

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

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

School Mailing Address 2700 Avenida Rancho Viejo  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Brownsville State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78521-0053

County Cameron County

Telephone (956) 547-4230 Fax (956) 547-4232

Web site/URL http://bisd-us-gallegos.weebly.com/ E-mail tvillafuerte@bisd.us

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. Rene Gutierrez E-mail rene.gutierrez@bisd.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Brownsville Independent School District Tel. (956) 548-8000

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. Eddie Garcia  
(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.)

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

54 TOTAL

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

- 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

- 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	31	31	62
K	29	30	59
1	37	42	79
2	29	29	58
3	32	37	69
4	31	28	59
5	31	34	65
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>	220	231	451

\*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: 10%

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	33
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	49
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	514
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 56 %  
251 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 56 %

Total number students who qualify: 251

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %  
87 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>3</u> Autism                   | <u>27</u> Multiple Disabilities                |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                 | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness           | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay      | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance    | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment       | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>12</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: 10
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	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 20:1

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	98%	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 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.

The vision of Dr. Ruben Gallegos Elementary is to produce quality educational experiences in a safe and positive environment, in order to produce successful students who will become productive citizens.

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.

Gallegos Elementary began the school year with students working 100% virtually. After the first six weeks the school began to open its doors for face-to-face learning, and invited students that were having connectivity problems, or struggling with instruction. Beginning the second semester the doors were open to any students who preferred face-to-face instruction, but still offered virtual learning for those students who choose to stay at home.

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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Dr. Ruben Gallegos is located on 2700 Avenida Rancho Viejo in Brownsville, Texas. This is the main street that leads into Cameron Park. The schools' namesake is Dr. Ruben Gallegos a migrant worker who became the first administrator to open a migrant school fully funded by the federal government. Aerodynamically, the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know it, so it goes on flying anyway. Given the odds that are stacked against our students, Gallegos Bees are not meant to succeed in comparison to their peers in other communities. Most of our students live in Cameron Park, historically the poorest community in America. It is a Brownsville "colonia" where people struggle every day to get by on a little more than \$4,000 a year. The promise of an education is the main source of Cameron Park's optimism, as quoted in the Texas Monthly January 2003 publication. However, our bees continually beat the odds that are stacked against them and prevail in the end because they are never told that they can't. Our students are uplifted by the administration, teachers, and staff, and are encouraged every day by the friendly and educational environment that is obvious at Dr. Ruben Gallegos Elementary.

Our campus has implemented key strategies to encourage and challenge our students to develop their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. Teachers here play many roles depending on each individual student's needs. The administration, teachers and staff play the part of a mom, dad, counselor, nurse, and cheerleader. We try to be the best role models for our students to show them that anything is possible if they set their mind to it! Academically the school provides tutorials, Saturday academies, and the teachers have even gone to the extent of using their own time to accommodate the students' needs. Physically the students are encouraged to follow healthy habits which include physical/social emotional activities such as participating in team sports including basketball, volleyball, and track. This is a perfect opportunity for the students to be active, mingle and acquire the social skills needed for everyday life. Staff members also attend the events to support and build positive relationships between the students, families and Gallegos Elementary.

Something that sets our school apart and contributes to its unique character is a garden club which was founded by a retired Gallegos teacher. He donated the materials and built a pergola where the students can appreciate nature and it provides them a learning opportunity through hands-on experiences on the life cycle of the plant. This provides them exposure to working as a team and how to care for and appreciate nature. The campus also has a yearly event where grandparents are invited to participate in a read aloud with their grandchild, and they also mingle with other grandparents. This activity makes our students feel proud of their Hispanic culture and recognizes the importance of the role grandparents play in their life and education. In many instances the grandparents are the student's primary caretakers. What really makes this school unique is the teachers who are extremely dedicated and work long hours to ensure that their students get the best education possible so that they can succeed in life.

Dr. Ruben Gallegos Elementary has adapted to COVID-19 challenges. Gallegos Elementary is following the School Re-Opening plan set by the Brownsville school district and implements campus health and safety protocols. Teachers and students wear masks and students have desk shields. Our school has established an excellent and safe learning environment which offers Guidance/Counseling, Health Services, and Food/Nutrition Services. Gallegos Elementary has a full-time security officer who also serves as a role model. He ensures the safety and security of our educational environment. Parents were given the options for their children's education throughout the year. Students could receive virtual on-line or on-campus instruction. Our school has offered face-to-face instruction since September as well as online learning. Teachers put together packets of schoolwork and offered curbside pickup for those that preferred paper and pencil work. All students were issued a tablet or laptop for online learning. Students that did not have access to the internet were also provided with a hot spot. The district's school buses were equipped with internet hotspots and parked around the neighborhood to offer free internet. Our campus has been successful at offering both virtual and on-campus instruction, yet the campus attained the most enrollment for face-to-face instruction among district elementary schools. Teachers dedicated their personal time to learning all the different platforms so they could prepare the students and their parents for an unprecedented school year. Despite all these challenges, Gallegos Elementary School has been nominated for the Blue Ribbon School

Award, a distinct and true honor for all of us working together to provide a future for all of our Gallegos Bees.



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

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

#### 1. Core Curriculum:

Gallegos Elementary has established a goal that all of our students will excel in the area of reading & language arts. We have implemented the 3-Tier Reading model with fidelity in an effort to improve student literacy and communication skills. Our instruction is based on the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), ELPS (English Language Proficiency Standards) and CCRS (College and Career Readiness Standards).

Our ELAR program implements 120 minutes of daily uninterrupted virtual instruction. Teachers provide whole group and small group (based on ability) instruction. They also implement learning centers, in order to provide differentiated instruction, as they target students with the most need. PK-3rd grade focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. PK uses the CIRCLE (Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education) program for direct instruction and they use a diagnostic evaluation CPALLS (Circle Phonological Awareness, Language & Literacy System) at the beginning, middle and end of year and OWL (Opening the World of Learning) to progress monitor. Kinder-2nd grade uses the district adopted curriculum. They use TPRI (Texas Primary Inventory/Tejas Lee "El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas") at the beginning, middle and end of year and to progress monitor. Our 3rd-5th grade students also use the district adopted curriculum for their direct instruction and their assessments are curriculum based. We do incorporate district benchmarks for K-5th grade students and we periodically assess in 2nd -5th with end of the six weeks assessment. Our instruction is based on assessment results and its data driven from our diagnostic, curriculum based and district benchmarks. Our teachers use writing academy resources to enable students to produce compositions from K-5th grade. We use a campus purchased computer-based learning program for K-5th grade. Students take a diagnostic assessment and their assignments are based on their results. Teachers are able to create STAAR formatted assignments and assessments based on results for additional practice and to monitor for understanding. This product is available for K-5th in reading, language arts, math and science.

Our mathematics curriculum is also TEKS & CCRS based. In K-5th grade, teachers provide 90 minutes of math instruction. The focus is on numerical representations and relationships, computations and algebraic relationships, geometry and measurements, data analysis, and financial literacy. Our teachers use the district adopted math curriculum throughout. We do use whole group and small group centers to differentiate instruction and target student's needs based on ability. PK-1st uses assessment to inform their instruction. In 2nd -5th, students take a checkpoint assessment each six weeks. Our students have multiple opportunities to use the purchased software to improve their computation skills, problem solving and critical thinking abilities. Student's assignments are created based on assessment results. The computer-based learning program we use facilitates a teacher's delivery of instruction and thus making a direct impact on student learning.

The science plan at Gallegos Elementary is TEKS based and we do implement our district adopted science curriculum. Teachers follow our district frameworks set up by the Curriculum Department. We implement inquiry based lessons, hands on activities and incorporate technology in our lessons. Science labs, hands on activities, vocabulary development and expository text is incorporated in our daily and weekly lessons. Our teachers provide multiple examples of how science is applied into a student's everyday life and thus fosters their discovery. Students are assessed through weekly tests (K-2nd) and end checkpoint assessments (once a six weeks) and district benchmarks for 3rd-5th grade. Based on the assessment results, student assignments are created and monitored through supplemental computer-based learning programs. Our students apply what they've learned by participating in Science Fair, Mini-Makers Studio (engineering activity), Coding Club, Chess, Nature Club and Destination Imagination.

#### 1d. Social Studies

Our social studies program at Gallegos Elementary is TEKS based and we do use our school district adopted NBRS 2021

curriculum which emphasizes United States and Texas history. The focus is to have students become productive, responsible, independent members of society. We do participate in Kids Voting each October in which students learn about voting in our democracy. Teachers stress that the student vote counts and the ballot topics are geared toward student interest in PK-2nd for example: What is their favorite food? What is their favorite color? etc... In 3rd-5th, the ballots include current candidates running for public office. Our teachers incorporate expository text including: newspaper and magazine articles, biographies and political cartoons. We use text features to facilitate vocabulary development including: charts, captions, photos and captions. Our teachers incorporate Studies Weekly that include cross curricular lessons. Students learn about historical figures, current events and local celebrations like Charro Days and Dia de los Muertos. They are assessed through weekly tests, compositions and creative projects to display for parents and the school community.

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

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

**Pre-Kinder Curriculum:**

The core curriculum includes Opening the World of Learning (OWL), center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE), the scope and sequence provided by the district, the Ignite by Hatch, the Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines, the CIRCLE and OWL progress monitoring. The curriculum addresses all students including the special needs population and the English Language Learners. They use a variety of data to group their students to enhance their personal educational needs. Students are taught through whole group and small group instruction. They are able to improve their oral language and vocabulary development using the themes provided within the curriculum. Through the thematic units the teachers are able to integrate learning centers. Students are exposed to all areas of curriculum. In addition, they target letter and number fluency through activities provided by the curriculum. Phonological activities are implemented throughout the school day.

In order to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19, they had to learn the different platforms including a variety of very effective apps. At the beginning, students had limited access to technological devices provided by the school. Once this issue was resolved, their next challenge was to train the students and parents on how to use the platforms. The following challenge that was encountered was to engage the students to the online classes. they had to incorporate movement activities within their lessons and shorten the length of face-to-face instruction in order to maximize the students' engagement. They included three key lessons throughout the day, which included literacy, read aloud and math. They also created packets every six weeks using their curricula to provide hands on learning activities at home.

The Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines provide a means to align Pre-K programs with the Texas Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which are the state standards at each grade level.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Physical education at Gallegos Elementary is taught three times a week for 45-minute classes to PreK-5th grade and is a program aligned to the PE TEKS to promote a healthy and active life style. As you know, physical education aims at the holistic development of children by providing students with opportunities to grow and develop as young adults to be useful for the society. It is important for them to know that one of the most important requirements for growing into healthy adulthood is the physical activity and growth which supports cognitive development. It is, therefore, necessary that all children at Gallegos get adequate opportunities to participate in free play, informal and formal games, sports, and organized team activities.

The school library media program is offered to students once a week in grades Pre-K3 - fifth grade it provides information literacy instruction through creative and innovative activities. For example, in order to reach the students that are learning from home and the ones that are coming face-to-face, the library staff

created monthly reading choice boards. Students could listen to an author's read aloud, learn and explore on current topics and celebrations such as the Perseverance rover that landed on Mars. The library program continues to provide access to carefully curated collections of current materials in a variety of formats, including curation of our open educational resources. Students have access to both a physical copy of a book and an electronic book or eBook. With the assistance of the school and district they have provided a device for every student.

The Fine Arts Music program at the elementary level is offered to PreK3-fifth grade once a week for 45-minute classes in order to prepare students in the basics of reading music as well as playing several instruments and incorporating movement. It is a program that is aligned to fine arts TEKS that helps the students develop the love for this amazing art. Teachers were trained in all types of technology and platforms to instill comfort. The music program had adopted a curriculum four years ago which was a predecessor of what was to come without knowing it. The curriculum was already being taught online through the use of a projector. The only thing that differed was that the students needed to create their own music accounts. This is exactly what they did, and so the journey began for each student. The music curriculum contains some instruments that can be played virtually. The music teacher felt the need to come up with other innovative ways of having students experience what was now unallowed. For example, for reading and playing the rhythm, instead of using classroom instruments, students were given an individual disposable cup which belonged only to each student, with which they would use as an instrument. Instead of having student partners, now they had to remain in their own space in which no one but him/herself was allowed. Music students are being serviced both online and face-to-face, it has been a challenge but nothing they cannot overcome as the Gallegos Elementary Bees.

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

#### Academic Supports:

Gallegos Elementary teachers tailor instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of various student populations. Particular attention is directed at the various special populations including special education, students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), migrants, and homeless youth. Some of the key academic supports provided by Gallegos teachers include collaborative learning strategies such as think pair/share activities, small group instruction, one-to-one interventions, hands-on science labs, and group competitions and presentations. Aiming to be the best for success as our student motto professes, students at Gallegos Elementary are catered and encouraged through various avenues to meet their individual needs by a team of dedicated and professional educators.

They also provided scaffolding and adjusted the instruction during the day by doing small group tutorials using interactive journals, and Tier II small group interventions. In addition, Gallegos teachers spiral the curriculum several times during the year in each core subject so that students are revisiting complex concepts using similar group activities. The students performing below grade level are placed on a Response to Intervention (RTI) plan. These students are given an additional thirty minutes for Tier 2 instruction aside from the regular classroom instruction where they receive interventions based on their deficiencies. If the students do not show academic improvement, they move on to Tier 3 where the teachers provide intensive and individualized interventions several times a week. After 12 weeks of being on an RTI, it is determined if the student will need a referral to special education services to receive further supports.

Students performing above grade level are recommended to the Gifted and Talented Galaxy Program where they receive enhanced instruction based on their gifted area(s). Throughout the year, these students work on leadership skills, technology, and research to develop a year-round project named the Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP). The TPSP comprises a set of performance standards, curricula, and assessments for differentiating instruction and deepening

academic learning. This project follows the students from kindergarten through high school. These students are encouraged to participate in more challenging competitions like Destination Imagination (DI), science fair and chess. These competitions allow students the freedom to explore a wide range of ideas, skills and techniques while solving challenges.

For students in special education or those with disabilities, equal academic and social opportunities are provided so that equity is ensured with the proper resources based on the needs of each individual child. These students are bound to an Individual Education Plan (IEP) where their accommodations are clearly set out for the teachers to follow. Students receiving special education services are reexamined every year through the Annual Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee which in turn determines if students need more services such as Inclusion, Resource, Content Mastery, or adjustments in their accommodations. Students are monitored through benchmarks and six weeks reports to determine if plan needs to be adjusted to meet the individual needs.

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

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

#### Engaging Students

Due to the unfortunate events of this past year and the ongoing pandemic, the staff at Dr. Ruben Gallegos Elementary were led to make some critical instructional adaptations. These changes were essential in order to accommodate the students not only academically, but emotionally as well. Although this transition was something that no one expected, teachers and staff quickly got on board with making the necessary adjustments.

Prior to COVID, the teachers used collaborative learning strategies such as pair/share activities, small group instruction, one-to-one interventions, hands-on labs, and group competitions. They also provided scaffolding and adjusted the instruction during the day by doing small group tutorials using interactive journals, and Tier II small group interventions. While these strategies provided ample opportunities to reinforce skills being taught during instruction, it was evident that once remote learning began, this was not going to be as easily attainable.

The school district had previously purchased several learning platforms that most of the teachers had not become acclimated with. However, once they were left with having to adapt to them and completely revamp their teaching styles, they found that these applications not only aligned with their TEKS standards but were teacher and student friendly. They do a great job of introducing and implementing the content, but also allow the students to interact through the use of digital activities. Once the teachers got accustomed to using a variety of application and online resources, everyone found that they were very instrumental in providing sufficient academic support and engagement. Gallegos Elementary is utilizing nearly a dozen of these amazing applications that made the transition to digital learning run smoothly. With their tablets, laptops, and even Clear Touch interactive panels, streaming the information to the students became more intuitive and productive.

Perhaps an even bigger concern and challenge was the emotional and social well-being of these students. As educators, they are aware that their job goes beyond the instructional aspect. The majority of their population is in dire need of emotional and social support. Pre COVID, the campus and staff would reward and motivate them by providing treats, hosting award ceremonies, attending field trips, recess, and other rewards. With remote learning, teachers had to find creative ways to provide this essential need to their students. For certain holidays and events, we create interactive slides. Teachers also share many pictures of student work on several platforms. Building rapport with each individual student became a top priority. Constant reminders to their students that they can message them for anything that they need, was a must.

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

#### Engaging Families and Community:

At Gallegos Elementary parent and community participation is essential for student success and school improvement. During these unprecedented times we have opened different communication platforms with our parents and the community. To communicate with our parents, we have established accounts in several platforms and social media approved by the district. We post messages on a daily basis on information, activities, tutorial schedules, lunch pickup, community resources and support organizations. We provide students with a monthly parent calendar of school events, activities, and other important information. Students currently attending face-to-face get a hard copy of the calendar to take home, and students learning virtually as well as, parents get a copy through the teacher's and counselor's education platforms. We also work with community resources to give students presentations on different topics such as bullying, self-confidence, college and career opportunities, self-esteem, anti-drug programs and other important topics. In addition, our parent liaison offers parent presentations on importance of reading, college planning, bullying, middle school transition, suicide prevention, parenting skills and drug prevention. All these presentations are

conducted virtually at this time. During our regular school year, Gallegos Elementary administration and teachers work with community organizations such as the city's Police Department to provide backpacks and school supplies to our most needy students. We also partner up with the neighborhood's Community Cultural Center to give Thanksgiving dinner donations for our most needy families. In December, we hold a Christmas dinner in partnership with a local community organization to provide a sit-down dinner for about 75 of our most needy families. Families attend this dinner where they participate in a drawing to receive Christmas gifts generously donated by our faculty and staff. For the past nine years, our school holds a fundraiser to give all students a Build-a-Bear for Christmas. We also have the support of our school's namesake, Dr. Ruben Gallegos, who provides the means to give our students pizza parties for attendance and field trips for their academic and extracurricular participation. Our faculty and staff are also rewarded for their hard work and dedication with luncheons, gifts and treats during the school year and teacher appreciation week. All these activities and donations provide our students, parents, and teachers the support for their academic, social and emotional success. Gallegos Elementary knows that when students' needs are satisfied they have a greater opportunity to be successful in school. We have to look at the whole child and make sure our programs meet their needs.

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

Having to transition many years of teaching experience to distance learning was not an easy task this school year. However, Gallegos Elementary school was able to offer multiple opportunities that in return helped teachers train on different platforms to prepare for the delivery of virtual lessons. The professional development concentrated on delivery on instruction, breakout sessions, and submission of lessons virtually. The school purchased tablets for the lower grades, and laptops for upper grades for those households in need. The school administration noticed the need of new and updated devices as they logged on to the classes for walk-throughs. Administration purchased 75" ClearTouch screens with adaptable cameras for better quality in image and sound for some classrooms. Teachers were supported by each other having after school trainings and learning new ways the panels could be utilized for instruction. This was a new way of learning for many and, of course, many were not prepared for it. The district suggested, and as a campus they agreed, that lessons would be assigned through the same software programs for lower grades and other programs for upper grades. That way teachers at each grade level would know what software would be emphasized in their trainings.

As a campus, the year usually begins with teachers being trained in district-wide strategies addressing testing data, technology, and instructional strategies for subpopulation. The focus always being on improvement from the prior years' data. This year all professional development was done virtually at the beginning of the year. Administration undergo training yearly to address any changes in the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, Special Education and State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness criteria. Every six weeks teachers attend in-services provided by the district to address achievement gaps in Reading, Math, Science and Social Studies. The dean of instruction will also attend various trainings on writing, reading and math strategies and then have turn around trainings for teachers. Every six weeks teachers will plan by grade level to gauge the success of their students and to plan on objectives that need to be recycled into the next six weeks. Through the year teachers have the opportunity to attend district-wide in-services to learn instructional strategies: Dyslexia conference, GT Conference, Literacy Conference and Technology Conference. Teachers have a yearly requirement of dedicated hours of professional development in core areas.

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

School Leadership:

Gallegos Elementary community has a reputation of a close-knit school. That is why the leadership here has to present a positive, proactive, and caring approach. The leadership team has the responsibility of engaging all members involved in the education of our students toward meeting the rigorous academic goals set for them. School leadership here at Gallegos consist of a principal, assistant principal, and a dean of instruction whose single most important thing is student success. The best academic success has one underlying feature: it is to engage all stakeholders in some way in the education of our students.

The principal is the instructional leader and oversees all data review with the emphasis on data quality. The data being the driving force for all instructional decisions and resource allocations. The data review encompasses all assessments administered to the students here at Gallegos. Data analysis provides a snapshot of what students know, and what can be done to meet their academic needs. When analyzed correctly data analysis can help educators make informed decisions that positively affect student outcomes. It is not the quantity of the data that counts, but how the information is used to improve instruction. With this information the principal will collaborate with all stakeholders to develop academic goals and set performance timelines to meet performance standards.

Gallegos assistant principal helps to guide testing and oversee students' information. One of her primary roles is to make sure every student is assigned the correct assessment and verify the data sources. The assistant principal has a variety of duties assigned to help manage the school system some being Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), textbooks, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee, the Dyslexia/504 Program, and the Response to Intervention Committee, and help with managing school discipline.

The dean of instruction is here to improve instruction. The dean provides instructional strategies that are targeted at improving instruction. The primary responsibility of the dean is to assist teachers in their delivery of instruction by researching standard based curriculum that targets students' area of needs. Planning high quality professional learning that is followed up with observed classroom implementation. The dean will coordinate academic tutorials and extended day enrichment programs to serve groups of students in need. The administration team works collaboratively to make sure all stake holders needs are met including parents, students and teachers. The most important thing being the open communication that must happen, making sure we energize those whom we lead.

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

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

As educators, we must nurture equality and inclusion within the classroom and school in order to celebrate racial and cultural diversity. Students enter the classroom with a variety of beliefs, which may include racial and cultural prejudices derived from their homes and families, neighborhoods, and even pop culture. In the campus, they help combat prejudice and racial discord by supporting positive behaviors among students, which, in turn, develop a sense of belonging and respect for all students and their families.

At Gallegos Elementary, they aim to provide instruction with a focus on diversity promoting tolerance of people with differing ideals and beliefs. This fosters cultural respect and understanding of others creating a positive effect on learning. When students experience friction with other students, it creates tension in the classroom. They provide various avenues to actively engage students and sometimes even their families in learning activities that instill respect for diversity. Classroom teachers help students build a community that connects through common native languages and cultural similarities by utilizing strategies that require group participation which fosters team collaboration, and establishes common learning goals, and the students teach and learn from one another.

Gallegos Elementary prides itself in not only teaching learning concepts, but also a place where it sets a foundation in becoming upstanding adults in the future. Our counselors create lessons for all students with the basis being the Six Pillars of Character. Character building is also done through planned actions and activities within the classroom. Every six weeks, each teacher chooses one student that has shown characteristics for one of the six pillars of character. The student chosen gets showcased at their six weeks awards ceremony, where the teacher will explain why the

student was chosen. The student then has an opportunity to speak and explain what they would like to be when they grow up. They also have a zero-tolerance policy regarding bullying. Students are included in different anti-bullying activities such as signing a pledge, taking part in the anti-bullying week by dressing up in orange, and being a part of anti-bullying presentations.

Gallegos ensures and supports a welcoming environment to all students and their families by providing many activities such as awards ceremonies, opportunities to “eat with your child,” providing curbside meals for those distance learning, as well as being able to celebrate their culture by dressing up for Charro Days festivities. Parental involvement is key to our success.



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

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### Strategy for Academic Success

Successful schools need to support all their students, so Gallegos Elementary begins the year with the previous year in mind. The main focus at the beginning of the year is the end of year results and what the team needs to focus on. They begin by analyzing the previous year data, and what they had success on and what they need to improve on. The district staff development days are centered around improving areas of weakness with vertical and horizontal alignment meetings, planning the year at a glance for benchmark testing and technology updates for their software. They make sure that the disaggregation of data for every subject will provide them with targeted skills that will enhance academic instruction for all students. The district and state assessments are connected due to their designed based on the state standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

To make sure all students have a rich educational experience at Gallegos, several planning sessions were scheduled during the year. These sessions provide teachers with the use of the data wall to focus in on students that might be struggling with specific TEKS. Every six weeks teachers will have the opportunity to collaborate and plan lessons based on end checkpoint results. Teachers will meet as a Response to Intervention (RTI) committee in order to review data and address the needs of struggling students. Here they will develop a plan of action with accommodations and interventions for each specific student. In the upper grades teachers have conferences with students to go over test results and plot their results. Keeping students aware of their progress and setting goals for their next benchmark personalizes the testing. To customize learning to individual students, teachers take advantage of the advances in technology and use the computer program to zero in on each student's area of need.

Gallegos Elementary teachers meet with administration after each benchmark to go over results and update tutorial schedules. These meetings are conducted to view writing samples for students and look at yearly growth. They have a saying, "We want Hoppers .... not Droppers," so they make sure all of the students have made some gains in their different tested areas. These meetings are crucial to have during the year because it keeps all stakeholders, such as the teachers, students, and parents focused on academic achievement.