

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Dee Gilley

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

Official School Name Cross Timbers Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 831 Jackson Trail

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

City Azle                      State TX                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 76020-2309

County Tarrant County

Telephone (817) 444-3802                      Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL http://www.azleisd.net/Domain/13    E-mail dgilley@azleisd.net

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/CrossTimbersEl    Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_    Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_    Blog \_\_\_\_\_    Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Ray Lea                      E-mail rlea@azleisd.net

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

District Name Azle Independent School District    Tel. (817) 444-3235

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. Bill Lane

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

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

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	24	16	24
K	67	39	106
1	39	48	87
2	50	55	105
3	47	41	88
4	55	49	104
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	282	248	530

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 30 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 67 % White
  - 3 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 35%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	82
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	96
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	178
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	513
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.347
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	35

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %  
75 Total number ELL

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 64 %  
Total number students who qualify: 347
8. Students receiving special education services: 5 %  
24 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>10</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>29</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>7</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 18
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	8
Paraprofessionals	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

Our mission to empower all students with lifelong skills and knowledge is to enable them to become inquisitive, compassionate, productive, principled citizens of the world.

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Cross Timbers Elementary School (CTES) opened in 1998 just west of Azle, a small town 17 miles northwest of Fort Worth, Texas. Azle is a commuter community, bordered by lakes and 35 miles from D/FW International Airport. The city encompasses 8.2 square miles and has 10,947 residents (92% white and 8% Hispanic), but 70% of the school district's 6,262 students live outside the city. The school district is 93 square miles and stretches into three counties. CTES currently enrolls 541 students, 84% of whom live outside of Azle.

CTES student demographic information from its opening compared to 2014-15 reveals significant changes. Enrollment increased from 440 to 538. Hispanic population increased from 5% to 31%. The number of white students decreased from 94% to 65%, while the number of economically disadvantaged students grew from 37% to 64%. English Language Learners (ELL) grew from 1% to 14% and the mobility rate increased from 26% to 35%.

CTES is an Exemplary High Performing School which has consistently exceeded expectations on state tests. Dedicated teachers have stayed focused on student achievement while adapting to a succession of changing state accountability standards. CTES received "Recognized" ratings from 1998-2002, and under the next state assessment, the school earned "Recognized" ratings three times and the highest "Exemplary" rating five times. CTES also earned 23 Gold Star Acknowledgements over seven years in Reading, Writing and Math. Under the current state assessment, CTES has earned the "Met Standard" rating each year while earning every eligible Distinction Designation — Top 25% Student Progress, Academic Achievement in Reading/English Language Arts, Academic Achievement in Mathematics, Top 25% Closing Performance Gaps, and Postsecondary Readiness. Particularly noteworthy are fourth-grade Hispanic scores in 2014-2015, as these students scored higher on Reading (100%) and Writing (94%) than both white (98% Reading, 82% Writing) and Economically Disadvantaged students (98% Reading, 89% Writing).

Cross Timbers teachers believe the number one reason for their success is the additional instructional time they have found within the school day. More than half of the faculty choose to adjust their workday to begin tutoring students as soon as they get off the bus, an hour or more before school starts. By providing morning tutoring or enrichment for all students, every student has a "home base" and builds a relationship with staff and other students. Students have an opportunity to check books out of the library, complete unfinished homework, get help in any subject area, attend Robotics Club three days a week, or peer tutor. The special education teacher and paraprofessional have "Breakfast Club" for special education students. Bilingual students have "Amigos Club" with a bilingual teacher and paraprofessional as well as upper grade peer tutors.

Data drives instruction, and CTES teachers collaborate and disaggregate data to match the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) to each child's instructional level. In 2014-15, when 41% of the third grade standards were new, they devised a different "game plan" to bring students up to speed on these standards, moving many things previously taught in grade 4 down to grade 3. Teachers incorporated the new TEKS into the curriculum during the 2013-2014 school year to give students a head start. Students' reading and math levels are assessed and an individualized plan is tailored for each child. Especially helpful was pushing out a TEK at a lower grade level for students who needed remediation before they could tackle their grade-level TEK.

When CTES first opened, a major challenge was attracting and retaining highly qualified staff. To help in that area, a licensed on-site daycare program was introduced, charging only \$12 per day for Azle ISD employees. After starting with three toddlers, within five years the program grew to 97 children on five Azle ISD campuses. As a result of this benefit, and the peace of mind it provided, highly qualified (and often higher paid) teachers from other districts joined the CTES staff and began bringing their babies to the on-campus daycare.

CTES designed a Student Motivational Program in 1999 to celebrate the progress and hard work of students and teachers. Individuals are recognized daily (morning announcements and a Perfect Attendance flag on the classroom door); weekly (Monday morning announcement of accelerated reading and math milestone points earned); and every six weeks at award assemblies.

The CTES educational philosophy includes differentiating instruction and guidance to meet the individual academic, emotional, social, cultural and physical needs of students while maintaining high academic standards for all. By providing appropriate scheduling, curriculum, instruction, and social and emotional guidance, the CTES community demonstrates acceptance and respect for individual differences. Consequently, students' chances of success increase along with their love for learning. Adapting to students' needs is intuitive and intentional. At CTES, there is a sense of determination to light the way for all children to succeed.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The TEKS form the foundation of the core curriculum at CTES. The campus utilizes multiple opportunities for vertical and horizontal alignment, which are evaluated each year and adjusted in response to student needs. Teachers use a detailed Scope and Sequence for each subject, including standards from one or more of the core subjects. The Reading/English Language Arts curriculum is essential, since it overlaps into all other core subjects. An intensive phonics program in Kindergarten – 2 (K-2) grades provides a strong foundation to form successful, independent readers. Phonics is reinforced in grades 3-4 through the spelling program. Staff members focus on meeting individual students' needs by frequently assessing their current reading levels and evaluating the progress and fluency of all students throughout the year. Many resources are utilized to provide a variety of genres—textbooks, novels, leveled readers, e-books and self-selected library books. Questioning is based on current TEKS as well as the released state assessments and open-ended questions. Staff members integrate writing with all subjects to make it relevant and meaningful to students. Students learn to brainstorm with thinking maps, revising their own writing, and editing each other's work.

The math TEKS focuses on fact fluency and builds upon number sense, critical thinking, and problem solving. Much of the instruction is in small group settings. Students use manipulatives, model drawing, mental math strategies, technology resources, music, and movement to acquire problem-based learning. Teachers use adopted textbooks, but pull learning activities from well-known math instructors to practice and reinforce student learning. They believe it is important to build from concrete to abstract thinking when approaching new concepts. For example, working with manipulatives on place value precedes working place value problems on paper. I-pad gamification activities support spiraling of previously taught material to help students master learning objectives. Struggling math students receive extra help as above-level students are given enrichment activities.

As time is always a crucial factor, integration is CTES's key to success when covering Science and Social Studies TEKS. Both subjects are taught in alternating three-week intervals for in-depth, focused instruction. Each grade level also integrates these two core subjects within Reading, Math, and English on a daily basis for maximum achievement. Vocabulary is emphasized for all students but teachers pre-teach vocabulary to ELLs and below-level students. Staff members believe it is imperative the writing process be integrated within Science and Social Studies lessons as different TEKS in various disciplines can be synthesized and practiced. The goal is to maintain rigor while providing enrichment through hands-on, well-developed, and higher-level thinking activities aligned with the TEKS to improve skills of above-level and below-level students. These subjects can be assessed through technology applications (apps) and project-based assignments.

In the school's Gifted and Talented (GT) population, each grade level increases the expectations to encourage students to stay engaged and learning. Teachers use individualized, computerized reading and math programs, which individually motivate students to improve their reading levels and learn more complex math skills. Teachers have developed more challenging spelling lists and have rewritten many of the assessments to reflect higher-level thinking skills. A GT pullout program meets one afternoon a week to work on individualized projects and beginning Spanish.

The integrated Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)/Pre-school Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) Pre-K/PPCD includes bilingual students. This program uses a curriculum that supports the Texas Pre-K guidelines and addresses development in social, emotional, communication, listening and academic areas. Students learn through exploration and manipulation of materials and through movement and music. Teachers align their instruction with Kindergarten and primary materials and goals to prepare students for the challenges in the grades ahead. Students are introduced to technology as the classroom is equipped with a Smartboard, document camera, and one student-to-one iPad. There is a strong emphasis on parent involvement by offering parenting classes, parent volunteer opportunities, educational social media and

daily communication. Since Pre-K began to be offered on campus three years ago, students come to kindergarten better prepared and more comfortable as they know the campus.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

CTES is proud of its additional curriculum areas such as music, physical education (PE), technology, and art. These special curriculum areas support and enhance the core curriculum of the students' overall educational experience and are integrated into students' daily schedules. The library is open to all students from 7:30 to 3:10 daily. Students in grades K-4 attend music and technology twice a week and have PE 30 minutes every day. Art is integrated in all subject areas. Pre-K/PPCD attends music, library, and PE classes once a week.

Staff members believe physical education promotes and supports academic achievement. Students participate in a wide range of activities to develop their physical well-being and their knowledge of the relationship between physical health, mental health, and healthy eating habits. Locomotor and manipulative skills are taught along with sports skills, sportsmanship and teamwork, in a curriculum that follows the required TEKS set out for Pre-K/PPCD through fourth grade. Students acquire the knowledge and skills for movement that provide the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to an active lifestyle. Students at CTES learn how to exhibit a physically active lifestyle and understand the relationship between physical activity and health throughout their school years. CTES staff and students participate in Jump Rope for Heart and have raised thousands of dollars for the American Heart Association. Staff members assess students' fitness levels through Fitness Gram Testing.

Music is another vital piece of a well-rounded education at CTES. The music program includes Integrated Pre-K through fourth grade and is taught by a certified music teacher. Students learn all musical elements through singing, moving, listening, and playing instruments. The music curriculum follows the required TEKS. K-4 grades participate in two public music performances per grade level, one for the student body and another for the community. These programs teach drama, speaking with self-expression, and performing in front of a live audience. Third and fourth grade students can audition for the All-City Choir through which they experience an advanced choral setting. CTES staff believes that a strong fine arts education positively affects academic performance.

Another non-core curriculum area is the school's technology classroom. Students in grades K-4 have access to desktop computers, I-Pad applications, and various robotic activities. The digital technology specialist teaches K-4 grade students' technology skills as laid out in the TEKS. This specialist also teaches second, third, and fourth graders the higher level STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curriculum. All students participate in the world-wide Hour of Code and learn coding through several apps. This gamification encourages students to come to school, be active in class and it engages the students for success in all academic subjects as they integrate disciplines to solve complex problems. Students are given the opportunity to put these skills into real-world application with the STEM activities' apps. The technology skills learned at CTES are hands-on applications that extend beyond the classroom, and lead to tremendous opportunities for CTES students. In May every year, the superintendent invites the public to Azle High School to attend the district "Showcase." Every student at CTES participates in the district-wide "Showcase" by displaying their artwork from each grade level, and to broadcast their artwork, experiments, musical talent, and technology advancements in depth. CTES students are excited to show their skills and share their achievements with the community. The community is especially impressed with the engineering skills of CTES students who demonstrate robots they have designed and built from scratch. Students have created a 3-D printer which highlights their ability to think out of the box. Technology is prevalent throughout the entire school with each classroom having Smartboards, document cameras and each student having an I-Pad. CTES's special curriculum areas provide viable tools that motivate students to make learning fun as they explore, design, and unleash their creativity.

## 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Differentiated Instruction (DI) within the framework of response to intervention (RtI) ensures high levels of student learning and achievement. DI helps all children struggling with basic skills to those students who

need enrichment to succeed. RtI is a problem solving process for below-average learners. A critical question is how large is the “gap” between a student’s performance and his grade-level peers. Classroom teachers provide group interventions at Tier 1. Grade level teams meet to review baseline data and design, review, and monitor intervention plans every six weeks. If a student doesn’t make adequate progress at Tier 1, more targeted services in a small group setting is provided at Tier 11. The title, Grand Central Station (GCS) teacher, bilingual, counselor, and principal (multi-disciplinary specialist team) meet to address teachers’ concerns. Progress is monitored bi-weekly. Students get services from a specialist teacher three or more times a week for 6-10 weeks. Tier 111 is for students who need intensive interventions daily to target their deficits. Additional academic testing may be warranted. RtI may be accessed through Section 504, linguistic, and IEP (Individual Education Plans) accommodations, also.

To serve above-level students, 83% of CTES teachers have the GT endorsement. Teachers differentiate GT instruction in conjunction with the GT teacher, who utilizes the state’s GT project-based curriculum. Grades 3-4 GT students meet weekly with a bilingual GT instructor for 2.5 hours. Students research areas of interest more deeply and improve their understanding of various topics. They also learn beginning Spanish. The use of iPads provides innovative and engaging lessons and encourages creative expression.

Support for ELLs is prevalent at CTES, with 97% of the classroom teachers and 83% of non-classroom certified teachers being ESL (English as a Second Language) certified. CTES has multiple bilingual paraprofessionals as instructional aides and a bilingual teacher, who offer support for ELLs in a daily pullout program. Struggling ELL students can attend Amigos Club every morning to get extra academic support before school. Additionally, each ELL gets 30 minutes of supplemental, targeted reading instruction daily. The GCS lab is open daily to support students with a grade of 75 or below, in any subject. The reading specialist serves the at-risk population by providing 30 minutes of targeted, intensive instruction outside the instructional day. Dyslexia students receive 45 minutes of instruction daily by two certified Academic Language Therapists. DI and RtI meet the diverse and individual needs of students to achieve instructional goals.

#### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Assessment is the cog that moves all the components of education. This process begins as early as registration when all new students are given a quick phonics screener to assess their reading ability. Within the first two weeks of school, a universal assessment is administered to all students in reading comprehension and mathematics. The results are shared campus-wide so that each grade level knows what weaknesses need to be addressed. This data allows staff to place students into appropriate tiered intervention groups. All grade levels meet individually in conjunction with the campus assessment team to discuss areas of strength and weakness. Based on those results, the curriculum is adjusted to meet the needs of the student population. This process is repeated in the middle of the year and at the end of the year. Every staff member is involved in identifying the skills and knowledge areas that need to be addressed.

Vertical alignment and sharing of assessment data is encouraged with set times provided for professional development on areas where the data indicates a need. Based on dis-aggregation, curriculum is adjusted vertically throughout the grade levels to meet the gap analysis. Supplemental material and technology are used to scaffold curriculum. CTES staff not only looks at data on a macro level, but each child is continuously assessed through observation and individual assessments.

The data drives the school’s pullout intervention groups. Classroom teachers, reading specialist, bilingual teacher, RtI coordinator, counselor and administrator collaborate every three weeks to continuously analyze the data. Results from these assessments and collaborations lead to recommendations for further testing or placement in gifted and talented, dyslexia, 504, special education, reading, math, or writing tutoring. This is a continuous process with adjustments made throughout the year.

The parents are the largest stakeholder group and are provided information through weekly reports, progress reports, calendars, and universal assessment reports. Yearly meetings are held to inform parents of assessments that were performed and progress for their student who may be in any intervention group. Parents are made aware of skills that need to be addressed for their child. Teachers post current grades for each child in the parent portal on the schools' website so parents are well-informed of their child's progress. The community is made aware of students' performance through Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) campus newsletters, award assemblies, school's website, twitter, Facebook, and the local newspaper.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

CTES staff believes that when the social and emotional needs of students are met, academics excel. Students are expected to have appropriate interactions with others, and administrators support teachers in efforts to help students grow socially and emotionally. Teachers, in turn, feel valued. Various programs are in place to foster student growth in these areas. Each six weeks, the school holds a celebration of students' successes, which draws a large audience. Students are recognized with certificates and prizes for Perfect Attendance, 'E' in conduct, Character Traits, Most Improved and the A Honor Roll, as well as individual awards for Music, Computer, Library, and PE. The end-of-year Principal's Awards present bicycles and scooters to students with Perfect Attendance, A Honor Roll, and E in citizenship.

CTES fosters a culture of kindness through a school-wide Bucket Filling Program. When a student is caught displaying kind behavior, his or her name is entered into a weekly drawing. During Friday morning announcements, the principal recognizes bucket-filling behavior and the student is given a prize. Each student participates in 30-minute guidance classes weekly, learning the six "Character Counts" traits: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Citizenship, Fairness, and Trustworthiness. Through this program, students participate in Red Ribbon Week and Career Day. Anti-bullying behavior is learned through ventriloquist Nana Puddin' and Rachel's Challenge activities.

CTES students benefit from the strong presence of mentoring programs on campus, including the PAL (Peer Assisted Leadership) program in which they are paired with a high school student. Students spend 30 minutes a week playing games, working on projects or just talking. CTES and Azle High School also partner for the Football Honorary Captain Program, which encourages academic achievement, good citizenship, and care for others. Many CTES students are mentors themselves, including second graders who serve as Reading Buddies to kindergarteners. The staff works as a team to assure success throughout the school. This camaraderie begins with the principal, who has an open-door policy with everyone who walks into the building. Our bilingual secretary is able to welcome and help non-English speaking parents who come or call. Grade-level teams meet weekly to ensure academic success for their students, and collaboration meetings give teachers a voice and help them coordinate strategies. CTES staff members believe creating a positive environment among staff, or leading by example, is vital in developing successful and productive citizens.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

At CTES, engaging families and the community is a priority. Meet the Teacher Night provides a no-stress environment for all parents and students to tour the school and meet their new teachers. On Parent Night, teachers explain specialized programs as parents meet, ask questions, and express concerns. Title, dyslexia, bilingual and GCS programs review specific homework expectations as teachers and parents build rapport. Medieval Night is an annual event that allows students and families to step back in time with the staff through science and math activities, technology, puppet shows and more. At Book Buzz, students hang out on a Saturday at the high school to read with their favorite high school hornet (Azle mascot). Elementary students are entertained by the cheerleaders, Band, athletes, and National Honor Society who provide snacks and autograph books that the students get to take home along with stickers, balloons and prizes.

A parental involvement organization facilitates a Bring Your Dad to School Day. This year, more than 230 parents attended class with their students. In a follow-up session, parents learned the importance of their involvement with their child's education, and did community-building activities. All promotional materials were in English and Spanish. CTES values its PTO members, as many parents commit time daily to help students and teachers. They provide security and greet students at parent drop-off, tutor, listen to students read, and raise money for classrooms and field trips. On Career Day, adult volunteers come to inspire and inform students about possible careers. Parent Portal keeps parents engaged in their students' progress, as teachers enter grades for assignments online, and the information is immediately available to parents. Parents and volunteers praise and encourage students and work with them to improve areas where they struggle.

Community organizations also help meet students' needs. Every May, the city's librarian comes to motivate students to participate in the library's summer reading program. Information is sent home in English and Spanish. Each child is challenged to read during the summer and win prizes to help minimize regression in reading skills. The Azle Lions Club gives needy students school supplies, eye exams, eyeglasses, clothing, shoes and coats — even paying utility bills when needed. Azle Community Caring Center partners with Tarrant County Food Bank to provide a backpack of food for needy students to take home for the weekend. The Rotary Club donates dictionaries to each third grader yearly.

### 3. Professional Development:

Professional development that enhances the quality of teaching is a key component of CTES' academic success. School administrators recognize the critical role professional development plays in creating more effective classrooms. Administration works collaboratively and intentionally with classroom teachers to produce an annual catalog of formal professional development opportunities that directly reflect students' needs. Placing high value on collaboration as an effective form of professional development, teachers engage in weekly collaboration meetings for each grade level to discuss student achievement. This is an opportunity for teachers to work together to set learning goals and adjust instruction to meet specific needs. Intentional implementation results in measurable growth for students as measured against the TEKS.

Faculty members participate in professional development in formal and informal contexts in order to further develop knowledge, skill sets, and educational practices. Teachers attend conferences, seminars, workshops, and organized collaboration meetings with colleagues. A majority of CTES's teachers engage in more than 100 hours of training annually. In a more informal, but equally effective context, professional development is ongoing through collaborative discussions among work colleagues, independent reading, webinars, online training, research, and observations of teammates' work.

Course selections are available year-round and are based on classroom needs in order to achieve targeted learning goals. For example, when certain math TEKS were shown by assessments to be weaknesses for our students, the administrator presented strategies from another state, which had been used successfully. CTES teachers attended a 3-day workshop in the bordering state and shared the teaching strategies with the whole staff. Strategies proved helpful. The principal encourages and utilizes outside professional development. Teachers are self-motivated and seek training opportunities outside the district to enhance classroom effectiveness. The staff attends training for new curriculum and academic programs to better support its implementation in the classroom and optimize effectiveness. By utilizing a trainer-of-trainers approach, the faculty shares skills and transfers the training campus-wide to achieve greater teacher proficiency. This results in higher student achievement.

More specifically, the staff attributes much of CTES' success to cross-curricular professional staff development in several core curriculum programs that emphasize engagement, student investment, innovation, and a visual approach to learning. These programs focus on designing engaging academic lessons for students and leading them to success by building foundational skills. Teachers share their favorite lessons with one another. The programs train teachers to motivate students through choice and affirmation, leading to increased student buy-in and authenticity.

### 4. School Leadership:

Cross Timbers' principal communicated the leadership expectations and philosophy in a speech at Open House in August 1988 when the school first opened. The expectations are posted in every classroom and reiterated every year. They assume the worth and good intention of every person connected to CTES: students, staff, PTO members, parents, and community helpers. The five Ps— Present, Punctual, Prepared, Participating and Polite—are not only necessary for the production of good work, but are the real preparation for life itself. They are a lifestyle, not merely a set of rules. Practicing the five Ps especially helps children develop good habits on the road to becoming self-disciplined adults in the working world. Teachers know they will be supported by leadership in their endeavors to help children grow in these areas.

When a child enrolls at CTES, the leaders' first priority is to make sure his or her basic needs are being met — food, clothing, shelter, and school supplies. If not, parents fill out forms that are relayed to Azle's generous community service organizations and to the school district's social worker. Next, each child is given a diagnostic test to assess academic strengths and weaknesses. The principal and instructional team reviews the data and consider if there is a need for bilingual, dyslexia, Title, GCS (Grand Central Station), small-group tutoring, peer tutoring, one-on-one services before school and/or 30 minutes targeted, intensive instruction, or counseling services. The student is assigned a teacher and diagnostic information is shared with the teacher, student, and parent. A teacher/parent conference is scheduled within ten days. The principal places students with limited English in a class where a strong bilingual student acts as peer mentor.

All grade-level teachers have a common 60-minute planning period daily. As a team, they collaborate on effective instructional strategies, disaggregate data, analyze teaching methods, devise interventions for slow or struggling students as well as plan differentiated instruction for above grade level students, and design engaging lessons. The daily schedule was designed to allow 30 minutes of tutoring before school at no cost to students or the school district. Small-group targeted, intensive RTI, Title reading, Bilingual instruction, and GCS are scheduled outside the instructional schedule.

The principal's innovations such as on-site childcare have enhanced the instructional environment for teachers at Cross Timbers and throughout the district. Campus leadership was also instrumental in the district adding a bilingual program and all-day kindergarten.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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When asked to identify the single practice most responsible for Cross Timbers' success, students, teachers, and parents quickly identified Morning Tutoring. A specific and structured duty schedule allowed CTES to turn a challenge — students boarding buses at 6 a.m. and arriving at school by 7:10 a.m. for an instructional day that begins at 8:30 a.m. — into an asset. Staff members restructure their workday (eight hours for teachers or a 37.5-hour week for paraprofessionals) in order to best utilize the time that students are on campus, so that half the staff begins tutoring soon after students get off the bus. Staff members who work an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. day have after-school duty for 30 minutes.

Small-group instruction begins the first week of school. Teachers organize tentative groups based on previous years' performance and observations made within the first few days — fueled by the philosophy that every instructional minute counts.

Approximately 200 students — 37 percent of the student population of 538 — receive services during this time, some from more than one teacher. This instruction encompasses dyslexia, bilingual instruction, reading, and math. Although parents help and sign off on nightly homework beginning in kindergarten, teachers are available for homework assistance in the mornings, when staff members are able to offer more intensive, needs-based instruction designed for each particular group of students. In addition to these groups, parents and teacher's aides circulate throughout classrooms from 8-8:30 a.m., extending the morning tutoring. They listen to students read, help with reading fluency, pre-teach vocabulary, reteach "hard to learn" or "hard to teach lessons", and assist with math practice. At CTES, adapting curriculum and instruction is a shared, collaborative, problem-solving process.

These morning tutoring groups are constantly evolving. Staff members use a variety of assessments, both formative and standardized, for placement into small-group instruction. Classroom teachers as well as specialized teachers collaborate to discuss students' daily work and performance. They look for success with targeted learning goals and coordinate student instruction to reinforce academic skills being taught in the classroom. Other measures of success include increased participation in classroom activities, successful completion of independent tasks, students' self-confidence, and student performance on standardized tests. This small-group tutoring every morning, in addition to good teaching practices and small group instruction throughout the day, gives students the boost they need to be successful.