosophy employed at AEA would be best described as Participative Leadership. This approach of depending on a community of teachers is possible due to the fact that the administration has

assembled a team that includes highly skilled members who are motivated and are able to work independently. The belief of the principal is that no one teacher is an expert in everything. The leadership's goal is to surround themselves with people who are experts in different areas and bring different skills and talents needed to run a successful school.

Upon the opening of AEA, the principal filled her classrooms and offices with highly qualified team players whose shared goals were the success of the school. Each came with their own level of expertise and became part of a powerhouse team. Staff members who excelled in technology, are skilled in curriculum writing, and are experts in differentiating lesson plans are an imperative part of the administration's ability to effectively lead.

The perfect example of this type of leadership is when our units of study are being written. The principal and assistant principal will discuss the CEP and district goals with a team of teachers. These teachers will then use the state standards for a particular curriculum area and begin building teaching points and key concepts to be covered. Another group of teachers will focus on the materials, trade books and read alouds that will enrich the focus of the unit. Each classroom teacher will have the autonomy to modify the teaching points and materials to fit the needs of their populations. The speech pathologist will be on hand to add tools and ideas that will be useful for certain children who require additional assistance as per their IEPs. Having all hands on deck and having trust in the expertise of your team is critical in being able to keep things running smoothly from a leadership standpoint.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

AEA administration, teachers, and staff continuously work to effectively address the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff.

AEA has a Racial Equity Committee, formed by parents, who meet independently to discuss current events, social issues, and how to address such issues in their lives as well as in our school community. As a team, teachers and parents seek out educational opportunities and partnership for our school communities. This year, 4th and 5th grades participated in field trips partnered with the Museo del Barrio, exploring different cultural holiday celebrations. 3rd through 5th graders participated in the Hidden Voices of NYC program through the Museum of the City of New York, learning about important historical figures in American history, such as Bayard Rustin. The school also partnered with the Louis Armstrong Museum for musical performances on site. These programs were a collaboration between administration, teachers, parents, and the PTA working to fund and plan meaningful learning experiences to celebrate diversity and a wide variety of voices and perspectives.

As detailed in Part 5 section 3, teachers are also engaging in a partnership with the new Citywide CRSE Professional Learning Communities (CCPLCs), facilitated by the Office of Equity and Access and The Metro Center at New York University. Through a series of professional development sessions, personal coaching sessions, and asynchronous work, a team of teachers work to build shared language to support awareness and understanding of CRSE principles, practices and prerequisites. With the mentorship for the Metro Center at NYU, teachers engage in discussions to develop capacity to engage and sustain CRSE practices with teachers from all 5 boroughs.

Teachers also work to develop CRSE implementation plans that center uplifting the needs of students who have been historically marginalized.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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Our school success is predicated on the belief that all students can learn. Giving teachers the tools and autonomy to help their students by creating multiple entry points creates success for all children. One practice that has been instrumental and has led to our school success has been shared leadership. Our school was started with what we like to refer to as the “Founding 4”; the four pedagogues who wrote the proposal to open AEA. Regardless of what title we held, no one person had any more say over the other. We have tried to maintain this same practice to the extent that our school is not run in a top down model. The opinions of our newest teachers carry as much weight as those who would be considered seasoned teachers. Our belief is if something doesn’t fit or doesn’t make sense, the norm is for that staff member to offer another suggestion in its place. For example, teachers and staff members are empowered to take on leadership roles in programming. During the pandemic, a group of four teachers programmed all students into virtual classrooms that had to be broken down by cohorts. Additionally, the in-person students also had to be programmed into socially-distanced classrooms on an A/B rotation cycle while another set of teachers programmed all students to give them online access to Google Classroom should the need arise to pivot to fully online learning.

Additionally, teachers make up two thirds of the hiring committee. The thinking behind this is that the teachers on a grade will be the ones working closely with the new hires. The belief is that these teachers should have an opportunity to be part of the interview process and give their opinions to the candidate being a good fit for our school.

Taking ownership for learning and professional input is key to the success of AEA. Teachers are part of every school empowerment team such as the School Leadership Team (SLT), Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), and Racial Equity Team. The power of unity has proven to be consistently successful over the last 15 years.