

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Vista Del Sur Accelerated Academy
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3908 West South Mountain Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Laveen State AZ Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85339-7897

County Maricopa County

Telephone (602) 237-3046 Fax (602) 237-1976

Web site/URL <https://vistadelsur.laveenschools.org/> E-mail jepacs@laveeneld.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* Dr. Jeff Sprout E-mail jsprout@laveeneld.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Laveen Elementary School District Tel. (602) 237-9110

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 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: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

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

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	15	14	29
K	44	39	83
1	39	56	95
2	45	40	85
3	44	52	96
4	37	49	86
5	42	42	84
6	49	46	95
7	39	45	84
8	40	45	85
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	394	428	822

*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
 - 17 % Black or African American
 - 44 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 20 % White
 - 8 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	21
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	32
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	827
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
English, Spanish, Mandarin, Persian, Cantonese, Somali, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Amharic, Arabic, Tamil, Bengali, Korean, Gujarati, Malayalam

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 37 %
Total number students who qualify: 304

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 4 %
35 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. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>25</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</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: 6
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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 28:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
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 2021.

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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2016

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

When learners are encouraged to interact with their peers, productively struggle with challenging concepts, and develop arguments by building on each other's responses they are engaged in effective instruction and accountability for their learning.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

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NONDISCRIMINATION / EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Board is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in relation to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, and disability. This policy will prevail in all matters concerning staff members, students, the public, educational programs and services, and individuals with whom the Board does business.

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

Students and families who chose to attend Vista del Sur must complete an open enrollment form and participate in an entrance assessment. The entrance assessment is to aid the parents in making the decision to understand where their child may be academically. This information is pertinent as a tool to support families, because Vista is an accelerated school working one year ahead in Mathematics and English Language Arts. From there, students are accepted based on open space.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Vista del Sur is one of the nine schools of the Laveen Elementary School District #59. It is located in the Laveen Village which is a suburb of Phoenix. Each school within the district has a signature program. Vista's signature program is acceleration. Even though Vista is accelerated, the school is still a Title I school. Not only are Vista's learners diverse in learning abilities, but there are cultural and religious diversities that bring more to the campus.

The students of Vista will be the next inventors, doctors, and or even the future president of the United States. The Vista students thrive at academics, but they are also great thinkers. Thinking beyond oneself or beyond a problem is something that cannot always be taught in the classroom.

Vista's families are outstanding. They want the very best for their children and they want to partner in the learning process as much as possible.

The students who attend Vista work a grade level ahead in both English Language Arts and Math. In order to achieve high achievement on state assessment, students at Vista must take ownership of their learning as well as themselves thus creating student self-efficacy.

Vista del Sur utilizes a facilitator model. This is done through including Kagan structures throughout the whole lesson. Each Kagan structure has a purpose. For example, Rally Coaching allows students to be peer instructors to each other. Because the student is being the instructor it requires students to be actively engaged during the lesson since they know they will need to teach another person.

Each morning, the whole school takes a mindful breath. This act helps to set the tone for the day and students are encouraged to take a mindful breath whenever they need it. If a student needs extra support, they are paired with a teacher through a Check In and Check Out system.

Excelling in the core subjects is important but how you interact with yourself and others is equally as important. At Vista del Sur, students complete the Kindness Challenge as well as attend Tiger Tribes.

Each February the community time lessons center around kindness and spreading kindness. Creating the Vista Kindness Chain is a tradition. Whenever a person catches another being kind, they describe it on a slip of paper and then attach it to the chain. The goal each year is for the chain to reach from one end of campus to the other.

Once a month, it is tiger tribe day which means that for 45 minutes, all students will move to a different class and interact with Vista student's kindergarten through eighth grade. During Tiger Tribes, tribes work on a fun activity and then discuss a social emotional skill. It is one of the ways that Vista works to foster a family-like feeling on campus.

The COVID 19 school closures were hard for everyone but the Vista del Sur staff, families, and students overcame the challenges presented together. During remote learning, the Vista teachers taught as if they were in class. The same high expectations were present and because of this, Vista saw similar high achievement on the state assessment.

The 2021-2022 school year is not a typical year, but the staff are working hard to make it as normal as possible. One of the biggest changes is how classroom teachers see intervention. The shift went from intervention with the focus of filling in a gap to WIN time. WIN stands for "What I Need." This shift in thinking is because it is hard to say if a student mastered a skill or was introduced to the skill with all the closures and online learning. During WIN time, teachers work from the sub objective level up to the objective so that students can master the grade level objective.

Vista del Sur was named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2016. Winning the title was a great honor, not only for the staff of Vista, but also the Laveen community. Since winning the title, it has helped to attract

families and recruit teachers. The state of Arizona is an open enrollment state which means that parents have options when selecting the school for their children. Since 2016, Vista has seen a 37% increase in student population. The National Blue Ribbon award has helped Vista to attract and retain teachers. Potential teachers want to teach at the top schools, so when they see that Vista is a National Blue Ribbon school, they become more interested. The work that is needed in order to be named a National Blue Ribbon School is great, but the rewards from the work is priceless, thus the retention of staff has increased because the Vista staff want to continue to push the bar further.

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 Vista del Sur administration, teachers, and support staff are anchored by the school’s vision statement and a common teaching approach. The vision statement can be found in every classroom as it is the collective beliefs that Vista staff reflect on when planning a unit of study. The Vista del Sur Accelerated Academy’s vision is “When learners are encouraged to interact with their peers, productively struggle with challenging concepts and develop sound arguments by building on each other's responses they are engaged in effective instruction and accountable for their learning.” The vision statement in action may look like a student reading a complex text with a partner, and discussing and coming to a consensus on the relevant evidence needed to support an answer. Finally, the two students may reference a rubric to self-assess their own answer.

In order to support the Vista vision, the teachers take on a constructivist approach. The constructivist approach means that the teachers allow students to construct their own arguments and approaches to solve the problems. This approach encourages students to think and process rather than memorize with drill and practice. Even within a constructivist approach, there is still room for direct instruction but the types of problems used for direct instruction are strategically selected to continue to allow students to think and use what they know to solve the problem even when learning new material.

Vista has a vision and an overarching approach to instruction, but a key strategy that Vista teachers use when lesson planning is the backwards design model. Backwards design is done on an individual level, as a grade level team, or as a vertical team. Thinking of the end product first, helps teachers to see the path that students need to take in order to get there successfully.

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

The Laveen School District went through a curriculum adoption process involving a range of stakeholders during the 2019-2020 school year. ReadyGen Literacy Program was selected for kindergarten through fourth grade and StudySync for grades five through eight. Both curriculums are an integrated and well-balanced approach to reading and writing instruction. It includes authentic literary and informational texts with modeling and teacher-directed activities. Instruction focuses on reading, writing, speaking, and listening in response to texts.

The adopted curriculum is the foundation in the classroom, but Vista teachers have outlined various practices that are included daily to enhance the curriculum and to help the students of Vista to be considered highly proficient on the state test. Some of these practices are partner reading, the integration of reading and writing, and the use of novel studies.

At Vista, partner reading is extended since not only are the pair or group of students responsible for reading the assigned reading, but the pair or group of students have a task or two to complete associated with the assigned reading. The task(s) are usually a text dependent question or annotations connected to a skill(s) found in the Arizona State Common Core Standards. Student engagement is increased because of partner reading since both students are responsible for the reading and the answer to the task(s) connected to the reading. Because more students are more engaged in the assigned reading, the student’s comprehension of the text is then increased which allows for better discussion and/or response through writing.

When speaking of writing, it can range from being as complex as writing in response to reading or completing a thinking map that shows a student’s thought process. It is important to write everyday which can be seen during any reading block on campus. By writing every day, it increases the connection between reading and writing and models to the Vista students that reading and writing are not stand alone practices.

Writing is so important to the teachers at Vista that they have even created their own writing assessments since the district adopted assessment does not include a stand-alone writing assessment.

Classroom teachers use the district-wide assessments, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), and their own classroom observations to monitor student understanding of the state standard per grade level. Both curriculums offer resources for various assessments. After reviewing the data, the classroom teacher may pull a small group and/or use the school support staff to help intervene when needed. Since Vista is accelerated in English Language Arts (ELA), the small groups are sometimes used to work with students to extend the learning or skill.

All reading teachers at Vista want to instill a love for reading and this is clearly done through the use of novel studies. Novel studies allow students an opportunity to engage with authentic texts and to apply what skills are learned in the classroom to the novel.

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

Vista del Sur uses the McGraw Hill MyMath for grades kindergarten through fifth grade and Glencoe Math for grades sixth through eighth grade. Both math programs are under one company, the transition from fifth grade to sixth grade is smooth because the format is the same. Since Vista del Sur is accelerated, the students in seventh and eighth grade have the opportunity to take algebra (seventh) and geometry (eighth) if they pass the required tests to show proficiency. Some Vista students could enter high school with two years of math already completed.

Because of the constructivist approach, the math teachers at Vista use various strategies, such as number talks and three act tasks to build a student's mathematical understanding. A number talk is when a math problem is presented and students mentally solve the problem. After some think time, the teacher will ask students to share how they solved the problem mentally. As the student is sharing, the teacher is scripting what the student says. The scripted part is important since it allows teachers to see a student's thinking and to clear up any misconceptions that may appear. Number talks usually begin a lesson and builds mathematical problem solvers, integrates the mathematical practices and weaves in inquiry based instruction.

To bring math alive in the classroom, the Vista math teachers use a strategy called Three Act Tasks. During Act One, a complex question is presented and students are given time to process the question. For example, how expensive is the Twelve Days of Christmas? Then during Act Two, some information is presented. Referring back to the example about the Twelve Days of Christmas, the song may be played and the price break of each item would be shared. During Act Two, the students would have work time after learning some information that would help. Finally, during Act Three, students share the results and the strategies that they used. After the students have shared, the teacher will reveal the answer. Vista math teachers try to do a Three Act Task after each unit of study since they can continue to measure their students' understanding of various skills and application of skills in regards to solving a math problem.

Learning Math is like building a wall, each layer is needed to have a sturdy wall. When Vista's third through eighth graders are 20 weeks out from state testing, the Math department will begin this program called Countdown. Each day there are a few math problems that students will work out for bell work. This is a great review of all the standards in a grade level as well as an opportunity for Math teachers to provide a quick mini lesson or review. It is also an informal assessment that could help when planning WIN time lessons. For Vista's grades K-2nd groups, there are support staff that can provide small group instruction on skills that students may have a deficit in.

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

Vista del Sur's teachers use Discovery Education for Science. Discovery Education is an inquiry based curriculum and enhanced with interactive activities and student led investigations.

Hands-on activities are a key component part of Science. The hands-on activities can range from making a

model to performing an experiment. Models and/or experiments lend themselves to Vista's vision as well as the constructivist approach since students are expected to investigate all possible answers. The Science teachers do several hands-on activities in their classrooms a month.

One of the biggest parts of the Science curriculum for all fourth through eighth grade students is the Science and Engineering Fair Project. All the classic elements are included, but the Science teachers encourage their students to design a project around a topic discussed in the classroom. Much of the project is done in the classroom which helps to support students for whom working on the project at home is a struggle. The Science and Engineering Fair Project is a great cross curricular activity since it involves Math, ELA and even Art.

The Discovery Education curriculum allows for differentiation through the use of lexiled passages, videos, and interactive explorations that meet the needs of all learners. Currently the Laveen Elementary School District does not have a district-wide Science assessment; thus, the teachers of Vista rely on informative assessment measures before providing the unit's summative assessment. Since the Science curriculum has a lot of reading, the Science teachers will use the results from the ELA NWEA assessments to help form small groups and/or reading partners similar to how the ELA teachers may as well. The Vista Science and ELA teachers work closely together since it allows the students another opportunity practice the informational text standards.

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

Discovery Education was adopted for both Science and Social Studies. Even though the platform is similar for both curricula, the content is different. For Social Studies, Discovery Education includes document-based learning through the use of primary and secondary sources, videos and interactive activities that focus on multiple perspectives. It is an online curriculum therefore students have access to the curriculum at school and home.

Regularly, Vista students watch CNN10 news. While viewing the news, students actively record ideas they saw under specific categories. The worksheet that houses the categories were created by the Social Studies teachers with support from the ELA teachers in order to integrate the two subjects. CNN10 news brings national and world issues to the forefront for the Vista students. Teachers can also use CNN10 news to make connections to the content they are teaching which allows for more active engagement and critical thinking.

Comparatively, Social Studies may be more student-led than the other core subjects at Vista. One strategy that is used often is a Socratic Seminar. A Socratic Seminar is a class discussion in which texts can be used to support an open ended answer. This strategy allows students to come to their own conclusions and defend them respectfully which is a skill that a 21st century scholar needs for life beyond Vista. A Socratic Seminar is a high-level thinking activity. To prepare for the discussion, teachers engage students in annotating the selected text and possibly to have a mini discussion in a small group on the question before involving the whole classroom. This way students feel prepared before sharing with the whole class. An example of a Socratic Seminar question is: Based on an excerpt from the song called the Hymn of the Nile, what can you infer about the importance of the Nile River to Ancient Egyptian Civilization?

1f. For secondary schools:

Vista's purpose is to set students up to be successful in their college and career endeavors. One of the ways we ensure student success and preparedness is through our acceleration. Most of our students go into high school and are automatically enrolled in honors or advanced placement courses. This gives students an advantage when looking at and enrolling in college. Another way that we support our students in through further acceleration in math. For students who demonstrate readiness, they are accelerated two years ahead in math. This results in leaving Vista with two years of high school math completed. Because of this, students are given the opportunity in high school to enter into college courses sooner and are several years ahead prior to even stepping foot into college. We want Vista students to have college courses completed in high school in order for them to know and understand the demand of college courses. This will provide a solid foundation for the day they are officially college students and hopefully allow several pre-requisite

college courses to have been completed. Another way we prepare students for their college and career experiences is through leadership opportunities. We provide many opportunities for students to problem-solve, critically think and build leadership skills. One example, is our National Junior Honor Society. This group focuses on the pillars of the National Honor Society which are scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. In addition, NJHS guides students to lead and participate in service projects. Every year students volunteer a total of twenty hours towards helping others. Other opportunities students are encouraged to participate in is student government, intramural sports and other after school clubs. All of these extra-curricular activities, build skills that create well-rounded students who can attack any challenge. There is no doubt, Vista's student population is ready for the college and future career experiences.

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

Vista del Sur's youngest learners are exposed to phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, letter recognition, Math, Science, and Social Studies which are outlined in the Arizona state standards. In order to reach the state standards for preschool, the preschool teachers at Vista del Sur use Wonders by McGraw Hill as well as Spalding.

The preschool school teachers not only focus on the academic standards of preschool but they also work with their students on social, emotional skills. Some of these social skills include social cues, such as personal space, how to behave at a school, sharing with others, etc. The preschool teachers work with their students on a more holistic level as they want to send a well-rounded student to kindergarten.

The state standards are the foundation for the preschool teachers, but the design of their day is flexible and up to the preschool team. The preschool team at Vista instructs their students by creating centers which allows the preschoolers to learn through doing. For example, a preschooler could be asked to locate the letter A and say the sound at the same time. Preschoolers learn through doing.

Letter recognition, the beginning of sounds and counting are important but another big part of the lessons taught are fine and gross motor skills. Skills, such as how to hold a pencil properly, cut a piece of paper, etc., are lessons that are presented in preschool. Preschool teachers basically teach the youngest of learners everything they need to know!

Because of the preschool program at Vista, the kindergarten teachers can begin their teaching further along than most other kindergartens. This is because the preschoolers know what it is like to be a part of a classroom community prior to the start of kindergarten. The preschool strongly supports the kindergarten program at Vista.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Even though Vista del Sur is an accelerated school, the administration believes there is more to education than just English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The "more" part of education is the special area classes. At Vista, students in kindergarten through eighth grades have an opportunity within the week to attend physical education, music, art, Spanish. Band is also offered to students in grades fifth through eighth. The special area classes offer an opportunity for students to express themselves and to become a more well-rounded student.

Each special class is forty-five minutes long and on a four-day rotation for student's kindergarten through fourth grades and a five-day rotation for students fifth through eighth grades. The two different rotations are because Vista shares a physical education teacher with another school within the district. Because the administration sees the importance of special areas classes, both rotations will accommodate no school days. This means that if Day 1 is a Monday and there is no school on Monday, Day 1 is moved to Tuesday when classes resume. This is important to note because the administration makes sure that Vista students have equal access to all special area classes. This adjustment shows the importance of special area classes.

As it has been stated earlier, Vista has Art, Music, Physical Education, Spanish, and Band. The special area teachers teach the Arizona state standards for their area which includes principles of design and composure,

history within their area, creating a love for moving, and cultural awareness. Within any given lesson in a special area class, students use critical thinking skills, task analysis and make real-world connections. The special area teachers also try to infuse their lessons with cross curricular ideas which helps students to continue to practice what is done in the classroom.

Vista does not have a specific time in the master schedule when student's kindergarten through eighth grades visit the library, but Vista does have a librarian who opens up the library for students to visit. Even during lunches and recesses, the librarian makes herself accessible by doing a mobile book cart. The librarian also implements reading activities to increase motivation and excitement for reading across grade levels.

Vista is a one-to-one device school. Prior to engaging with technology, students must work through the cyber safety modules that the technology department created. Some of the topics are how to use various Google resources, phishing, and even cyberbullying. These modules not only help students here at Vista, but are relatable to at home devices.

Before COVID 19, Vista partnered with Junior Achievement to bring financial literacy into the classroom. Each classroom was able to participate. A parent volunteer would teach all the lessons and it allowed students to walk away understanding how our society works on a daily basis. To hear a kindergartener talk about the principles is impressive, but Junior Achievement helps to bring financial literacy alive at all stages of learning.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

The Laveen School District uses the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) to assess students in kindergarten through eighth grades. One aspect of this assessment is that it is adaptive and will locate specifically where a student is performing on a particular skill. After each testing round, the classroom teachers use the data to best support students in the classroom. This is the primary way of collecting data on students at Vista. There are forms such as quick screeners, observations, and informal assessments as well created by the teacher or provided by the curriculum.

If a classroom teacher notices that a student is performing below grade level, they can seek out the Teacher Assistance Team (TAT). This is a group of teachers, coaches, support staff, and administrators that come together to create a plan for a student who may be struggling before taking the next steps of evaluating for special education.

Even though Vista is an accelerated school, there are students who perform below grade level. In order to support these students, Vista has built into its master schedule a specific time for interventions. When it comes to supporting students performing below grade level, it is important to meet them at the sub-objective level in order to prepare them for the main objective. This can be done through small group instruction as well as providing more opportunities to practice a skill. Due to the impacts of school closures because of COVID-19, Vista saw a need for more support staff to help the students fill in any missing gaps from not being able to be in a typical classroom. This is helpful since it allows classroom teachers more chances to provide small groups and support students at various levels.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Vista del Sur has students below grade level but for many students, they are above grade. This can be attributed to the fact that Vista teachers teach a grade level ahead in both ELA and Math. Many people think that only struggling students need support, but highflyers also need support to expand their thinking. There are times when the regular classroom activity or assessment is already challenging enough for the students at Vista, but when this is not the case, there are other ways of supporting these students.

Within the classroom, teachers support students who perform above grade by providing extension activities.

There are a variety of extension activities that a teacher can provide. For example in ELA, students could write an alternate ending to the story or write a story from a different point of view. Whereas in Math, a student who is learning about area, perimeter and scale factors could create a floor plan for a house they wish to build.

Another example to extend the learning, would be the Genius Hour in which students spend time learning a topic that they wish to learn more about. Since the end product shows what they have learned, it can be almost anything. Many students like this project because it gives students choice and freedom to do what they wish.

During WIN time, teachers can use the time to extend learning by asking students to create a product that can support students who are struggling. This could be done through creating a review worksheet or even a video recording of the student teaching a lesson. There is great power in peer to peer tutoring. The above grade level student can create a quiz, task or worksheet for other students to engage with.

3c. Special education:

The staff at Vista del Sur supports every student based upon their individual needs. This includes students on 504 plans, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and gifted students.

Vista teachers ensure that all students are learning and growing within their classroom. Students who have a 504 plan are supported in the classroom by our teachers. Armed with strategies, accommodations, and interventions developed by the special education team, they ensure our students' needs are met.

Our IEP students meet with our certified special education teacher based upon their specific needs as determined through an evaluation process. The special education teacher and other resource teachers are on the Vista campus several times a week. The special education team makes sure to work towards students' IEP goals through push-in and pull-out services. In addition, they ensure all staff are trained and aware of the accommodations to set them up for success. Because of the hard work of the special education team and students, Vista has exited many students from services.

The Gifted Program is a program to be celebrated. Vista currently has 188 students or 23% of the student population in the gifted program, and it is continuing to grow. Students can be identified for the gifted program by staff, parents or themselves. Our gifted coach has a dual role. She pushes into the classroom to ensure instruction is aligned with their needs as well as providing professional development to teachers. With this professional development, all teachers at Vista implement rigorous instructional practices throughout the day to meet their needs. These students also get support in social emotional skills specific to their giftedness. At Vista we believe in teaching the whole student, academic and social emotional, so they are able to make an impact.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

Working with Vista del Sur's English Language Learners (ELL) is such a rewarding task because almost daily you see the growth of a student's language skills. Vista has a high population of ELL students; however, the reclassification rate is high. The ELL students can be found in kindergarten through eighth grades. There is an ELL coordinator in the district and this coordinator works with a group of hard working assistants.

Before the school starts, the coordinator will meet with the classroom teachers and/or teams at Vista who have an ELL student. During this meeting, the coordinator will review where the student(s) are in the English learning development continuum as well as the goals for the student(s). Then once the school begins, the classroom teachers and support staff work with these students in the classroom as well as through support services for more of an individualized time. Not only are the classroom teachers working with these students, but the ELL coordinator and her assistants will come to Vista to work with these students as well. There is a great amount of support provided to ELL students since language unlocks many new doors here at Vista.

In February, Vista's ELL students take a state language test on their language development. Vista del Sur students usually reclassify from direct ELL services within the first year to Fluent English Proficient (FEP).

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

All students have the right to the best education, and this includes homeless and Native American populations. In the Laveen School District, there are two liaisons that support these populations of students. Hiring and supporting this department at the district office models to the staff of Vista the importance that these two populations deserve.

Before the school year starts, the Native American liaison works with local organizations as well as tribal nations to collect school supplies. Within the first week of school each Native American student is given a new backpack filled with various school supplies. Then, weekly the Native American liaison will visit Vista and work with the students through a tutoring program with a focus on reading and math. Since this is a huge undertaking for one person, the liaison has partnered with a local outreach program called Gila River. This outreach program also comes to Vista to provide extra resources for tutoring services.

Tutoring is one aspect of support, but the liaison also wants to build community. This is done through pack meetings. Once a month the liaison hosts a pack meeting where she invites all families within the district both Native American and non, to one of the schools for the meeting. During the pack meeting there is time to socialize and an educational aspect where one Native American nation is highlighted.

In the state of Arizona, there is a law that protects homeless children. During this difficult time, the liaison works with the family and other groups to make sure that a child's learning is not interrupted. This could include transportation, breakfast and lunch at school, and other supplies in order to be successful. Each situation is unique thus being flexible and open minded is important because everyone shares the same goal; educate the child.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Vista del Sur has a tiered behavior program to motivate students to continue to do their very best around the school and in the classroom. The first tier is Class Dojo. All students have a Class Dojo account, and when they are doing something aligned to ROAR (Responsible, Organized, Alert, and Respectful), they are given a point. Students can save up their points in order to spend them at the classroom or school store. The second tier is a tiger ticket. A tiger ticket is when a student does something above and beyond the regular classroom expectations. Some examples could be cleaning up the playground, bringing an extra dollar for a classmate on a dollar dress down day, or being a role model for others. Tiger tickets are read during the morning announcements, and students get a badge for their lanyard and a prize from the treasure box. The third tier is student of the month. Each month one student from each classroom is selected as the student of the month. When a student receives student of the month, the student and their family are invited to a special breakfast. These are the students who model all the school's expectations daily. Vista del Sur has awesome students, and it is important to celebrate these students.

When the last student is picked up, the school day may be over, but after school activities have just begun. At Vista, there is a wide range of clubs, such as Fine Arts Club, Art Club, Dungeons and Dragons Club, Girls on the Run, and the list continues. Clubs are important for the students of Vista because it allows students to have a safe place to express themselves, learn something new, and work with others from various grade levels. Even during remote learning, Vista teachers held club meetings. The club meetings during these times were done through Google Meets and the meetings were so much more important during those times since it gave students a chance to interact with others even when apart.

Because of the lack of a typical school year for the past two years, the Laveen School District saw the importance of having a strong social emotional curriculum at the school. The program that was implemented is Second Step. Second Step presents lessons on how to grow personal confidence, solve problems, and how to navigate the world effectively.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

“It takes a village to raise a child” and this is seen throughout Vista del Sur. Vista believes in a strong connection with its families as well as the Laveen community. Each family at Vista is asked to complete seven hours of service to the school. This could include helping during lunch, working in a classroom, helping before or after a school event or attending a parent meeting in the evening. Having 100% of families complete their hours is usually not a problem since Vista's parents are invested in their child's education and want to support.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is one area for school and parents to work together for the betterment and success of the school and the students. The PTO will create and sell spirit wear as well as organize the Scholastic Book Fairs. The PTO supports classroom teachers however possible. The third grade team was able to use funds from PTO to purchase Scholastic News magazines for their students to help bring in more informational texts and current events into their ELA and Social Studies classes.

Vista is special because they have a club just for the dads. This should be celebrated because dads play an important role in a young person's life. The club meets monthly and they discuss various items, such as how to support their child academically and socially. The main project of the dad's club is to plan and lead the Fall Festival each year which is a cherished tradition. The sports field is transformed into a mini carnival. There are inflables, water games, food trucks, and even booths from community businesses. It is always a fun time to see the whole Vista community come out and support both the Dad's Club and the school.

Vista is an active member of the Laveen community. Each year the school designs a float for the Laveen Community parade. Even though this is an extra project, the administration and staff believe it is important since it shows the Laveen community that the school cares about its members.

Partnering with local businesses is another way that Vista and the community work together. For example, the local ice cream shop donates coupons and even will volunteer to teach various financial literacy lessons to different grade levels. This connection allows students to see how different skills are used in the “real world”.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Happy teachers make happy students, which makes happy parents. The administrators work hard to make sure that each staff member on campus knows and feels that they are supported and welcome for as long as they are at Vista del Sur.

When new hires come to Vista, they are provided a week-long training both at Vista and at the district. This is a time for the administrators to provide an overview of Vista’s culture and climate and answer any and all questions before the rest of the staff come back to campus and the year begins. This is a time for the new hires to bond and create a cohort since they are experiencing Vista for the first time. Once the school year officially starts, new hires are paired with a returning staff member to be their mentor. Monthly, the mentor and new hire meet to discuss various topics to continue to grow professionally and learn more about the climate and culture of Vista.

All staff members attend professional development on half day Wednesdays which happen roughly twice a month as well professional development classes offered by other teachers and staff in the district. The district believes that as a community there is always room to grow and fine tune the art of teaching. The professional development sessions at Vista are dictated by topics that arise. For example, since Vista is the home to many gifted students, there may be a professional development on how to recognize a gifted student and how to work with a gifted student. Professional development at Vista can be led by any staff member who is willing to share what they know about a certain topic on the agenda.

Vista’s administrators are in charge of the daily schedule of the school, but they are only two people, thus they need help. At Vista there are two committees that support Vista administration. The committees are the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports) committee as well as the Leadership Committee. There is at least one member from each grade level and special area on each committee and they meet at least once a month. This is a great time for both administrators to hear from their staff as well as this group helps to make decisions for what is best for the school.

4. School Leadership:

The Laveen School District believes that all its staff have talents and worth that will benefit not only the staff on its campuses but the students as well. This belief is implemented at Vista Del Sur because the school prides itself in teamwork and working collaboratively to support parents, staff and students on campus. By allowing others to take on a leadership role at Vista, the staff member or even parents can take ownership of the task and feel proud of what is accomplished.

Teamwork is at the center of the leadership philosophy of Vista. This idea of teamwork can be seen with both parents and staff.

Parents: Vista has a Site Council and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that works with the administration to make the school a great place to learn. At these meetings, the principal presents the recent data as well as any trends that have appeared since the last meeting. Then as a group, the parents and administration work together to find solutions to some of the trends.

Staff: At Vista, there are opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles. One of the main roles is as team lead. The principal will meet with the team leads of kindergarten through eighth grade once a month and this is a great chance for the principal to hear from each grade level and how to support all teachers. The team lead will also lead the professional learning community (PLC) meeting.

Because of the school closures, the administrative role shifted because both administrators had to rely more on the teachers since both administrators have never taught remotely. This shift was strongly seen in the staff's professional developments. Teaching remotely was new for all teachers on campus but there were times when some teachers "cracked" the code on certain ideas and Vista's administration wanted to capitalize on this, thus there were more teacher lead sessions during these meetings.

The COVID-19 school closures were very challenging, but as usual Vista prevailed. The administrators were strategic and were sure to support their staff through lesson planning and even co teaching a lesson. Administrators have many tasks and responsibilities to juggle on a daily basis but during the school closures, many of those tasks were put on hold which allowed them the opportunity to focus closely on their teaching staff. Because of this focus on their staff, the current school is stronger.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The Vista del Sur vision anchors the staff in planning and delivering instruction whereas ROAR unites how staff and students interact with each other. ROAR stands for responsible, organized, alert and respectful. At Vista, there are many diverse people as well as diverse learners but respecting each other brings everyone together.

In the classroom, cultural awareness is seen in a couple of ways. The current ELA curriculum does a great job highlighting diverse authors and stories. For example, in the sixth grade ELA curriculum, students are taken to Vietnam by reading an excerpt from the novel "Listen, Slowly." While sixth graders read this excerpt, they are introduced to the Vietnamese language as well as a hint to the climate. This brief introduction to Vietnam may inspire a sixth grader to do research on the country to learn more. Because teachers have respect for the diverse learners of the school, they are flexible and open minded when a student is not able to participate in something. For example, many of the teachers will also invite Muslim student to rest in their rooms during Ramadan since they know these students are fasting from both food and water.

Since the Vista staff want to be cognizant of all diverse perspectives, the administration worked with an outside agency to teach not only the staff but the students and parents about diversity and how to be more aware of it. The presentation was the same for all parties but just tailored to meet the needs of the audience. The presenter wanted to share some of the definitions of words associated with diversity, explain how certain actions and/or phrases can be hurtful to different groups of people and create an action plan to do better. The presenter just touched the surface of this mountain, but a conversation was started.

Vista knew it could do more to celebrate the different groups at the school, so it held its first Cultural Night March 2022. The night was led by families who represented a different culture, and it was spread out around campus. Because the parents led the night, it is another example of parents taking an active role here at Vista. There were groups from each continent. Families who attended the night got to experience the different cultures through food, dance, and song. Everyone who attended left with newfound information.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Vista is an accelerated school with a wide range of student needs. Teachers and support staff work to make sure each student feels welcomed, receives the best education and feels valued for all 180 days of the school year. Vista's success comes from the relationships that are built with students and staff.

Relationships have to be cultivated. This can be seen before school starts when teachers call each family to welcome the student to their classroom. This phone call also establishes a positive teacher-parent relationship. Then when school starts, the first weeks of school is all about building and fostering relationships. This is done in a variety of ways. The first weeks of school are not the only time when relationships are cultivated. Relationships come in handy when a student is having a hard day be it with a lesson in the classroom or feeling less than perfect. As the year continues, teachers and students have opportunities to share about themselves through Vista traditions and even during units of study.

Once the relationship is sown, it is important to nurture the relationship. The easy way is to infuse different team building activities or other activities that promote relationship building into a lesson or within a week.

At Vista, it is common for our students to mask true feelings or lack awareness for how to socially respond in various situations. At Vista, there are two times when classroom teachers teach social emotional lessons. The first time is during community time and the second is the district adopted program Second Step. Community time is when the classroom teacher pulls everyone together to look at a skill that is focused on for the week. For example, cooperative learning could be a skill. With the skill, the teacher reviews the steps of the skill and then student's role play or list out phrases that can be used when talking with another peer and other adult in connection to the skill. For many of the students at Vista, they are like family since they have been at Vista since kindergarten and it is important to "check in" and reflect on how Vista students can be better for themselves and others.

At Vista del Sur when a student knows a teacher cares about them, they are more willing to work for the teacher.