

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Hidalgo Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 601 S. 2nd Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Hidalgo State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78557-3004

County TX

Telephone (956) 843-4225 Fax (956) 843-3158

Web site/URL https://www.hidalgo-isd.org E-mail ratinoco@hidalgo-isd.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\* Mr. Xavier Salinas E-mail xasalinas@hidalgo-isd.org

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

District Name Hidalgo Independent School District Tel. (956) 843-4401

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

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

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Rafael Garza

(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**

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The electronic signature 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 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not 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 as of October 1, 2020 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	18	17	35
K	28	18	46
1	17	29	46
2	19	17	36
3	28	16	44
4	20	18	38
5	23	26	49
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>	153	141	294

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 100 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0 % White
  - 0 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 13%

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	31
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	45
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	343
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 80 %  
235 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 92 %

Total number students who qualify: 271

8. Students receiving special education services: 14 %  
41 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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <u>11</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay      | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>38</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>10</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: 4
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.

	<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.	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
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 15:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	98%	96%	96%
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 2020.

<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.

Hidalgo Elementary is committed to preparing students for participation and immersion in global educational experiences and technologies while maintaining a nurturing environment for all.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Hidalgo Elementary has been operating under an asynchronous remote learning model with dedicated synchronous times embedded in the schedule. The school started the year with 100% remote teaching and learning. The school transitioned to face-to-face instruction using a concurrent model. The school has remained open and has been available for any families that choose an in-person, face-to-face education.

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

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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"Every Student, Every Chance, Every Day." Hidalgo Elementary holds high expectations for every student. High expectations and increased student engagement have led to increased academic achievement across all content areas. Teachers are committed to student success by helping them achieve their future academic, personal, and professional goals. Teachers and staff build and sustain positive relationships with families in the community. A community rich in history dating back to before the City of Hidalgo became part of the United States. Hidalgo was La Habitación when it was part of Mexico. John Young built the first mercantile store and renamed the city Edinburgh. It became a strategic center and major salt trail for Union and Confederate forces during the Civil War. Edinburgh became the county seat of Hidalgo County, incorporated in 1876, and changed its name to Hidalgo in 1885. Soon a small, two-story school building was constructed in 1852, leading to a much larger facility in 1890 to house elementary to high school students. From 1936 to 1960, the building only served a growing number of pre-primer to eighth-grade students, leading to a larger facility built by 1960. Gaining accolades and receiving excellent school ratings from the Texas Education Agency, Hidalgo Elementary attracted more students. By 2007, the school moved into a brand-new two-story facility to accommodate increasing enrollment. From an old two-story schoolhouse in the 1800s to a state-of-the-art building, Hidalgo Elementary has made quite the transformation, sitting majestically among the old historic city district, a symbol of progress and pride to generations of students who have walked its halls. Hidalgo Elementary serves a diverse population of students, many of whom come from first-and second-generation immigrant families. Some may see this as a challenge; however, Hidalgo Elementary sees it as an opportunity to harness the culture families bring from across the border. Together with multi-generational families living in the city, they work closely towards bridging languages, building relationships, and contributing to overall student success. Three years ago, Hidalgo Elementary was the only school in the district presented with an opportunity to form a partnership with the Hidalgo County Head Start program. This unique partnership requires sharing the building by providing pre-K 3- and pre-K 4-year-old classrooms fully staffed by Hidalgo County teachers and one Hidalgo Elementary teacher. Hidalgo Elementary jumped at the opportunity, opened its facility, and welcomed a Hidalgo County early childhood center. This partnership aligns with their long-standing belief in serving all students in the community. The Head Start program provides educational opportunities to qualifying pre-kindergarten students from surrounding communities in Hidalgo County. The program actively recruits students and creates a home-to-school pipeline to bring in as many qualifying children as possible. Building foundational skills and school readiness as early as possible contributes to increased overall achievement. Hidalgo Elementary and Head Start collaborates on special education evaluations, related services, and support the transition from preschool to kindergarten, focusing on early literacy, numeracy, oracy and refining their approaches to learning. This school exemplifies the concept of family, relationships, communication, and team. This united group of Hidalgo Elementary and Head Start staff, in partnership with every family, work synchronously to address the student needs, particularly social-emotional learning. Another critical strategy instrumental to student success is a strong commitment from every teacher, support staff, and administrator to the one-way/two-way immersion dual language program (DL). Hidalgo Elementary implements a strong dual-language program that promotes biliteracy, bilingualism, and biculturalism. Throughout the instructional day, the students at Hidalgo Elementary are intentionally immersed in rigorous academic vocabulary in two languages bolstering their academic success and student achievement goals. Hidalgo Elementary offers a viable and guaranteed Texas Essential Knowledge Skills (TEKS)-aligned curriculum for English and Spanish language arts, math, science, social studies, music, and P.E./Health. That elevates every student in a rigorous, technology-enhanced, culturally responsive environment. Academic progress is monitored weekly by teachers, and in-depth data digs, by grade level teams, and administration after-campus formative, summative, and district content-based and benchmark assessments. Monitoring is also ongoing through data walls, progress monitoring forms, data management software, focus TEKS, and program committee meetings such as the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC), 504, Admission, Review & Dismissal (ARD), and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) committees. These concerted efforts from all stakeholders lead to targeted daily interventions before, during, and after school. Student academic success and socio-emotional well-being are at the forefront of all staff, yet the school understands a child must feel safe and valued to learn. With fidelity to the TEKS, effective delivery of instruction, rigorous on-grade level lesson plans, professional learning community (PLC) meetings, and targeted professional development, Hidalgo Elementary maximizes all resources. With systems in place such as

restorative discipline, social-emotional learning, daily character education lessons, culturally responsive teaching, and digital citizenship, Hidalgo Elementary sets a high bar of excellence both academically and developmentally by educating the whole child.



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

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

The goal for Hidalgo Elementary has continually been to provide an ongoing, rich, and robust TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) based instruction aimed at advancing all students' academic success by providing an on-grade level, rigorous, aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessments- even from a distance. This past year through the pandemic, the school acted quickly and seamlessly to provide an enhanced remote and digital environment by providing synchronous and asynchronous instruction through well-planned, aligned, and engaging lessons and assessments. As soon as the pandemic began, the school sprang into action by providing training to staff on the approved digital lesson plan template for asynchronous instruction to finish the spring 2020 semester. Staff contacted families to review access to online lessons, including live links to materials, resources, and support tools for special populations. All staff worked as a team to provide a seamless transition from face-to-face to virtual teaching and learning. As the Spring semester ended and preparations began for the upcoming new year, the campus prepared teachers on the new Learning Management System (LMS) and prepared digital lessons that were clear, concise, focused, and aligned. One of the key strategies was differentiating between an age-appropriate LMS to meet the needs of the lower and upper-grade students. The primary focus was on ease of use while maintaining all-campus expectations and alignment with TEKS and Pre-K Guidelines. The staff then began to prepare lessons that would engage students in synchronous and asynchronous learning environments with high rigor and engagement. Each week, students received a checklist posted to the LMS to access their daily digital lessons in ELAR/SLAR, math, science, social studies, and electives. For example, in ELAR and SLAR, the teachers organized the tasks and activities, engaging them through a deep understanding of reading concepts and skills as laid out in the adopted TEKS-aligned scope & sequence and district instructional year-at-a-glance. The checklists guide students by completing reading and writing workshop activities, read-aloud, and foundational skills while deepening understanding of concepts relevant to the assignment. Hidalgo Elementary is committed to keeping things simple yet rigorous enough to maintain substantial academic achievement and close achievement gaps day after day. For example, the Math daily lesson plan outlined the objectives each week and guided students through weekly teacher-made videos. The math videos showed students through the breakdown of prime numbers, fractions, and thinking aloud through a multi-step word problem. Activities such as these led to increased engagement between peers. They elevated the discussion on tackling a two- to three-step word problem using academic math vocabulary to guide the conversation. This remote hands-on approach helped students in mastering concepts and in being successful on weekly online assessments. In Science virtual classrooms, teachers reinforced the TEKS by engaging students using 3-D simulation videos. This interactive learning approach included pair up -share up strategy, using breakout rooms for students to talk about the observation, using a checklist of vocabulary and questions to guide them. Using short formative quizzes to check for mastery provides valuable data for ongoing interventions and supports. In Social Studies class, teachers used a project-based instructional approach. Students participated in project presentations about the community, family history, and citizenship using online tools or other materials available from home. Some students created a family tree or invited a family member to speak on camera when learning about community jobs. Assessments looked differently during the pandemic. It included virtual presentations, photographs, paper-based and online tests, and video submissions. It included virtual presentations, photographs, paper-based and online tests, and video submissions. Assessments switched from paper-based to online formats across all grade levels. As a standard practice, grade level teams meet weekly to disaggregate, analyze, and interpret formative (quizzes, teacher-made tests, etc.) and summative (district benchmarks) data to draft interventions for learning gaps. Assessments switched from paper-based to online formats across all grade levels. Teachers took the time to guide students through the transition to online assessments. Hidalgo Elementary has adapted its daily operating schedule to maximize the number of synchronous minutes of instruction, including built-in time to implement intervention plans created by PLC teams. Maximizing daily synchronous instructional minutes allows teachers to manage small group breakout rooms to implement strategies such as guided reading, bilingual pairs, language supports, and assessment preparation. The school ensures that students served by special education have access to the same or equitable learning platform as their peers. In many cases, in an online environment, the teacher/student interactions are differentiated for students with additional learning needs by providing other supports, such as individualized telephone or video conferencing. The school always considers how current accommodations and modifications in a physical classroom (i.e., extra time,

redirection, small group) and what these would look like in a virtual environment. Instructional and related services such as speech, occupational/physical therapy, tutorials, and counseling have continued in a virtual environment through individually crafted scheduling.

**1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

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

The early childhood program at Hidalgo Elementary is an integrated approach that focuses on thematic units engaging early learners in all core subjects. This program significantly impacts language and literacy instruction in children's school readiness. The curriculum used serves as a platform to scaffold critical foundational concepts and skills in early literacy, fluency, numeracy, oracy, early writing, social-emotional, and technology. Due to COVID-19, teachers have had to modify their lesson delivery to address all these skills uniquely and engagingly. Teachers have online digital classes where they have a set routine to reinforce the learning and allow early childhood students to experience what they would be learning in person. Teachers have created each lesson into a video and an interactive PowerPoint to integrate into the live class. Students have multiple opportunities to give verbal and non-verbal interaction to show comprehension throughout the live course. One strategic decision made early on was using an interactive, early childhood LMS. When students have poor internet connection or other environmental challenges, they can see the teacher-made videos at their own pace and submit assignments via the LMS throughout the day. Teachers have created strong partnerships with parents by engaging with them as active participants in the learning process. Teachers and parents work collaboratively to meet the needs of students and solve any problems which may arise with technology and ongoing teaching and learning. Through the alignment using the Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines to the TEKS, teachers provide large and small group instruction through video conferencing break-out rooms to increase rigor and develop proficient readers across all disciplines. Students are provided with one-to-one instruction and interventions when needed to allow more opportunities to master content and foundational skills. When the Young Pirates reach third grade, they are academically ready to succeed in on-grade level TEKS.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Hidalgo Elementary believes that creative arts are crucial to healthy child development and incorporates this premise by exposing young minds to vibrant music education. The school provides educational field trips, university visits, community tours, and TEKS-aligned activities to create a well-rounded program for all pre-K3 to 5th-grade students. After virtual or face-to-face educational tours, students always reflect on their learning and dive into a creative art project to display or present what they learned. Other art projects are prominently displayed across halls, the cafeteria, or entrances to the campus, from family trees to college collages. An essential part of the curriculum at the school is music, and the excellent music teacher at Hidalgo Elementary has embraced the new remote teaching platform with passion and purpose. The teacher continues to build relationships and establishes routines with his students weekly. All students attend music at least once a week for 45 minutes. Bringing music to the lives of every student is an ongoing commitment across the district from pre-K3 to high school. In these times of high stress, music instruction allowed an avenue for students to express emotions and learn critical skills that transcend academics. Health and PE are part of the school synchronous and asynchronous schedule; all students, pre-K3-5th grade, attend five days a week for 45 minutes. The program promotes team-building and social skills that are important, especially during the pandemic, for the Young Pirates to stay united during virtual learning. Reinforcing safety protocols and coping skills in health class is critical and teaches students how to manage stress and take necessary precautions. TEKS-aligned technology integration has elevated to the top as a priority for the school. This integration has contributed to meeting the high-level achievement goals set by the campus. At the helm, the school librarian takes the lead to support students with library resources, adapt to recent technology advancements in virtual learning environments, and pass on the fundamental tenets of digital citizenship and literacy to students. She presents to all staff during PLCs, several times a year, to keep everyone updated on how to use the latest digital tools and maximize their use in the classroom.

Additionally, she holds digital tool presentations in the library for pre-K3-5th grade students and virtually

for remote learning students during their weekly scheduled, 45-minute library time. She leads the campus independent silent reading program, including the administration of pre-and post-assessments and the monitoring of reading levels every six weeks. The data she gathers is reported bi-weekly during grade-level PLCs. This data helps teachers adjust reading instruction and meet the individual needs of every student. The school counselor has been proactive in addressing social-emotional learning through virtual character education sessions delivered monthly to all classes. These sessions are on varying topics such as resilience, growth mindset, mindfulness, and self-reflection aligned with the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) TEKS. The social-emotional well-being of all pre-K3-5th grade students is critical in addressing the needs of every child and is a high priority for the school's diverse student population.

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

Hidalgo Elementary takes pride in its "Every Student, Every Chance, Every Day" philosophy. Data is consistently disaggregated at the campus level to drive instructional adjustments, determine interventions, and close achievement gaps for all subgroups across all grade levels. A dedicated "data room" houses and strategically displays test scores, gains, or losses for all student groups, by individual students, teachers, and subgroups after every district-wide local assessment. The data triggers "data discussions" and actions to work collaboratively and create rigorous targeted lessons and assign intervention groups with schedules to address specific TEKS designed to close achievement gaps. Intervention and enrichment groups are scheduled every day thirty minutes before school, forty-five-minute blocks built into the school day, and one hour after school. Migrant, English Learners, special education, 504, gifted and talented, and general education students, from below grade level to above grade level, receive specialized, targeted instruction during these intervention and enrichment periods. After the middle-of-the-year benchmarks, teachers strategize and analyze new data and adjust interventions and enrichment groupings. PreK3-2nd grade teachers provide forty-five-minute interventions for upper-grades twice weekly; they also offer forty-five minutes of interventions and enrichment to their students twice a week to build and maintain strong foundational skills. All stakeholders share the responsibility for the success of every student on campus. The teachers receive extensive training on the dual language program and follow it with fidelity. The migrant population is served by a Title 1 paraprofessional who monitors student progress and works alongside teachers to deliver academic services daily. Staff members collect data, review it with leaders and adjust the delivery of services. Priority for Service reports outline migrant student progress and are shared with district staff and monitored by the local region educational service center. Special education students from resource and inclusion classrooms to early childhood and life skills receive targeted instruction from a certified teacher and paraprofessional. They also receive related services from the Special Education Department itinerant staff. There is a 3:1 teacher-student ratio in the life skill units where individualized instruction focuses on the specific needs of each student. Analyzing pre-assessment and post-assessment data monthly, fidelity to the curriculum, and teachers making data-driven instructional adjustments has made the special education student population one of the strongest sub-groups in campus accountability. Hidalgo Elementary has implemented the co-teaching model where general education teachers and special education teachers plan and deliver rigorous, on-grade level lessons daily. Teachers attend extensive training to ensure they understand each component of the co-teaching model and begin a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership to support every student in the classroom. Both teachers are given additional lesson planning time, which is also used to monitor progress and adjust instruction as needed. This model has helped teachers deliver specialized instruction to meet each student's needs. The data shows that the co-teaching campus initiative is one of the key strategies which ensures Hidalgo Elementary maintains achievement gap scores to lower than ten percentage points across all student subgroups. The school's success begins and ends with "Every Student, Every Chance, Every Day!"

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

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

At Hidalgo Elementary, motivation is a critical component used to keep students engaged and master concepts skills delivered through rigorous quality lessons across all content areas. Teachers work hard to create hands-on lessons paired with academic supports such as visuals and language supports which help students reach mastery in daily lessons. Despite the challenges of a pandemic, the school embarked on a journey to "stay connected" with every student and parent. All stakeholders work collaboratively to build a positive environment where every child is connected to a teacher, a counselor, nurse, parental liaison, and the leadership team. The school's vital strategy to maintain the learning community engaged is the staff's complete operational understanding and mastery of the new Learning Management System (LMS). The instructional team understands that to maintain an adequate level of engagement, the design of digital lessons housed within the LMS must be easy to navigate, be motivating, and inclusive while addressing rigorous, on-grade level content. With continued efforts across every grade level, every student is provided differentiated TEKS-aligned instruction and formative and summative assessment to monitor skill mastery and engagement. Hidalgo Elementary stands behind quality teaching and learning and meets the social-emotional needs of every child. All staff members understand that utilizing motivational activities, building a strong school community, and encouraging students to take ownership and pride in everything they do are critical strategies in stimulating students' academic, social, and emotional growth. For example, by asking students to invite friends to join the school reading club, they develop reading skills at higher and deeper levels. Still, students also share a positive experience contributing to social-emotional growth using friendship, mentorship, and shared interests. A climate of high expectations, cultural responsiveness, diversity, and college and beyond goal planning is seen and felt across the campus. Hidalgo Elementary continually aims at improving its processes to ensure a positive school culture and student academic, social, and emotional growth by providing ongoing activities such as recognition, customer service, and mental health awareness. The staff collaborates daily on creating a unified vision by making collaborative decisions, following a viable and guaranteed curriculum, engaging in deep discussions, sharpening their caring attitudes, celebrating responsive leadership, and providing ongoing positive support for all students. These cumulative processes, adhering to their "Slow and Steady Wins the Race" philosophy, step by step, action by action, pulls in a constant direction toward a solid academic and social-emotional whole child.

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

Hidalgo Elementary prides itself on its highly engaged and active family and community program. The campus has a dedicated parent liaison position that builds strong relationships with the community and recruits parent volunteers who assist the staff and support daily classroom activities. The parent volunteers help teachers create materials and resources for classroom instruction and actively participate in all school and community events, which, in turn, has had impact on the academic achievement of their children in school. Hidalgo Elementary family and community engagement is a priority that starts early in the school year with annual Meet the Teacher and Curriculum Nights which help establish rapport and communication between school and home. Hidalgo Elementary shares its resources with the Head Start program to build relationships and foster unity between the campus and the county educational program. The campus parent liaison and parents from both entities work together to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for all stakeholders. Hidalgo Elementary has established strong relationships with local cities and municipalities by actively participating in community-sponsored events. The school counselor has developed partnerships with local business facilities to accommodate tours that are intentionally connected to grade-level curriculum and real-world applications aligned to the TEKS. School participation in events like Borderfest, the annual city clean-up, and the festival of lights allow students and the school to get involved with the community and maintain strong relationships. These activities are fun-filled and promote social-emotional awareness between students and their peers. Hidalgo Elementary strongly believes students need to be exposed to various career choices and role models who can inspire their future careers. Local community members are scheduled throughout the year to come and speak to students about their jobs. The school has continued to engage parents and the community throughout the pandemic with web-based programs that allow for remote communication. Hidalgo Elementary has remained open and available to any student and

parent who needs assistance in the array of services the school provides. Teachers keep daily phone logs and quickly report any interruption in remote instruction, attendance issues, and concerns with any family who need immediate assistance. The leadership team will respond promptly to resolve problems and minimize potential learning loss. The parent liaison sets up monthly meetings to inform parents on essential topics such as changing CDC, local and state guidelines, status changes within the school environment, mental health, vaccine updates, Child Find, etc.

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

Nurturing a school culture where teachers feel valued, supported, and accomplished in their craft is a shared responsibility at Hidalgo Elementary. Aligning to these basic tenets, the staff participates in a learning environment of meaningful relationships, open communication, collegiality, teamwork, and a robust support system for teacher growth. Developing an intentional, well-articulated, and relevant professional development plan to support the campus' student achievement goals requires a collaborative effort from teachers and instructional leaders on campus. Grade level instructional teams, including the principal, assistant principal, and lead teacher, meet weekly in professional learning communities (PLCs) to analyze assessment data, recognize patterns of potential gaps, plan interventions, and explore evidence-based options for professional learning. Four times a year, the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee meets to review student needs and plan necessary adjustments based on teacher feedback. During these meetings, the committee discusses the grade-level teams' recommendations and revises the CIP to reallocate resources to address those identified needs. This process is not new and is well-established and valued within the school's culture. By following this process, the instructional leadership, PLC, and CIP teams ensure the resources used to address the professional learning needs are intentional, relevant, fully embraced by the teachers, and aligned to the schools' improvement goals. This year, transitioning to remote teaching and learning brought many challenges and opportunities to grow in technology integration. Based on those challenges communicated by teachers, leaders received training on delivering remote instruction, and in return, they provided training for their staff on delivering virtual exemplary lessons. Hidalgo Elementary teachers also received remote training in high yield strategies, sheltered instruction, dual language, co-teaching models, social-emotional learning, and the use of the Learning Management System (LMS), among others. Every six weeks, teachers participate in vertical alignment meetings with colleagues from other district elementary schools. At these meetings, teachers collaborate, share best practices, and brainstorm new ideas to elevate their practice. The product of these teachers' collaborations, such as digital lesson plans, intervention strategies, and paper-based instructional packets, is key in maintaining a high level of student attendance, high levels of student engagement, and academic achievement across all student subgroups. Without a doubt, nurturing a culture of stakeholder empowerment, professional growth, staff well-being, and appreciation for each other's talents is integral in achieving performance goals and keeping a healthy school climate. The school staff works as a team toward a common mission, where all students learn and master on-grade level concepts and skills.

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

The campus leadership at Hidalgo Elementary is rooted in collaborative action. The leadership philosophy of the school principal is that of relationship building grounded in synergy. The principal believes that a unified team works together to achieve the campus and district goals and objectives for all students. The principal and his leadership team work diligently to create a safe learning environment and set clear and specific expectations using a common language. Together they coordinate targeted and ongoing professional development for teachers, including instructional materials and resources, oversee mentor systems, and co-teaching opportunities that help students achieve their full potential. The principal and assistant principal do remote walkthroughs with a weekly designated area of focus from content and language objectives to differentiated instruction. Every week, on Fridays, the leadership team meets at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the week-at-a-glance for weekly professional learning communities (PLCs). All staff members meet weekly at 1:00 p.m. through video conferencing, review the current weekly achievements and share the upcoming weekly expectations, including data analysis, goals, assessments, and implementation of safety protocols. PLCs include a best practices portion where teachers prepare and demonstrate digital breakthroughs and challenges. Aside from monitoring discipline management, attendance, and registration, the assistant principal (AP) coordinates virtual staff development, lesson planning sessions, online training, and

meetings.

Despite the pandemic, instructional planning continues to be a focus in a virtual setting. Technology integration, such as document cameras, became an important teaching tool in enhancing presentations to students. The assistant principal worked diligently on ordering safety materials, placing them in strategic areas, and creating a schedule to put staff on two teams. If one group ends up quarantined, the other team could seamlessly take over. The school counselor plays an active part in the collaboration of services provided for every student. She works closely with all staff to provide academic and social-emotional supports to every child. Her robust monthly calendar reflects the numerous strategies employed to support educational services, classroom instruction, tutorials, gifted/talented and English Learner testing, character education, and support social-emotional learning. The lead teacher is a former student and effective teacher who serves as a teacher mentor and instructional leader. During the pandemic, she has led the school in navigating the new learning management system, designing digital lesson plans, and enhancing remote instruction, which increased student engagement and mastery across all subjects and electives. She also leads PLCs to target literacy and math and to improve lesson plans.

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

Hidalgo Elementary is committed to addressing the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff through culturally responsive teaching and learning. The one-way and two-way dual language program model is a crucial strategy of the Hidalgo Elementary educational program since its adoption 20 years ago. The effectiveness of this robust and research-based program has helped students achieve bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism and an enhanced awareness of cultural diversity, leading to high levels of academic achievement. Hidalgo Elementary stands out amongst the other schools in the district because 90% of the staff are from the community. The staff's unique makeup represents the students and community demographics they serve, but it goes beyond that. Many staff members have gone through the same cultural and educational adjustments which the students and families are still going through today. They bring stability and knowledge, which is invaluable and is the driving force behind high achievement. They celebrate students' and families' cultural diversity and leverage those unique experiences to build strong foundational skills. Hidalgo Elementary staff is, without a doubt, the school's most incredible resource. The students are the beneficiaries of this great resource, as is evidenced by steady academic growth and continuous closing of learning gaps across all subgroups. Hidalgo Elementary ensures equity and cultural responsiveness is at the forefront when committees meet to select textbook adoptions, educational software, and library resources. The school has an equitable representation of library books in English and Spanish. The school secured technology equipment and hotspots and equitably distributed them to all students on campus who needed them. Situated just blocks away from a major international corridor, Hidalgo Elementary understands the commitment and sacrifice many students experience when leaving their extended families behind, across the border, searching for education and opportunities. The school has a partnership with a local newspaper and receives complimentary copies weekly. Reading while covering current events in social studies and health classes, bringing awareness that sparks conversations about what is happening outside their classrooms. Being culturally responsive is a "norm" in the school and across the district. Teachers receive ongoing training in creating and aligning culturally relevant materials and resources into their lesson plans across all grade levels and disciplines. Culturally responsive questioning, cultural awareness, and respect for others are monitored through daily walkthroughs and the use of dual language checklists to ensure equity and authentic responsiveness to student diversity.

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

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The one most instrumental, long-standing practice Hidalgo Elementary has leveraged successfully has been the strategy of effective communication to keep connected with every student, family, and staff member. The school has consistently created a supportive environment focused on increasing academic, social, and emotional success through strong school connectedness established through effective communication strategies. Geographically, the school sits in the center of town, with most students walking to and from school. Many of the parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were students themselves at Hidalgo Elementary, and some became teachers working at the school or within the district. This connectedness and strong ties are mutually beneficial to all stakeholders. Keeping effective lines of communication between leaders, teachers, support staff, and across to every family has remained a constant, regardless of what is happening outside the school doors. Staff stability is a great asset; they know the strengths and challenges of every student, family, and community as a whole. In addition, students are familiar with the teachers even before their first day of school. Leveraging established communication channels during the pandemic has propelled the school into action and led to high achievement for all students. Leaders trained teachers and prepared them on enhancing digital tools to support quality lessons and remote instruction. Teachers worked closely to support each other as they refined their digital skills. The news of a pandemic rattled everyone, but the resiliency and strong bonds of the school community promoted a positive culture of increased connectedness resulting in high engagement, high attendance, increased achievement, and competency to overcome challenges. The school contacted families daily, so they felt supported and were able to help their children navigate their new learning environment at home. Parents were informed about virtual programs and services for their children, safety protocols, accessing online assessments, digital lessons, and paper packets for extra support. Hidalgo Elementary worked hard to streamline the implementation of its learning platform, aligned the mandated TEKS curriculum, and focused on targeted skills for students in need. Virtual discussion forums are often scheduled between leaders, teachers, and parents to listen effectively, question and reflect on student needs and act quickly. Ongoing effective communication has always been strong, but during the pandemic, it elevated even more. The school adopted the slogan Strong Apart, Stronger Together, which exemplifies effective communication. Hidalgo Elementary's social-emotional bond with the community is deep-rooted, and the success of all students is a testament to that bond.