

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Meadows Arts and Technology Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2000 La Granada Drive  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Thousand Oaks      State CA      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 91362-2099

County Ventura

Telephone (805) 495-7037      Fax (805) 374-1160

Web site/URL http://www.matescharter.org      E-mail bolshever@matescharter.org

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

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

Name of Superintendent\* Mrs. Brenda Olshever      E-mail bolshever@matescharter.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ventura County Office Of Education      Tel. (805) 383-1931

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mrs. Jennifer Murasky  
(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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

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

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	36	30	66
1	30	36	66
2	34	33	67
3	30	37	67
4	35	32	67
5	45	23	68
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>	210	191	401

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 9 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 14 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 70 % White
  - 2 % 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 2018 - 2019 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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	7
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	395
(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. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Cantonese, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Hungarian, Korean, Mandarin, Pashto, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
7 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8 %

Total number students who qualify: 33

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %

32 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>8</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>3</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>19</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 11

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 25:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	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 2019.

<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.**

Instituting a vision that welcomes innovation, honors the past, transforms the future, commands achievement, and empowers all children through the Arts and Technology.

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

MATES admits all pupils who wish to attend, up to capacity. No test or assessment is administered to students prior to acceptance and enrollment into MATES. MATES complies with all laws establishing minimum and maximum age for public school attendance in charter schools.

Applications are accepted during a publicly advertised open application period each year for enrollment in the following school year. Following the open enrollment period each year, applications are counted to determine whether any grade level has received more applications than availability. In the event that this happens, MATES holds a public random drawing (or “lottery”) to determine admission for the impacted grade level, with the exception of existing students, who are guaranteed admission in the following school year.

Admission preferences in the case of a public random drawing are given to the following students in the following order:

- 1) Siblings of existing MATES students;
- 2) Pupils who reside within the former attendance area of Meadows Elementary School;
- 3) Children of employees of MATES
- 4) All other District residents;
- and 5) All other pupils.

The Board of Directors takes all necessary efforts to ensure lottery procedures are fairly executed. Lottery spaces are pulled in order of grade level by the designated lottery official (appointed by the Executive Director). Separate lotteries are conducted for each grade in which there are fewer vacancies than pupils interested in attending. All lotteries take place on the same day in a single location. Lotteries are conducted in ascending order beginning with the lowest applicable grade level. There is no weighted priority assigned to the preference categories; rather, within each grade level, students are drawn from pools beginning with all applicants who qualify for the first preference category, and shall continue with that preference category until all vacancies within that grade level have been filled. If there are more students in a preference category than there are spaces available, a random drawing is held from within that preference category until all available spaces are filled. If all students from the preference category have been selected and there are remaining spaces available in that grade level, students from the second preference category are drawn in the lottery, and the drawing shall continue until all spaces are filled and preference categories are exhausted in the order provided above.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

---

During its forty-five year history, Meadows Elementary had a solid history in teaching excellence along with a passion for the arts. However, in the midst of the Great Recession, the local school district voted to close Meadows due to a district-wide decline in enrollment. The community was devastated by the prospect of losing its successful and beloved neighborhood school. With immense support, a large group of parents, community members, and teachers united to reopen the Meadows campus as a conversion charter school. Meadows Arts and Technology Elementary School (MATES) successfully opened in 2009 as an independent, public charter elementary school. MATES is directly funded by the state of California and authorized by the Ventura County Office of Education. As an independent charter school, MATES has great autonomy with regard to curriculum and teaching methodologies and demonstrates a history of high academic performance. As the school name indicates, the arts and technology play a heavy role in the MATES curriculum.

As a conversion charter school, the priority of MATES is to serve the surrounding neighborhood of the campus in order to honor the original vision of its founders to maintain a neighborhood school. Though at the time of the closure of the Meadows campus the surrounding neighborhood was an aging population with declining numbers of school-aged children, since the inception of MATES the community demographics have changed. Young families have moved to the neighborhood, as MATES has become a draw for the community. The influx of neighborhood children has given MATES the opportunity to continue to serve the original intention of the charter by providing a high-quality education infused with the arts and technology to the surrounding neighborhood and local community. MATES provides expanded educational choice and opportunities for families in the community of Thousand Oaks. As a conversion charter school, the demographics of MATES reflect those of the neighborhood population. Additionally, MATES provides outreach to families from surrounding areas in order to extend school choice to families from all demographic backgrounds. Thus, MATES provides opportunities for a diverse population of learners.

MATES students are actively engaged in high-interest, rigorous learning via thematic, project-based instruction linked to state standards. By infusing visual and performing arts and technology, students enhance and solidify their knowledge of core academic subjects, apply critical thinking skills, and deepen artistic self-expression. Classroom instruction based on grade-level standards is integrated with art and technology in order to equip students with the tools and creative processes necessary for life and academic success. In addition, the arts and technology curriculum is reinforced by the expertise of specialists. The MATES specialist program is one of the unique features that differentiates the MATES program from other schools in the community. MATES employs a music specialist, computer specialist, visual arts specialist, science specialist, PE specialist, library specialist, and dance specialist. All students attend specialist classes throughout the week. Classroom teachers and specialists collaborate to enhance thematic units with arts and technology. Examples of arts and technology integration include musical plays thematically integrated into academic content, an annual Winter Art Gallery where students share curricular-based art projects, and developmentally appropriate use of technology to demonstrate understanding of grade level content.

Classroom teachers integrate arts and technology projects into each unit. The educational philosophy of thematic, project-based learning with an infusion of arts and technology at MATES has proven to result in high academic achievement. Since the inception of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) test, standardized test scores at MATES have steadily risen in both English language arts and math. MATES students in the general student population and in subpopulations benefit from a variety of modalities for both accessing academic content and presenting their learning. Thematic teaching allows the MATES students to make authentic connections across disciplines, which makes their learning meaningful and long-lasting. The implementation of thematic units gives authenticity to the curriculum, allows opportunities for novel application of concepts, and promotes differentiation. Access to arts and technology-based instructional techniques reaches students from a wide variety of learning styles and allows students the opportunity to develop an increased awareness of their innate artistic and creative abilities through the arts and technology focus at MATES.

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

---

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

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The focus of the MATES educational philosophy is on academic excellence within the research-supported framework of the arts and technology through project-based learning opportunities. Interdisciplinary, thematic units allow the MATES teachers to integrate a variety of subjects under an overarching theme. For example, the kindergarten “Weather” unit includes projects such as creating weather forecast videos using a green screen and weather-appropriate costumes to explain the weather around the world, a rainy day art piece with a QR code link to hear each student reflect on their own art, and an illustrated weather journal to track weather patterns in a variety of locations. Fifth grade students study an “Explorers” unit, which gives students the opportunity to research an explorer of their choice, dress and act as the explorer in an oral report, design a digital poster about the explorer, create an explorer ship art piece using chalk pastels, and perform the musical production *European Explorers in the New World*. These units are examples of ways in which the arts and technology are contextualized into authentic learning experiences.

Student work is assessed in a variety of ways including rubrics, student portfolios, and self-reflection tools. In addition to standards-based outcomes, student performance in the arts and technology is demonstrated through project-based learning. Students are assessed for their mastery of standards, as well as their ability to solve problems individually and in cooperative groups. Project design incorporates rigorous and complex problems that require students to understand the relationships between concepts across disciplines. Projects culminate in tangible products and often a public exhibition of student work. Projects in which students create multimedia presentations, web pages, performances, artwork, or songs may be evaluated differently than traditional assignments. Assessment strategies include performance evaluation, teacher observations, personal communications, project rubrics, and self-assessment.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

A primary goal of the MATES English Language Arts curriculum is to encourage students to value reading as a source of information and a stimulating pastime. Students’ love of reading encourages their growth as readers and writers. Using a balance of whole group instruction, guided instruction in small groups, and independent practice, teachers develop these skills in students in a developmentally appropriate manner, supporting the individual needs of every student. Student progress is consistently monitored via formative and summative assessments to help drive instruction and ensure students make continual growth. Teachers use tools such as the Basic Phonics Skills Test, the STAR reading assessment, fluency assessments, Smarter Balanced interim assessments, and core literature comprehension tests to help teachers form small homogeneous instructional groups, allow teachers to find opportunities for remediation and acceleration, and support further content instruction.

The primary grades emphasize phonics and phonemic awareness where students are “learning to read.” Examples of these instructional strategies include daily chants and songs, word sorts, rhyming, and oral blending and segmentation. Additionally, reading instruction is integrated into thematic units to contextualize student learning and highlight high quality literature. For example, a first grade “Pond Life” unit revolves around reading Arnold Lobel’s *Frog and Toad Are Friends*. The unit allows the first grade students to make connections across disciplines as they act out the life cycle of a frog, perform a musical production of *Frog and Toad All Year*, and contribute to a whole-class mural of pond flora and fauna.

In the upper grades, instructional focus shifts from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” with an increased emphasis on comprehension strategies. Fluency and articulation are developed through public speaking opportunities, oral reports, choral reading, small group interactions, and projects. In addition, performances in song and theater reinforce and apply the standards. Critical thinking skills are addressed through read alouds, think alouds, open-ended questioning, and oral retellings. Thematic integration brings the reading of core literature to life. For instance, the fourth grade “California Gold Rush” unit centers around reading Sid

Fleischman's *By the Great Horn Spoon!*, a gold rush adventure novel. Along with reading this work of historical fiction, fourth grade students also simulate life in a mining camp, write daily gold rush journal entries, perform a musical production *Gold Dust or Bust*, and paint world maps to trace the journeys of the '49ers. Interdisciplinary thematic integration allows students to make connections to support authentic meaning-making in their learning.

The goal of writing instruction at MATES is to help students discover reading "from the inside out." As children write, they use their letter-sound knowledge, develop content knowledge, and practice the art of writing using previously analyzed models as a guide. Teachers in every grade level guide students through the writing process so students become independent writers who can write on demand for a variety of audiences and purposes. Technology is also incorporated into writing instruction. Students research, draft, and revise using technology and various digital programs to present their work to multiple audiences. For example, as a part of the first grade "Africa" unit, students each choose an African animal to research. Once they complete their animal research, the students are guided through the writing process to create written reports. They create three dimensional dioramas to depict their animal in its habitat, and culminate the unit by presenting the projects and reports to their classmates. In this way, writing is integrated with science, art, research skills, and oral presentation skills under one overarching theme.

### 1c. Mathematics

The goal of mathematics instruction at MATES is to produce students who are fluent with numbers, have built mathematical reasoning skills, and have developed a strong math vocabulary through real-world experiences. Within the context of the California state standards, students are constantly challenged to reason and communicate mathematically to demonstrate proficiency in their learning. Specifically, teachers focus on developing students' number sense and mathematical reasoning abilities. Elements of number sense among young children include linking symbols to quantities, understanding part-to-whole relationships, and being able to make calculations with fluency to devote more of their thinking to visualizing and tackling difficult word problems. Teachers utilize Number Talks strategies and problem solving activities to encourage collaboration and mathematical reasoning. Teachers use the McGraw-Hill My Math program, which includes hands-on activities, classroom discussion about mathematical reasoning, and sufficient calculation practice to make mathematical operations automatic. Various artistic concepts and elements, such as music, are incorporated into the math program, and vice-versa, as the two disciplines intertwine, complement, and help explain one another. Teachers use the My Math program assessments to monitor student progress on an ongoing basis. Assessment results are used to drive both small group and whole group instruction to ensure all students continue to be challenged. Using this data, teachers assign and monitor individualized remediation or acceleration opportunities through the IXL Personalized Learning platform.

To make math concepts accessible and relevant, teachers integrate interactive games, manipulatives, and theater into math practice. For example, in Math Workshop centers, first grade students play the Trader Game in which they trade pennies for larger coins in an attempt to make a dollar, use Dominoes for addition and subtraction practice, use playing cards to play Addition Top-It, and use bowling pins for subtraction bowling. Third grade students create physical word problems by acting out complex word problems using props to demonstrate the equations, create surveys and graphs to analyze hereditary traits, and use Three-Act Tasks to engage in mathematical storytelling in which students develop their own math problems and research to find the missing information in order to solve. These types of hands-on strategies provide an engaging context for learning, encourage multiple approaches, and allow for collaboration and reflection.

Additionally, MATES teachers incorporate mathematics into hands-on projects in order to go beyond the conceptual to make learning authentic and meaningful. For instance, to help bring their "Geometry" unit to life, the fifth grade students are tasked to create a Polyhedraville. Using their knowledge of polygons, polyhedra, area, perimeter, and geometric nets, the students are given colored cardstock and tape to create three-dimensional "buildings" and form a "town" made from polyhedra. However, the students are also constrained by a budget, and the various polygons for purchase are priced by square foot. Therefore, the students are required to work in teams to determine what shapes are needed to create their buildings and calculate whether or not they can afford the pieces within their budget. Calculating the surface area of their

town and finalizing the accompanying expense report allows the fifth grade students to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to create a hands-on project that is creative, engaging, and memorable.

#### **1d. Science**

Students discover and learn about the natural world by using methods of science as extensions of their own curiosity. In alignment with the Next Generation Science Standards, students acquire knowledge of the physical, life, and earth and space sciences through the STEMscopes curriculum, with a focus on engineering, technology, and the applications of science. Students engage in science and engineering practices such as asking questions, developing models, planning investigations, interpreting data, and constructing explanations. The science curriculum emphasizes understanding the process of scientific inquiry, building curiosity, practicing comprehension skills for reading informational text, and developing collaborative skills from working in groups to produce tangible products of understanding. Teachers use STEMscopes written assessments as well as assessment rubrics for hands-on investigations to ensure students are learning both the science content and practices necessary for success. Both formal and informal assessments allow teachers to monitor progress and drive instruction for the future.

All students work with the science specialist in the science lab on a regular basis. During this time, students experience hands-on science activities, experiments, and engineering challenges to solidify the classroom content learning. Combined, laboratory science and real-life experiences provide MATES students with a well-rounded science program. Through the thematic teaching approach, MATES teachers incorporate science content across disciplines. For instance, the second grade “Geology” unit includes a scientific study of landforms, layers of the Earth, and types of rocks. In the science lab, students build and erupt model volcanoes. In the classroom, they read and write informational texts in relation to their geology experiments and create art projects to demonstrate their learning. The geology unit concludes with a production of the musical play *Geology Rocks!*, in which the students sing lyrics that recount the scientific concepts they have learned via characters such as sedimentary rocks, canyons, and fossil fuels.

Keys to this successful science program include engaging in scientific inquiry, opportunities for questioning, and hands-on laboratory experiences. Guest speakers and field trips provide reinforcement and real-world relevance, as does the annual STEAM Night in which students connect with STEAM professionals in the community and present science and technology-based projects.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

Teachers build upon students’ curiosity about themselves and their world by presenting history as an exciting and dramatic series of events and issues. Frequent opportunities exist for all students, including English learners, to share their language, customs, and heritage, thereby providing multicultural dimensions to the curriculum. Teachers provide equal access to the core curriculum for all students through thematic, project-based units. Key content outcomes for social studies include cultural understanding, democratic principles and civic values, and academic and social skills necessary for effective participation in diverse societies. Study of current events helps students understand common and complex themes that reoccur throughout history. Teachers use Pearson’s My World program assessments to monitor student learning, as well as integrated assessments such as journals, scrapbooks, and reports. These assessments allow students to demonstrate their content knowledge in a meaningful way.

For example, during the third grade “Immigration” unit, students study Ellis Island and its significance in the history of American immigration. To help make history come to life, the students interview family members to research their own family immigration story, and the students take on the persona of one of their own ancestors. The students read Ellen Levine’s *If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island*, write daily journal entries to recount their migration experiences from the perspective of their ancestor, and create paintings of the Statue of Liberty. To complete the historical simulation, the third grade students decorate the school cafeteria to become “The Great Hall of Ellis Island.” Students come to school dressed as their ancestor and simulate the experiences immigrants encountered at Ellis Island in the early 1900s. The students “experience” an arduous sea voyage, are tagged with information from their ship’s registry, and wait in long lines for medical and legal inspections before they are given entry into the United States. The

unit concludes with a production of the musical play *We Come From Everywhere*. These real-world experiences help students develop an appreciation for the history of American immigration, as well as celebrate the diverse origins of people in the United States.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Visual and Performing Arts

Integration of the arts is an integral part of the educational philosophy at MATES. By engaging in visual and performing arts, students enhance and solidify their knowledge of core academic subjects, apply critical thinking skills, and deepen artistic skill and self-expression. All students access high-quality instruction in all five arts disciplines: dance, music, theater, visual arts, and media arts in both specialist classes and in the general education classrooms. MATES is the only elementary school in the area to employ a full-time music specialist. Additionally, MATES also employs a full-time computer specialist, part-time visual arts specialist, and a part-time dance specialist. All students attend specialist classes throughout the week, and the five arts disciplines are integrated into the thematic units taught in the general education classrooms. The specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate arts concepts into the core curriculum through project-based activities. For example, all classes put on musical plays that are thematically integrated into grade level academic content. The music specialist and classroom teachers collaborate to arrange performances by rehearsing lyrics, choreographing movements, and preparing students to play musical instruments such as percussion instruments, Orff xylophone instruments, and recorders to support the class musicals.

Through instruction and exploration, students engage in self-discovery, risk taking, fine motor skill development, and participate in performances and exhibitions. For example, MATES students showcase their artwork annually in the Winter Art Gallery. Every student submits two to three art pieces from their art portfolios to display for the community in the gallery. The Winter Art Gallery gives MATES students the opportunity to create art pieces, curate their own collection for display, and respond to the art of others. Students are able to discuss the essential steps in the process of creating their piece, taking pride in their hard work, knowledge gained, and their end product. Students create QR codes to link art pieces to video and audio recordings of themselves sharing accompanying academic content. Additionally, students create Artist Statements to accompany many of their art pieces in order to present their work to an audience by sharing how the piece was created, what they made, and why it is significant.

Physical Education

The goal of the physical and health education curriculum is to promote healthy lifestyles among students and their families through the development of positive physical and social-emotional practices. The physical education and health curriculum covers the following strands: movement skills and knowledge, self-image and personal development, and social development. In the arts, ethnomusicology and world dance forms are used to add multicultural experiences to the physical education curriculum. Sports and games from other cultures augment classroom units of study. All students receive weekly physical education instruction from the PE specialist and bi-weekly instruction from the dance specialist. The physical education program emphasizes individual motor skills, fitness, and good sportsmanship. Proper nutrition and healthy lifestyles are also woven into unit themes and school-wide service projects and events. For example, the PE specialist organizes an annual school-wide Jump Rope for Heart event in which students practice their jump rope skills while learning about heart health.

Technology

In the course of a 21st century education, technological skills and applications are prime common denominators of all students entering into a global society. MATES recognizes the value of introducing

students from widely varied backgrounds to the technological advances available today. Technology is integrated into academic coursework at MATES, and students receive instruction from the computer specialist and school librarian on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Efforts are made to blend technology with the arts as these two fields become increasingly intertwined. Among other applications, students use technology for creative art projects, research purposes, remediation, and enrichment activities. Students are able to apply technological solutions to academic and real-world situations through multimedia presentations, coding, and digital art projects. Project-based units involve the use of technology to create and amplify the learning process. Classrooms are equipped with laptop computers, wireless internet, iPads, SMART tables, interactive touchscreens, and document cameras available for daily, in-class use. MATES also has a computer lab that provides a class set of computers, 3-D printers, and a green screen for video production. The music lab is equipped with desktop computers and digital piano keyboards that allow students to integrate the arts and technology through music production.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

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

MATES attends to the individual needs of all students. MATES teachers are well versed in identifying students having difficulty by using ongoing assessment data, monitoring progress, providing differentiated intervention strategies, and monitoring advancement with struggling students. Meaningful instructional methods including thematic, multimodal, differentiated, flexible groupings paired with engaging content boosts student interest and allows teachers to meet students' individual needs. Instructional activities vary to accommodate different learning styles to draw out students' various strengths. Students who are not meeting grade level benchmarks may be provided Response to Intervention to align with their specific needs. The MATES Response to Intervention program is provided by a credentialed teacher specifically trained in a variety of intervention strategies. The interventions focus on building and supporting basic reading, writing, and math skills for success in grade-level appropriate curriculum. In addition to the Response to Intervention program, MATES offers an after-school homework lab monitored by a credentialed teacher. The lab provides struggling students an opportunity to work in a quiet environment. When additional interventions are needed, the staff is proactive in coordinating support services. MATES adheres to a Student Study Team (SST) intervention process. This process increases focus on interventions and teaching using differentiated methods. In all cases, the focus of the SST centers on students' needs and how MATES can provide necessary support. Parental involvement and open lines of communication are integral to the process. SST members include the classroom teacher, administrator, resource teacher, parents, school psychologist, speech pathologist, and any other specialists needed to provide additional insights and strategies. This team addresses the needs of the whole child, using assessments as well as teacher observation data to support decision-making on the intervention level. Indicators of a disability may lead to further assessment and possible placement in a specialized program.

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

Since the mission of MATES includes assuring that the educational experience of all students is rigorous, teachers are prepared to provide additional challenges for those who are learning at a faster pace than the majority. Beginning in third grade, students who demonstrate higher level thinking skills are referred by teachers and parent request for identification in the gifted and talented education (GATE) program. Those students identified as GATE and students working above grade level benefit from differentiated curriculum and peer clustering, as well as individual and group lesson extensions that demand creative uses of high-level thinking skills in terms of scope, sequence, depth, and complexity. In order to effectively differentiate content for high achievers, MATES teachers use acceleration to move students vertically through the curriculum at a faster pace, such as in the implementation of leveled reading groups and the use of leveled academic programs. In addition, enrichment strategies incorporate topics not typically included in the regular curriculum such as the use of passion projects, independent study activities, and inquiry-based techniques. MATES teachers also implement extension opportunities to allow students to expand or broaden their understanding of the regular curriculum. In thematic learning, students may choose to explore facets of the unit in greater depth and share their findings with the rest of the class, or students may apply the depth and complexity icons to their learning in order to experience the material in a variety of ways. Students who

need further differentiation are offered activities that support their interests and curiosities that engage and accentuate the overall learning experience. Heterogeneous groupings allow for leadership and cooperative learning encounters with above-, at- and below-grade level peers. Above-grade-level students receive appropriate activities that are of high interest and stretch their natural abilities.

### **3c. Special education**

Research shows that all students, but particularly children in special education programs, benefit from the presence of art in the classroom. The MATES philosophy of thematic, interdisciplinary education infused with the arts and technology provides students with disabilities multiple means of accessing and expressing learning. Project-based learning allows students to engage in academic content via a variety of modalities, optimizing entry points for all types of learners.

In addition to an accessible general education curriculum, special education students at MATES also receive services as identified by their individualized education program. MATES employs a full-time resource specialist, part-time speech pathologist, and part-time school psychologist to meet the needs of special education students in their area of disability. Special education faculty members collaborate closely with classroom teachers in order to ensure a quality continuum of services across settings and to reduce potential barriers to learning. For example, special education faculty assist teachers in developing sensory diets for students with processing or attention disorders. All classrooms have options for flexible seating such as wobble stools, floor cushions, and exercise balls. Regular movement and brain breaks allow students to maintain focus and optimize learning time. Additionally, special education staff are trained in multisensory teaching approaches, allowing students with disabilities to link auditory, visual, and kinesthetic processing skills to create an integrated and complete learning experience.

The MATES special education program has resulted in strong academic outcomes. Each year, CAASPP standardized test scores at MATES have continued to increase across the general student population and student subpopulations. Students with disabilities performed at 29.2 points above the standard in English language arts and 19.1 points above the standard in mathematics on the most recent CAASPP assessment. The arts and technology emphasis at MATES has improved students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, equipping them to master state standards. The arts and technology have also provided equitable access to student subpopulations to allow all students to make positive growth.

### **3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered**

English Learners (EL) at MATES are supported through a combination of integrated and designated English language development instruction, a supportive school culture, and additional academic support as needed to develop proficiency in the English language. Frequent monitoring by teachers ensures that English learners are internalizing English language skills. The home and school connection for EL students is established through the creation of an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) for each student through collaboration between the classroom teacher, parents, and administration. ELPAC standardized test scores are analyzed and interpreted in order to develop a plan of individual goals. The individual goals are supported by both parents and teaching staff. The ILP is reviewed and updated annually upon the receipt of the ELPAC results. If the student's goals are not met, alternative interventions and resources are considered. Differentiated instruction, which supports all learners, including ELs, is supported through project-based learning. The emphasis on arts and technology creates learning opportunities that allow ELs to access content in different formats. These approaches diminish the reliance on reading and writing as the only classroom learning tools and allow students to demonstrate their mastery of subject matter in a variety of ways.

MATES values diversity, especially as it relates to the integration of the arts and technology. The arts provide a glimpse into culture and help students see themselves as part of a global, culturally diverse society. MATES's multicultural art curriculum allows students to experience and celebrate different points of view. Students' English language skills and academic vocabulary are enhanced through conversation and critique about artwork, and social skills are built through collaborative projects. These strategies have proven successful, as English learners scored 27.1 points above the standard in English language arts, and 25.3 points above the standard in mathematics on the most recent CAASPP assessment, and 50% of the EL population at MATES was reclassified as fluent English proficient last school year.

### **3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered**

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

---

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

In addition to providing an engaging academic environment, arts and technology integration at MATES also creates a positive school climate where students are connected to their environment and enjoy the learning process. Annual parent and student climate surveys demonstrate high levels of satisfaction, and a 97% average attendance rate indicates students want to be in school. Students are motivated by the authentic learning experiences the arts and technology provide.

Further, students in all grade levels regularly engage in core values lessons to support social-emotional learning. Teachers utilize applicable literature, experiential lessons, modeling and role play, and hands-on art projects to teach the MATES core values, known as the “HEART of an Eagle.” Positive behavior is reinforced on campus with red heart stickers, which are awarded to students who show these core values. The sticker serves as a physical reminder to the students of the character traits expected of MATES students, and gives all members of the MATES community an opportunity to recognize students for doing the right thing. Students are also celebrated in monthly Core Values Assemblies for showing the HEART of an Eagle throughout the month. Parents and family members are invited to join the assembly, and the teachers share why each student was chosen to receive an award. In this way, not only are the students recognized for their character, but they are also identified as role models for their peers. All students are also equipped to use a school-wide conflict resolution tool called the “HEART Highway.” The HEART Highway provides students with the appropriate steps necessary to resolve peer conflicts independently by identifying and sharing their feelings, brainstorming potential solutions, and resolving to move forward peaceably.

Students in grades 3-5 have a unique opportunity to participate in Friday Focus. Time is set aside each week for students to participate in multi-age elective classes. These classes allow MATES to differentiate according to student interest, as students select classes of their choice. These group interactions are facilitated by different teachers each session, with the electives offering alternative modes of engaging students in high interest activities. Some examples of Friday Focus class sessions include entomology, 3-D printing, comic book design, engineering, gardening, line dancing, and news casting. Friday Focus is often students’ favorite part of the week. This unique program allows teachers to introduce students to content they are passionate about and allows students to explore topics beyond the typical curriculum.

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

Family and community involvement in MATES is essential to the school’s success. In this respect, parents make up the majority of the MATES Board of Directors, participate on the Parent Advisory Council, and have established an active parent-teacher organization. The parent-teacher organization funds and coordinates special events at MATES to provide the opportunity to share students’ creative expression with the community at large, as well as allow community members to share their expertise with students. Art @ Lunch is a weekly lunchtime offering, run by parent volunteers, in which students engage in process art activities with a new art media each week. Materials such as plasticine clay, watercolors, tin foil, chalk pastels, etc. are provided to students to explore and create a piece of their choice. Music Day is a biennial event based on a chosen musical genre such as “Jazz” or “Music around the World.” Professional and amateur musicians and dancers from the local community are selected to perform their style of music in each of the MATES classrooms. Throughout the day, the students rotate from room to room to see each of the performers present. The day ends with a concert for all students to attend together. This event allows experts from the field to share their passion and expertise with the MATES students. Every year, MATES also holds a STEAM Night event. This event brings in STEAM professionals from the community such as art therapists, robotics engineers, and virtual reality entrepreneurs to allow students to experience career connections with STEAM in the community. Students display their media arts and science fair projects such as digital photography, game design, inventions, and Rube Goldberg creations. Signature events such as Art @ Lunch, Music Day, and STEAM Night help build curricular connections with the arts, as well as strengthen the network of the MATES community-at-large.

Additionally, MATES has an official partnership with our local university as a Community Collaboration School. This agreement allows undergraduate educational studies majors to volunteer on the MATES campus, shadow the classroom teachers, and work with groups of students. This experience provides the university students the opportunity for authentic learning and practice in their prospective field, and it allows the MATES students more individual attention in their small group lessons. The partnership also provides the MATES staff with opportunities for professional development and training from university experts. This partnership with an undergraduate university program is unique in the state of California and provides a strong community connection across educational settings.

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

Staff development is a key element of what makes MATES successful. The MATES staff are truly life-long learners, never satisfied with the status quo. Time is allocated every Tuesday afternoon for professional development for the MATES staff. Minutes are banked throughout the week to allow for early pupil release days on Tuesdays to ensure a protected time for teachers to collaborate, engage in professional learning communities, and plan together for future units and projects. The staff has engaged in on-site professional development sessions in a wide variety of topics including restorative justice, Project ACT, social-emotional learning, and digital citizenship. In addition to on-site professional development, all staff members are also allocated \$300 per year to attend an outside workshop or conference of their choice. Staff have used these funds to bolster their knowledge and skills by attending conferences on topics such as the Orff Schulwerk approach, STEAM integration, Computer Using Educators (CUE), and the new California Arts Standards. After attending a conference, teachers are given the opportunity to share their learning with the rest of the staff so all members benefit from the experience.

All MATES personnel, including teachers and specialists, are observed and evaluated annually. Teachers' observation reports are based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, which include engaging students in learning, designing learning experiences for students, and assessing student learning. Observations, evaluations, and pre- and post-observation conferences with administrators help to ensure that the effective implementation of best practices in education remains a constant focus at MATES and an area for continual improvement. Staff are also encouraged to engage in peer observations. This form of collaborative professional development allows teachers to share instructional techniques and ideologies with one another in order to improve teaching practices and student performance. Ongoing professional development is a critical element in keeping the MATES staff informed and relevant in their field. Both on- and off-campus professional development is funded through the general budget and is prioritized by the MATES staff for personal and professional improvement. The MATES teachers excel in their craft and were ranked as the #1 teaching staff in the county in 2019 by Niche.com.

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

As an independent charter school, MATES has autonomy to make programmatic and curricular decisions to best meet the needs of our students. The school is overseen by a governing board of directors, comprised of parents and community members, who ensure the school operates in accordance with state and federal mandates. The Executive Director and Assistant Director preside over the day-to-day operation of the campus. Though MATES is autonomously governed, we are also accountable to our charter authorizer, the county office of education. MATES provides the Ventura County Office of Education with a yearly programmatic audit, which includes a summary of data showing student progress toward the goals and outcomes specified in the MATES charter and an analysis of whether student performance is meeting those goals using state and local assessment instruments. MATES uses the data in the programmatic audit to assess and improve upon our educational programming to ensure continued growth.

All stakeholders at MATES have a voice and are invited to participate in the decision-making process for the direction of the school via our board committees. Board committees are comprised of administrators, teachers, specialists, parents, and board members. Board committees cover a wide range of areas of oversight such as curriculum, facilities, budget, core values, technology, and safety. Parent volunteers are encouraged to join committees in their area of expertise. For example, the Safety Committee includes parent volunteers who are firefighters, nurses, and police officers. Drawing from the knowledge of the collective

community strengthens the decision-making process for the MATES staff and board. The committees allow stakeholders to voice opinions, evaluate program effectiveness, and make recommendations for change to the governing board. This process ensures the curricula and programs in place for the MATES students are effective and are being implemented to fidelity.

Additionally, the MATES Board of Directors has established a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) whose purpose is to serve as an advisory board and as liaisons between parents and the MATES Board of Directors. The advisory council includes parent volunteers from each grade level to ensure representation from multiple perspectives. The Parent Advisory Council is responsible for providing input and advice regarding pupil outcomes, parental involvement and engagement, and school climate to the MATES Board of Directors and the administration. The leadership structure at MATES is a collaborative approach, which values the input of all stakeholders. This leadership philosophy allows MATES to be more than just a school; it is an authentic community.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

The MATES mission statement is, “Instituting a vision that welcomes innovation, honors the past, transforms the future, commands achievement, and empowers all children through the Arts and Technology.” As this statement indicates, the model program and practice most instrumental to the success of MATES is the integration of the arts and technology into the core curriculum. Since the school was founded over a decade ago, the arts and technology have been the core of the educational philosophy and practices at MATES. The mission of MATES is now a reality for all students, offering a school setting that reflects the community’s desire to have access to a rigorous academic program with an emphasis on the visual and performing arts and technology.

The arts and technology serve as a mechanism for investigation and problem solving while addressing multimodal learning. Integration of the arts and technology also facilitate effective project-based learning techniques and act as a scaffold for all students. The teachers’ implementation of thematic units provides both depth and breadth of curriculum, allows for student choice, and promotes differentiation. MATES students develop meaningful skills in social and academic realms, with the opportunity to develop their artistic and creative abilities through the arts and technology focus. This practice provides the MATES students with a variety of ways to access learning and demonstrate their learning, while building capacity for life-long skills.

The MATES community exhibits a passion for creativity and artistic expression and openness for ingenuity. With a collaborative culture anchored in hard work and pride, the school has succeeded in providing a high quality educational program to all of our students. MATES implements an integrated educational program that provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to real-life situations and service to their community. We continue building on the collaborative learning resources of parents, teachers, community members, universities, and students, all partnered and dedicated to the goal of enabling all students to become self-motivated, competent, lifelong learners. MATES stands for Meadows Arts and Technology Elementary School, and the infusion of the arts and technology into the MATES curriculum makes for a truly unique and impactful learning environment for our students.