U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal <u>Mrs. Patricia White</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name <u>Elkhorn School</u>
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address <u>10505 North Davis Road</u>
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

<u>Stockton</u>   <u>CA</u>   <u>95209-4327</u>
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County <u>San Joaquin</u>

Telephone <u>(209) 953-8312</u>   Fax <u>(209) 953-8319</u>

Web site/URL <u>https://elkhorn.lodiusd.net</u>   E-mail   <u>pwhite@lodiusd.net</u>

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*<u>Dr. Cathy Washer</u>
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail <u>cwasher@lodiusd.net</u>

District Name <u>Lodi Unified School District</u>   Tel.   <u>(209) 331-8034</u>
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 <u>Mr. Gary Knackstedt</u>
(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

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 2019 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 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.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.

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. 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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   33 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
    (per district designation):   6 Middle/Junior high schools
                                            4 High schools
                                            0 K-12 schools

                                            43 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
    [X] Suburban
    [ ] Rural or small city/town

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	14	16	30
5	11	19	30
6	15	15	30
7	47	45	92
8	43	33	76
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	130	128	258

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school (if unknown, estimate):   37 % Asian
                                          2 % Black or African American
                                          24 % Hispanic or Latino
                                          8 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          21 % White
                                          6 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 2%

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 *to* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	261
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
                                                      4 Total number ELL

    Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
    Arabic, Cantonese, Filipino, Gujarati, Hindi, Hmong, Italian, Khmer, Mandarin, Pashto, Punjabi, Spanish, Urdu, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42 %
        Total number students who qualify: 108

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %

    5 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.

    0 Autism   0 Multiple Disabilities

    0 Deafness   0 Orthopedic Impairment

    0 Deaf-Blindness   1 Other Health Impaired

    0 Developmental Delay   0 Specific Learning Disability

    0 Emotional Disturbance   3 Speech or Language Impairment

    1 Hearing Impairment   0 Traumatic Brain Injury

    0 Intellectual Disability   0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school
    staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	10
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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   26:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
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 2018.

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%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
    Yes <u>X</u>   No

    If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. <u>2008</u>

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

Elkhorn provides a rigorous curriculum by means of differentiating instruction, compacting, enriching, and accelerating the curriculum to foster academic and social growth.

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

Elkhorn School is a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) choice school. Students are selected through a lottery process.

PART III – SUMMARY

Elkhorn School is uniquely situated on the boundary between two growing cities, Lodi and Stockton. Its diverse population is a reflection of the students from the entire Lodi Unified School District. Elkhorn has classes from fourth through eighth grades and serves identified gifted students. There are many cultures as well as socioeconomic groups represented at the site. We have a free and reduced lunch population. District transportation is not provided to our site. This allows for our parent community to meet each other and create carpools. A potentially negative situation has actually become a positive because more students and parents have come to know each other.

Beginning in 1998, Lodi Unified School District implemented a program for gifted fourth through eighth grades to serve students in the district. Elkhorn is a small site with 10 teachers who collaborate to provide innovative learning experiences for all students. Because of our small size, the staff has a unique ability to create and maintain relationships with current and former students. Elkhorn has received the California Distinguished School Award multiple times and is a former recipient of the National Blue Ribbon School Award. The elementary and middle school Science Olympiad programs have traditionally placed in the Top 5 teams. Our middle school team has competed at the regional and state levels and has gone onto national competitions in previous years. Since its inception three years ago, our STEM teacher has participated in the NorCal Science Festival, an event that is free and open to the public.

Elkhorn strives to engage all learners through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies. Students are encouraged to reach their full potential through differentiation, acceleration, choice activities, and creativity. All staff encourages a growth mindset approach of risk-taking and learning through failure. Teachers are supported in the philosophy of removing constraints to release students' creative expressions. Project-based learning, Socratic seminars, and role-playing are regularly integrated into the school day. Students' thinking is challenged with lessons that strive to remove barriers to thinking and incorporate depth and complexity. Staff provides a safe learning environment where learners have opportunities to demonstrate understanding of pre-determined criteria in new and different ways. As a staff, we believe subject material integration leads students to make connections in their learning. We strive to design meaningful lessons that engage students and allow them to make meaning of the content through differentiation.

Elkhorn staff recognizes that gifted students' needs differ from their age-appropriate peers. We have multiple clubs that address social and emotional needs, as well as development of leadership skills. Elkhorn has recently implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) which provides strategies for teaching appropriate school behaviors and fostering a positive school environment. At Elkhorn the PBIS approach establishes a climate where appropriate behaviors are rewarded and eventually become the norm. This year, students, along with our counselor, started the Gay Straight Alliance club (GSA) for middle school students to meet and talk about pertinent issues. She supports all students with organizational strategies, and prioritizing, as well as having one-on-one meetings for guidance and support. Middle school students in California Junior Scholastic Federation (CJSF) provide tutoring for their struggling peers on a weekly basis. Middle school students have an opportunity to participate in a lunchtime Games Club, where students with like interests can gather. This year, Elkhorn started a student leadership group, Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM). The purpose of TEAM is to help seventh graders transition to Elkhorn Middle School. Formal team builders and informal lunchtime meetings in their cadres allow eighth grade TEAM leaders to build a community of inclusion. This year, the entire school participated in National No One Eats Alone Day. TEAM organized weeklong events that brought awareness to the impact of social isolation. Additionally, we have outdoor education facilitators come to work on team builders with incoming seventh graders. It sets the tone for seventh graders to encourage the development of process, persistence and grit as students proceed through middle school. Teambuilding begins in fourth grade and continues through eighth grade.

Because Elkhorn has been a previous recipient of the National Blue Ribbon School Award, it has become a model school for effective instructional practices. There are teachers on staff who are mentors in the district and county, for example. The award has allowed dedicated staff to achieve success in the classroom and beyond. Our math teacher is a mentor in the district's Teacher Induction Program (TIP); our science teacher

recently served on the science textbook adoption committee; and the fifth grade teacher is on the San Joaquin County Region 6 science leadership team. The exposure from the award has resulted in weekly phone calls where parents inquire about enrollment at the site. The award has given the entire learning community a sense of pride and a desire to put in effort to be purposeful at a site that has earned such a distinction. Professional development opportunities have opened up for staff as a result of receiving the award. Staff has been allowed to attend professional development that is tailored specifically to our gifted population at conferences such as: Confratute at the University of Connecticut, National Association for Gifted Children, and California Association for the Gifted (CAG), due to support from school leadership recognizing teachers' desires to continuously improve and meet the needs of the population we serve. The site administrator at Elkhorn encourages staff to take risks and grow as professionals. She trusts teachers to use their knowledge to do what is best for students. The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) recognizes that Elkhorn teachers put forth extra effort to meet learners' needs. PTSA recognizes that our learning community succeeds based on participation. For example, parents volunteer to drive on numerous study trips, lead after-school clubs such as drama, art, Math Counts, Math Olympiad, and coach Science Olympiad events, oftentimes at both the elementary and middle school levels.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

In Reading/English language arts, students read novels and do short stories within units. They learn to practice and apply critical thinking skills during Socratic seminars based on the literature and other core subject reading. Students develop thoughtful questions and provide text-based support for their seminar responses. Socratic seminars allow students to practice multiple standards such as speaking and listening as well as citing text-based evidence. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model Reading (SEM-R) program, developed at the University of Connecticut, is used to increase comprehension and fluency while students read in their interest areas at their reading levels. Students' comprehension skills have increased as a result of weekly conferences with adult volunteers and retired teachers who come into the classroom as well as via video conference. Universal themes, in addition to the content imperatives of depth and complexity for GATE education, are embedded into student-led literature circle discussions. Content, such as narrative bias, and the convergence of past, present and future have been explored in previous lessons.

Grammar is taught using a four-level analysis of sentences beginning in fourth grade and continuing through eighth grade. Students identify sentence parts in order to construct meaningful, grammatically correct sentences. Identification occurs through student-led discussions using grammar prompts.

Foundational lessons such as word analysis and vocabulary instruction at Elkhorn are meaningful and creative. Students have created skits and vocabulary cartoons, for instance, to demonstrate knowledge and application of their understanding.

Writing across the curriculum is embedded into every subject area. Students' persuasive essays, for example, have been used for background information to participate in classroom debates. Oftentimes, debate topics are student-generated. Saturation reports are examples of writing in which students explore areas of interest in further depth and detail. Finally, long-term projects across grade levels require written components that are embedded within menu choices. For example, to assess their acquired knowledge, students may choose to write and perform a skit, write an essay or a poem to present their information.

Data from Smarter Balanced testing has demonstrated that an area of focus for all Elkhorn students is listening skills. In response, teachers have embedded explicit teaching of content literacy skills such as such as structured partner talks within their lessons to address the listening skill deficit.

1b. Mathematics:

Math lessons at Elkhorn are tiered to individualize instruction based on student ability. Sixth through eighth grade participates in an accelerated curriculum program in which sixth graders complete seventh grade common core math. Select middle school students have an option for ninth grade curriculum. For another advanced group, there is an integrated math honors pathway. Visual art is integrated with math curriculum in many ways from fourth through eighth grade; through tessellation lessons and origami.

The standards for mathematical practice are addressed in multiple ways at Elkhorn. Students are regularly challenged with problems of the week. These problems allow students to individually delve deeply into math content to explain problem solving techniques they applied to find a reasonable answer. Students describe their problem solving techniques in front of their peers weekly. Problems of the month are a series of problems that address common core standard areas. Students work collaboratively to approach problem solving at their level and beyond as problems progress in difficulty.

Math projects are a common part of the curriculum at Elkhorn. Often, students are engaged in projects that integrate STEM on a regular basis. For example, when learning about the coordinate graph, students also used coordinates to design a Battleship-type game to play with a partner. Additionally, engineering has been

built into units of study such as toothpick bridges, scale-model houses, and kites. A Bungee Barbie project was part of a unit on graphing data based on the number of rubber bands used to calculate slope, regression equations, and line of best fit.

Multiple supplementary units are used at Elkhorn to meet the needs of our gifted learners. Khan Academy is one of the digital resources used to supplement class instruction. Cooperative learning groups are utilized in simulations such as The Stock Market Game and Fraction Speed Bumps. These simulations are often incorporated into the regular curriculum to engage and sustain student interest in real-life math application.

1c. Science:

Elkhorn's science program has fully embraced Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). It is one of the few schools in the district that made an early transition to the three dimensional method of teaching science to give students more opportunity to nurture their interests in science, and to be college and career ready with 21st century skills. Students often role play as scientists and are given real-world scenarios to solve. In a recent lesson, students were given a scenario of earthquakes occurring at an increasing rate in certain areas. They were tasked with identifying potential causes for the increased seismic activity. To problem solve, students had access to their Chromebooks and used scientific simulations, as well as the United States Geological Survey (USGS) real-time earthquake website to chart where seismic activity occurs most frequently.

Students conduct hands-on experiments to investigate factors that affect the subject matter they are learning about. For example, in a recent lesson about saving a town from a hurricane, students modeled how they would protect historical buildings from damaging floodwater on a limited budget. Many of the hands-on science experiences that Elkhorn students annually engage in come in the form of study trips. A weeklong trip to Mount Lassen incorporates learning about Earth's systems, the Lawrence Hall of Science hands-on lab topics have included robotics and structure of living organisms, the Exploratorium trip incorporates all of the science standards, the Lawrence Livermore Lab trip allows students to participate in physical science experiments with lab chemists, and a simulated Mission to Mars gives students a new perspective of a planet other than Earth.

Students research science content in more depth and present their information in a variety of ways such as: songs, videos, models, analogies, posters, children's books, brochures, journal entries, video games, board games, skits, and slide presentations. Final projects are presented and evaluated with a rubric. The school district does not yet have NGSS-aligned benchmarks to assess student learning in science, therefore, teacher-created assessments are used to gauge science content that may need to be revisited.

Critical and creative thinking are embedded through BreakoutEDU lessons that foster students' critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving skills to decipher clues and determine codes that will allow them to breakout of their locked box. These sessions are integrated with current units of study and are highly engaging for students.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Students demonstrate mastery and understanding of history social science standards through choice projects and simulations, which include visual and performing arts standards, and are regularly incorporated into the curriculum. In an Ancient Egypt unit of study, students learn about the mummification process by mummifying Cornish game hens. A Gold Rush unit culminates with students as prospectors trying to strike it rich while trying to survive in a frontier mining camp. At the end of an Explorers unit, students debate about who really discovered America. Students' perspectives are challenged through the use of tableaus, for instance, in a unit on slavery.

Higher-order thinking skill questions form the content for prediction, viewing events from multiple perspectives, and preparing positions based on information that students research. Questions such as: What if Sybil Luddington had been the only messenger? and, What would Paul Revere's horse say if he could speak? spark unique conversation in group discussions, for example. Graphic organizers, such as the Frayer

Model, are also used to aid students in their thinking processes. Concepts, such as a revolution are given student-created definitions of what qualifies as a revolution, and what does not qualify as a revolution.

Document-Based Questioning (DBQ) and Document-Based Assessment (DBA) integrate literacy skills when students examine historical documents and respond with a thesis based on historical evidence. For instance, during a unit of study on India, students had to choose whether or not Ashoka was an enlightened ruler or a ruthless ruler based on some of his edicts and battles. Student research on Ancient Greek assemblies allows for a comparison of past and present. The research is completed with Chromebooks while the argument of positions and voting is done with tokens, exactly as it was in ancient times.

Teaching Social Studies in the 21st century classroom means embracing the virtues of technology. Using primary source documents such as the crew manifest of the Susan Constant obtained from a Jamestown website gives meaning and authenticity to learning experiences while at the same time allowing students to construct meaning.

Formative assessment in History/Social Studies is ongoing and is used to dispel misconceptions in addition to guiding instruction. Teachers create standards-based summative assessments based on need.

1e. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Elkhorn School has a very small population of less than 300 students. Our fourth through sixth graders have Music class twice a week. They have a winter concert in addition to a spring concert. Middle school students interested in continuing are involved in choir, which performs three times per year.

All seventh and eighth graders at Elkhorn take two years of a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) course as well as Spanish and Physical Education (PE). Physical Education standards are assessed by examining how to maximize each student's overall well-being. Physical Education is differentiated at Elkhorn by allowing students to progress at their own pace to reach their fitness goals. For example, students keep track of how many regular push –ups they perform daily and set goals for the next day of exercise and are encouraged to surpass their personal best. Students who have mastered the regular push-ups are given higher-level challenges such as diamond or fingertip push-ups. Some activities, such as volleyball, are also tiered by the level of mastery of the learning standards. For instance, once students master the underhand serve in volleyball, they earn the opportunity to master the overhead serve. Additionally, if students master the core skills in volleyball using a larger training ball, they move to games with a standard ball.

Results from the State of California's FitnessGram test, as well as teacher-developed unit tests, are used to customize our program to maximize performance. Online unit tests allow us to gather data to inform instruction about which sports strategies, rules and content standards need refining to help our students reach their best levels of health and well-being.

Elkhorn middle school students take two years of Spanish. Spanish lessons are centered on the "C's" of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. Each "C" is addressed through multiple avenues. Communication: students work on interpersonal, presentation, and interpretative communication. Culture: students investigate the practices, products, and perspectives of the 21 Spanish-speaking cultures. This is done in class or through online platforms, such as: Avenue Task, where students speak in the target language and receive feedback, and FlipGrid, a space for students to discuss, collaborate, and share thoughts on

teacher-created topics and questions. Connections: through the cultural readings, students connect to other disciplines such as geography, ecology, and math. Comparisons: Students compare their own culture to the Spanish-speaking cultures they encounter in the ¡Que Chévere! Program. Communities: Students build communities at school using a variety of program components, including audio resources, videos, music, and stories. Students have the opportunity to develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills and to prepare for the AP exam as early as level one.

The overarching goal upon completion of the Spanish program is for students to become global citizens who are communicative as they interact orally in dialogues, interviews, surveys, and practice writing everything from lists to reports. Furthermore, Elkhorn students are expected to become knowledgeable about the Spanish language and its cultures, inquisitive about diverse subject areas, and reflective about human values, perspectives, and their own learning process. Ultimately, our hope is that students gain an appreciation for cultural practices, products and perspectives that differ from their own.

Elkhorn's STEM program uses STEM101 curriculum, which is project based. The engineering design process is emphasized throughout the STEM program. An example of a STEM unit involved creating a robotic car and controlling it wirelessly through hand gestures, similar to the real-life process engineers use for detecting radiation in unsafe buildings. In this particular unit, students took on the roles of electrical, mechanical and software engineers, and data scientists as they followed the design process to investigate, identify what they needed, planned for what they wanted to build, created a prototype, tested it and improved it, and presented it as a final product to use at the annual Norcal Science and Technology Festival. As the students progressed through their design process, they divided the project into four main parts: the wireless control piece, the hand gesture control piece, the car's motors, and the software piece. If students were not able to meet their goal (NGSS STEM standards), students and teacher held discussions to identify what worked, what did not work, and what needed to be fixed. The summative assessment had two parts: one score was generated from a written test, and the other was generated from how well the device worked. Student feedback, in the form of reflection and course evaluation, is used to guide future instruction. Students are asked to individually respond online to questions, such as: "Are you happy with the result of your learning the last few weeks? Why or why not? Do you have any suggestions to make the lesson and/or classroom activity better?"

STEM is designed to provide students hands-on projects to address high-order thinking skills and STEM skills. Through projects such as those mentioned above, students gain experience and practice in the process of critical thinking and STEM skills. Using STEM101 curriculum, and other STEM resources along with student feedback, the ultimate goal is to prepare our students to be ready for 21st century careers.

3. **Special Populations:**

Elkhorn is a high-achieving school. Unlike some schools, we do not have an achievement gap to close each year. We have a small number of students who have special needs and qualify as twice exceptional.

Though our special needs students are provided with accommodations, we do not alter what they are expected to learn. Our student with Asperger's, for example, is allowed breaks and extra time as well as a safe environment, such as the office for lunch instead of the cafeteria. Another student with hearing aids has preferential seating while the teacher uses a voice amplifier. This particular student also benefits from extended time to formulate a verbal response when participating in class discussions. Finally, another student's accommodations include visual cues for appropriate behavior and preferential seating.

Because Elkhorn is a school that draws its population from throughout the district, we focus on the unique social and emotional needs of a gifted population and underachievement. The challenge of transitioning to this school from another elementary school can be overwhelming for some students. Sometimes, students feel very isolated making the transition to Elkhorn, especially at the middle school level. For this reason, two staff members started a group that would help incoming seventh graders transition to the expectations at Elkhorn. Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM) is a group of eighth graders that met with incoming seventh graders prior to the first day of school. They continue to meet quarterly to build community through participation in the following activities: teambuilding exercises, cookie decorating, movie afternoons, spirit

days, and National No One Eats Alone Week.

Curriculum at Elkhorn is individualized for gifted underachievers. The curriculum is differentiated, modified, and compacted to account for underachievement factors. We place emphasis on study skills to help students who may feel overwhelmed. Our school counselor has a Stress Busters group to support such students. Growth mindset is encouraged in all students to focus on process versus product, and to develop intrinsic motivation rather than students being pressured to perform. With a large part of our underachieving population, we de-emphasize tangible success to diffuse feelings of inferiority. Services are used to guide students through personal and family dynamics, which may be impeding their achievement in the classroom. Elkhorn students have one-to-one sessions with the school counselor, and group sessions called Stress Busters where they learn self-regulation strategies. Because we know that students tend to group with like-minded peers, we use teambuilding to integrate student groups and to help prevent social isolation. Underachievers, for example, are grouped with all students in team builders for successful strategies to be modeled. Peer tutoring for middle school students occurs when underachieving students are paired with California Junior Scholastic Federation (CJSF) volunteers. Finally, intervention for all students is offered through the after- school assistance program.

The Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Club, open to all middle school students, meets weekly and offers a forum for discussions about various issues they face in school or their communities, such as discrimination. With the help of the counselor, students approached the principal about starting a GSA Club to have a place to meet socially and offer up support for one another. A member of the GSA Club who also serves on the TEAM, was involved in the restroom beautification project that incorporated positive messages of acceptance.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

A positive school climate is directly correlated to success. At Elkhorn, we strive to provide a respectful and responsible environment where students feel safe to express themselves. Staff fosters a positive environment through communicating clear behavioral expectations, and we recognize students who consistently make good choices. From the first day students step onto the Elkhorn campus, staff makes an effort to get to know students, whether in the classroom, at recess or lunchtime. Our custodian even makes an effort to connect with students through daily basketball games. Relationship-building is a crucial element to building a positive environment where students are engaged and motivated. The atmosphere is very familial. Students are encouraged to play with others during recess, lunchtime, and during after-school sports. Cross-grade level study trips are planned each year for students to have off-campus experiences that support their social and emotional growth. Additionally, a positive environment at Elkhorn is fostered through several clubs and after-school activities. Leadership Club, Games Club, and Kindness Club are groups that meet weekly and are open to all students . Workout Warriors and After-School Sports allow the adviser to develop and maintain relationships that promote social and emotional growth.

The strength of a school culture begins with a shared vision that all stakeholders are following and enforcing the school mission in a consistent manner. Because of this, staff feels valued, trusted, and appreciated. During staff meetings, for example, there are opportunities to celebrate teacher accomplishments. Teachers are supported in curricular choices because of the trust embedded within the school culture. Our PTSA supports teachers' goals and plans extra fundraisers to meet teachers' needs. Elkhorn teachers feel valued and supported by parents when they receive communication in person or via e-mail. Teachers regularly rely on parent volunteers and in turn feel valued and supported when parents trust what is happening in the classroom environment. When former students return to Elkhorn to share their reflections and accomplishments, teachers share a sense of pride. At Elkhorn, teachers are supported by their students' actions as well as their parents' positive feedback, knowing that they have challenged and inspired learners. Guest teachers at Elkhorn have also expressed gratitude with regard to being included in staff celebrations and lunchtime camaraderie. As teachers, we know that visitors on our campus can feel safe, respected, and trusted.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

A small-school environment is beneficial for developing family and community partnerships. Parents are viewed as partners in our learning community, and we value parent input. Parents and students are given a school climate survey to complete on an annual basis. Parents value the Elkhorn learning community and are willing to go above and beyond through efforts, such as grant writing and fundraising. Various programs are supported with parent involvement. Because of our limited staffing, parents provide a necessary vehicle for enrichment activities. Parents are encouraged to bring their expertise to our site and offer extracurricular activities for our students. For example, many offer to coach Science and Math Olympiad. Enrichment activities include drama and art clubs as well. This year, the drama club hosted two productions to raise funds for the school. The schoolwide club invited local food trucks and classic car enthusiasts to the production. Parents graciously donate their time and energy to support the school vision.

To help parents of gifted students understand their learners, Elkhorn has hosted various parent information nights, including Growth Mindset, presented by Dr. Sally Glusing, and Grit, presented by Dr. Blake Brandes. Additionally, there is a parent resource library on campus for parents to support their child's gifted educations. To foster ongoing parent contact, Elkhorn staff uses various methods of communication, including: Elkhorn website, ConnectEd phone messages, JupiterEd e-mails and texts, Remind app messages, and ClassDojo messages. Regular parent communication informs parents of classroom successes as well any challenges that might occur.

Elkhorn staff makes an effort to communicate with the community at large through the local newspapers, The Lodi News-Sentinel and The Record. Because we are a small school with limited parking, we have

forged a new relationship with the church that is adjacent to the school property. The church now allows parents to park on their property during school events. Several local businesses have chosen to sponsor study trips and special events such as the Harvest Festival. Dignity Dental, Artigiano Furniture and Cabinet Company, The Standard, and Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) have all contributed to student activities. Lastly, the STEM teacher received funding from Chevron for a robotic hand activity. These community connections have supported the Elkhorn vision of providing students with enriching and challenging experiences.

3. **Professional Development:**

Elkhorn School serves as the district's comprehensive site for gifted and talented education for fourth through eighth grades. The majority of staff professional development centers around best practices in gifted education. Site professional development activities are directly aligned with the state's GATE standards. In addition to Common Core State Standards, Elkhorn teachers are upheld to the standards for GATE education and therefore attend professional development that supports their population. Staff attends conferences such as California Association for the Gifted, the Northern California Gifted Symposium, and Confratute, to be knowledgeable about current practices that affect our population. Gifted conferences are pertinent for GATE teachers to learn about their students' unique intellectual, social, emotional and physical needs. Confratute, a weeklong conference held at the University of Connecticut, is hosted by gurus in gifted education, Drs. Sally Reis and Joe Renzulli. Upon returning from Confratute, two staff members presented professional development on infusing creativity into the curriculum. At Elkhorn, a large part of our professional development is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of gifted learners. Within the context of addressing the core curriculum, it is our job to differentiate content of the state standards.

Staff has attended the following conferences in subject-specific content areas: National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), California Science Teachers Association (CSTA), Asilomar math conference, 100Kin10, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), LittleBits, and Making Sense of Science. Staff members have attended and facilitated WestEd's Making Sense of Science workshops. The workshops are aligned with Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and meant to bolster adult learning in science-specific content areas. Site leadership allowed teachers to fully implement NGSS-aligned lessons prior to the district's implementation, which supports all students in their transition to new science standards. After attending the conferences mentioned above, staff is expected to share best teaching practices and provide supporting resources such as tasks or lessons for others on site.

4. **School Leadership:**

Elkhorn's leadership philosophy is grounded in mutual respect and the overall philosophy of possibility thinking: all students can achieve and be successful. Therefore, everything we do at Elkhorn revolves around what is best for the gifted population we serve. Students understand that there are high expectations for them to be the best they can every day. Teachers operate from the philosophy that they are facilitators of knowledge rather than being the sage on the stage. Administrator support for this philosophy is demonstrated daily, when staff decisions are valued. Our administrator has an open-door policy and allows time for peer collaboration. Staff is encouraged to work together to allow students to make more relevant connections to what they are learning. Our administrator has provided staff with books and book study discussions on growth mindset and gifted underachievers. During staff meetings, for example, time is set aside for teachers to discuss topics of interest. The Elkhorn staff is given a chance to provide input to the administrator when decisions need to be made. Although she has the final decision, the principal actively seeks input from staff to approach decision-making through shared collaboration. We appreciate that our principal encourages teachers to pursue professional development opportunities that will benefit us in our areas of interest. She values and recognizes that teachers are professional decision makers. Additionally, our principal makes regular classroom visits to demonstrate a leadership commitment to building relationships. Elkhorn strives to develop and nurture a safe learning environment built on mutual respect. By providing an environment of respect, student learning excels, and morale is boosted. Elkhorn leadership provides staff and students an atmosphere of high-level learning that challenges them daily.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Elkhorn School has a tradition of employing research-based gifted education strategies that meet the needs of our unique learners. Many of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies have been embedded in the foundations of gifted education practices that are in place at Elkhorn. Academically, our students succeed because they are engaged in the learning process, they have choices for demonstrating mastery of material, and content is presented in multiple methods through differentiation. Differentiation allows for rigor in every classroom, and all students' needs are met. Interest inventories, for example, are used school wide to get to know students' preferences and learning styles. Another student-centered approach to academics is the use of the icons of depth and complexity to further challenge students to think like disciplinarians in various fields of study. Students are more engaged in the learning process when they are given options to choose. Students who experience the greatest amount of differentiation result in fewer discipline problems at our school. Levels of engagement are directly correlated to less discipline issues.

Students demonstrate their knowledge of grade-level content standards in many ways. The strategies used to meet learners at their levels and to challenge them to go above and beyond are numerous. Math, for example, is taught through a tiered-lesson approach that provides various levels of support for all students. In English Language Arts, students participate in the School wide Enrichment Model-Reading Framework (SEM-R). SEM-R is a research-based reading program, from the University of Connecticut that has consistently demonstrated student achievement in reading comprehension and fluency. During SEM-R, students select novels to read based on their interest areas. They participate in weekly conferences with volunteers who focus solely on topics such as how the antagonist contributes to the main conflict. For the past ten years that the program has been in place, students' reading and comprehension scores have consistently increased throughout the school year. In history, students were tasked with examining the major philosophies of Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. They were presented with documents of the philosophies, and then given the freedom to show their understanding through learning menus. Each of their project choices demonstrated individual depth of student knowledge and complex thinking through the formative assessment process.

Because of the differentiated strategies in place at Elkhorn, students are able to achieve advanced scores on Smarter Balanced assessments. The results of Smarter Balanced test scores demonstrate student growth in both English Language Arts and Math in all grade levels and across all subgroups at Elkhorn. Student outcomes, as measured by state tests, have proven to be favorable over the years.