U.S. Department of Education
2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Casita Center for Science/Math/Technology
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 260 Cedar Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Vista State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 92083-5108

County CA

Telephone (760) 724-8442 Fax

Web site/URL https://cas.vistausd.org E-mail jennychien@vistausd.org

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

Date
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Matt Doyle E-mail mattdoyle@vistausd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Vista Unified School District Tel. (760) 726-2170

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

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

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.

5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.

6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.

7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):

15 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
5 Middle/Junior high schools
6 High schools
1 K-12 schools

27 TOTAL

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

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

[ ] Urban (city or town)
[X] Suburban
[ ] Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2022 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 Students
PreK	0
K	120
1	120
2	120
3	120
4	102
5	102
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	684

*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):

0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
3.2 % Asian
1.1 % Black or African American
49.6 % Hispanic or Latino
2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
35.7 % White
8.2 % Two or more races
100 % Total

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2021 - 2022 school year: 1%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	**Answer**
(1) Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	653
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

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

Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog, Portuguese, Mandarin, Dutch, Russian, Urdu, Polish, Romanian, Bengali, Telugu

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 8 %

53 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 6 %

Total number students who qualify: 43

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 14 %
Total number of students served 97

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

12 Autism	0 Multiple Disabilities
0 Deafness	1 Orthopedic Impairment
0 Deaf-Blindness	18 Other Health Impaired
0 Developmental Delay	20 Specific Learning Disability
2 Emotional Disturbance	42 Speech or Language Impairment
2 Hearing Impairment	0 Traumatic Brain Injury
0 Intellectual Disability	0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 1 %
Total number of students served: 8

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 3

11. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	11
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

12. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 26:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	92%	96%	98%	97%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes _ No X

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

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

The mission of Casita Center is to develop a community of compassionate, responsible, life-long learners who respect people's differences and take action to create a more peaceful world.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pme2FGIBgFyPqE8XUn99ATd4eXF5Dt4H/view

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

Students residing in the Vista Unified School District (VUSD) boundaries and students living outside of the VUSD boundaries are eligible to submit a VUSD Magnet application. The District's magnet schools accept students without regard to disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or English Language Learner status.

Prospective families apply during the January-April period of time using an online application called SchoolMint.

The District will conduct an admissions lottery at the district office at a time and date chosen by the Superintendent or their designee. After the priority admissions process (including a lottery, if required), a lottery for the remaining available spaces will be conducted. Each lottery will be conducted using an electronic method selected by the District. Employees from the District Student Support Services office will conduct and/or oversee the lotteries to ensure compliance with this magnet school admission procedure.

All students who reside in the VUSD attendance boundaries will be assigned to one of three pools based on the middle school attendance area in which they reside. All students that will be applying for an Interdistrict Attendance Permit will be assigned to an Out-of-District Pool. Each pool will be randomly assigned a place in the drawing order (one through four). The student drawing order within each pool will be randomly reassigned.

Students on an Interdistrict Transfer will be limited to 10% of the lottery. If there are spaces available after the lottery, and all students within the VUSD boundaries are accepted, then students on Interdistrict Transfers may be accepted above the 10% limitation.

Students will be admitted in the order they are drawn from the lottery until all available spaces for that school and grade level are filled. Any remaining students will be placed on a waitlist for their school and grade, in lottery order. If the size of any waitlist grows so large that a student would have no reasonable chance of gaining admission, the waitlist will be closed and remaining students will be appropriately notified.

At the end of the lottery process, parents will be notified of their students' offer of admission or if their student has been placed on the school's waitlist. Information will be sent in a text or email (depending on the chosen communication preference) from School Mint.

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

As you enter the campus of Casita Center for Science/Math/Technology (Casita), you know you have entered an unconventional and dynamic learning space designed to bring out the full potential of each child. In front of the school, you find a vast garden with vegetable beds, composting bins, butterfly plants, rainwater catchers, a sink, and a seating area where learners grow and harvest food to cook in the Kitchen Lab. Students learn about the impact of growing food on the environment, and are encouraged to try healthy recipes. Behind the school, you find a schoolyard habitat where learners explore plants and animals and collect water samples in the creek of a native coastal sage scrub ecosystem. This makes studying the regions of California, life cycles, and biodiversity of plants and animals a hands-on experience. In the center of campus is a Maker Space where students learn game design, circuitry, Computer Aided Design (CAD), 3D printing, robotics, and programming. Learners are challenged to learn from their mistakes, and take risks while collaborating with peers. Next door is a video productions studio where communication skills are fostered through digital storytelling and stop motion animation. In this space, weekly news shows are written, directed, and produced by fourth and fifth graders. There is also an art studio designed to tap into learners' creativity through various mediums and techniques while exposing them to the richness of cultural expression. In the classrooms, you find a variety of furniture that allows learners the choice to sit on the carpet, an ergonomic stool, a pedal chair, or a traditional desk. During family campus tours, many parents comment on how they wish they could go back to school!

Casita is a public elementary magnet school in the Vista Unified School District (VUSD) located in suburban North County San Diego, California. In 1971, Casita opened in a blue collar and predominantly Latino neighborhood. Twenty years later, VUSD converted Casita into a technology, science, and math magnet school in an effort to desegregate central Vista. In 2013, district magnet schools were repurposed. Casita was designated as a dual magnet with an International Baccalaureate (IB) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) theme. In 2014, Casita applied for IB Candidacy, and in 2017, Casita was authorized as an IB World School featuring the Primary Years Programme (IBPYP). Nestled in the same neighborhood, IB reevaluated and reauthorized Casita as a World School in October 2021.

Today, Casita has 680 diverse learners from an array of cultural backgrounds. Learners live in the surrounding neighborhood and commute from within and outside district boundaries. Some parents work multiple jobs to make ends meet, and some work in professional fields such as science and engineering. School events, volunteerism, and partnerships are based on Casita's vision of developing caring and culturally aware learners who are prepared for higher education opportunities and entry into the 21st century global workforce.

Casita's academic approach is an inquiry-led, transdisciplinary framework that challenges learners to think for themselves and take responsibility for their learning. Under the instructional leadership of the IB Coordinator and Principal, teachers develop a Program of Inquiry (POI) framed by six global themes that provide students with authentic learning experiences that are not confined to the boundaries of traditional subjects. The culminating effort is the fifth grade IB Exhibition Capstone project where learners study an issue that matters to them, connect it to a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, take action, and create a presentation. Issues studied, for example, have included animal extinction, packaging responsibility, mental health, or unhoused individuals. Each teacher on campus mentors two or three fifth graders and connects them to community members' expertise. Learners are inspired into action, such as organizing food drives, conducting a beach cleanup, or making changes to eat more responsibly and sustainably. The IB Exhibition Capstone concludes with an evening exhibit showcase and celebration of the learners' journey with special congratulatory remarks from the Board of Trustees and Vista's Mayor.

Learners' social-emotional, physical, academic, and cultural needs are addressed through the POI, and explicitly supported through a Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) framework. At Tier 1, all learners engage in projects designed to develop character traits and learning skills. Starting in kindergarten, students take responsibility for their learning as they ask questions, seek answers, and are inspired to act. At Tier 2, formative assessments give teachers information on each student in order to support or extend learning during small group instruction. Casita's learning support team, Team Impact, meets weekly to analyze data

and place learners in appropriate Tier 3 academic and behavioral supports as determined by IEPs, 504s or Reading/Math Intervention Plans. High expectations are set for all teachers and learners resulting in all subgroups, including Students with Disabilities, English Learners, and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, scoring in 6-63 points above the standard in ELA, and 22-60 points above the standard in Mathematics.

In 2020, Casita was honored as a California Distinguished School.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

As an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP) school in California, Casita's Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is interwoven throughout the transdisciplinary units of inquiry. It is based on the philosophy that language, in both expressive and receptive forms, is fundamental to communication and is a vehicle to understanding ourselves and the world around us. For example, developing the oral language skills of listening and speaking helps learners gain the conceptual understanding of how to learn from and relate to others. Developing the language skills of viewing and presenting, allows learners to understand the concept that language can shape our beliefs and values. In the area of written language, learners develop reading skills as a way to understand the world around them and writing skills as a way to make their thinking transparent and express their unique voice. Combined, these support thinking and create a web of conceptual understanding.

ELA teaching is based on a constructivist approach by considering learners' interests, needs, and experiences. Through guided inquiry, learners are asked to tap into their prior knowledge and understandings before exploring a new concept or skill. This is true whether kindergarten learners are studying a new letter and its sounds, or a fifth grader is writing a persuasive essay. Casita believes the best way to learn language is within a social context. Classrooms are a hive of expressive and receptive language, with students sharing ideas, peer editing, and co-creating their own learning. Students identify and engage with a diverse, rich literature collection of picture books, decodable texts, and novel studies. Learners in the primary grades engage in foundational learning through Science of Reading based experiences. Participating in structured word inquiry allows learners to understand the origins and evolution of unknown words. Learners are given a multitude of opportunities to respond to provocations and use language to express their thinking through school-wide questioning and visible thinking routines. Giving learners voice and choice in the Writers' Workshop supports students in learning to write through a meaningful context that is personal and motivates them to hone their language skills to communicate.

Teachers think about assessment within the IBPYP framework of what learners will know, do, and understand. For example, as second graders use inquiry to explore commas, formative assessments monitor multiple elements of their progress: learners' content knowledge of the purpose of commas, their analysis skills in identifying patterns of comma use, and their application of this knowledge in their writing.

Formative assessments are emphasized as they are immediate tools to guide learning and teaching. Students participate in the process by co-creating success criteria for a learning experience, and self- and/or peer-assessing alongside their teacher. Throughout language arts instruction, learners identify their strengths and challenge areas, set and monitor their goals for improvement, and leverage their IB learner profile attributes, all of which they share during student-led conferences. By self-assessing, students are placed at the center of their learning and their performance and the school's performance improves.

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

Mathematics is viewed as a way of thinking to describe and analyze the world. Casita's ultimate goal is for learners to see math everywhere and be able to solve novel problems using mathematical reasoning.

Casita's curriculum content is based on the California Common Core Standards for Mathematics and guided by both the California Mathematics Framework and IB Math Scope and Sequence. Using district-adopted curriculum and open-source materials such as Boaler's Mindset Mathematics, Liljedahl's Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics, and Parish's Number Talks, Casita teaching practices focus on conceptual understandings, skills and procedures, and application. Math is taught conceptually with a focus on problem solving, number sense, and mathematical practices. For example, in first grade, learners think about math equations in terms of the concept of form, analyzing how numbers, symbols (such as the equal sign or minus

sign), and their order interact to change the meaning.

Casita's instructional approach to mathematics is rooted in the idea that learners construct meaning through experiences. Therefore, when learners are exploring mathematical ideas, they first identify their previous understandings and experiences with those ideas. For example, third graders are asked what they know about fractions and where they see them in life before a unit on fractions. Learners are encouraged to represent concepts in ways that make sense to them by creating models before being introduced to traditional notation or processes. Learners engage in real-world applications of mathematical concepts, such as an immersive miniature city, Casitaville, where learners open various shops and conduct transactions with money in order to understand economics in action.

As students engage in mathematical ideas, learners are taught explicitly how to use mathematical practices and IB Approaches to Learning skills, such as communication and thinking skills, to support their learning journey. Group work allows learners to share and compare ideas in order to interact with ideas while constructing meaning. Teachers employ strategies such as the pencils in protocol, numberless word problems, Number Talks, and Dot Talks, and Thinking Classroom routines. Skills are reinforced through spiral review and real-world application problems. Students are asked to reflect on their learning, including the skills and IB attributes used in the process.

Assessment strategies are key to student achievement. Summative assessments, such as unit tests and performance tasks, are used to analyze student growth and identify the level of mastery for each standard. Formative assessments are designed to measure learners' mathematical thinking and improve instruction. Minute-by-minute formative assessment of student progress allows teachers to provide feedback and adjust instruction to scaffold learning. Learning is monitored by listening to math talks between learners, analyzing student models, and reviewing written explanations of their thinking. Check-ins, such as exit tickets, allow students to apply their learning and inform instruction to meet students' needs. Student thinking is documented in their math journals, which encourages learners to self-assess and provides a portfolio of learning evidence for teachers. By incorporating written reflections, students communicate their conceptual understandings, placing them at the center of their mathematical learning.

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

Casita's science curriculum incorporates Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and California's Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&Cs). The teacher serves as the facilitator, guiding students to learn science in context to encourage and foster the learner's natural curiosity to understand the world. Critical thinking skills are built through this constructivist inquiry-based approach.

The science component of Casita is characterized predominantly by concepts and skills rather than by content. To mirror how scientists and engineers research and innovate in the world of work, science is taught through the 5E instructional model of inquiry (Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate). As an example, fourth graders observe an anchoring phenomenon of a landslide and develop inquiries about the speed and destruction of erosion. Learners then explore and explain how different variables of water impact land formation through their stream table investigation. After collecting data, students propose mitigating efforts to address erosion in the schoolyard habitat culminating with learners evaluating what they have learned to describe what occurred in the phenomenon.

Sense-making notebooks are the most important tool teachers use to assess learning in science. Learners utilize their notebooks to record their thinking, collect data, interpret and analyze the data, and arrive at their conclusions. Learners also develop further questions, which prompts additional inquiry. Teachers notice what prior knowledge learners have, how they are gathering and making sense of data, and how their thinking has evolved to inform next steps in instruction.

To improve school-wide performance in science, teachers bring three samples of student sense-making notebooks to a professional development meeting. Notebooks of high, middle and lower performing learners from kindergarten to fifth grade are analyzed based on the rigor of student thinking and instruction in order to calibrate the learning progression in science, identifying strengths and areas of improvement.

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

Through social studies, learners investigate the world around them by studying people's beliefs and values from the past, present, and future. Casita's curriculum is grounded in enlightening and empowering responsible citizenship in local and global communities. Utilizing open-source and district adopted materials, the curriculum is based on the California History and Social Science Standards, the California Social Studies Framework, and the IB Social Studies Scope and Sequence.

Social Studies instruction is inquiry-based. Formative assessments take place through the 5E framework of student experiences. A provocation piques learners' curiosities and engages them in an idea. This is followed by an interactive experience such as a gallery walk of primary sources, a sorting activity, or a field experience to observe a concept. learners explain the meaning they took from this experience, and compare ideas with others. Then, learners are given texts, videos, or podcasts that explain the event, phenomenon, or concept even further. Learners expand their knowledge of the IB Learner Profile attributes as they study changemakers who have made historical contributions.

In studying the function of local government, 3rd graders identified issues in the community, and wrote to different stakeholders to better understand city actions. They learned that various agencies serve different purposes and citizen involvement is vital for a thriving community. One group picked up trash and brought cans to the recycling center. Another group volunteered serving food at a shelter exhibiting empathy, compassion, and respect; developing the attributes of an IB learner and a responsible citizen of the community. When learners take a position on an issue, or are inspired into action in light of their learning, they are active participants in their summative assessment. This relevancy increases student and school-wide achievement.

1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Art is the expression or application of creativity and imagination. In addition to weaving arts into the IB Program of Inquiry curriculum, learners attend an Expressions Lab every other week for one hour. During this time, learners combine their creativity and reflection skills to learn a variety of art techniques and mediums. Learners engage in watercolor painting, mosaics, ceramics by hand or through the pottery wheel, glass fusing, and recycled art. Learners are also introduced to musical instruments through ukuleles, rhythm sticks, tongue drums, xylophones, and lap harps. In addition, every child receives a series of steel drum lessons as a school-wide enrichment opportunity that culminates in a community performance.

Casita has extended art opportunities where learners can explore their passion for art. Learners can participate in collaborative projects to beautify the campus and community. For example, fifth graders co-designed and painted mosaic planters to place into the friendship garden. Casita also has a personalized studio experience for students during recess and lunch where they can utilize a skill that they have learned in labs to create art pieces based on individual interests. Additionally, learners can attend after school art workshops including advanced ukulele and advanced glass art.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

As an IB school, encouraging learners to make informed, healthy choices is an important mission. Learners experience a balanced PE curriculum that includes games, individual activities, movement composition, adventure challenge, and activities that help develop their understanding of health-related fitness. These experiences are designed based on the IB Personal, Social and Physical Education Scope & Sequence, the California Health Standards, and the California Physical Education Standards to ensure that students are learning and developing the essential motor skills to engage in physical activities, the basic concepts, principles, and strategies of movement, and the key elements to staying physically healthy.

In some of the transdisciplinary units, learners engage in further in-depth studies of well-being. For example, in second grade, as part of their transdisciplinary theme, "Who We Are," learners explore the idea of personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health. They investigate the idea of life balance, the way that different structures support personal wellness, and the nutritional value of a healthy eating plate. In response to their learning, students are encouraged to make positive and healthy choices.

2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)

Casita's learning community selected Spanish as the additional language for its IBPYP framework because it is the native language of a significant portion of the students.

Kindergarten-3rd grade learners attend Language, Literacy, and Culture (LiLaC) Lab every other week, while 4th and 5th graders attend weekly. The year begins with each student developing a self language portrait. They identify languages and cultural influences that are meaningful to them.

Through guided inquiries into cognates, learners build vocabulary by discovering word meanings in Spanish and noting similarities to English. This awareness builds confidence because it is a tool for understanding a second language. Students learn language rules such as grammar patterns to write and speak simple sentences. They realize not all languages use the same patterns such as adjective before noun or noun before adjective. Understanding how to address a person based on your relationship such as "tu" or "usted" gives insights into Spanish-speaking cultures and signs of respect. Communication skills are improved by practicing Spanish phrases and dialogues.

Learning a second language creates opportunities for students to develop international mindedness. Listening to the sounds of language, singing songs, hearing stories, and viewing art are aesthetic experiences that foster appreciation of culture.

2d. Technology/library/media

The library serves students in Kindergarten through 5th grade and the adults in Casita's learning community. Students have a designated time to visit the library as a class where they engage in library technology and systems, every other week for Kindergarten through 3rd grade, and weekly for 4th and 5th grades. Learners develop informational and media literacy by exploring and synthesizing digital resources. Fifth graders also learn the differences between primary and secondary sources which they utilize in their Capstone IB Exhibition projects.

Casita's library offers literature focusing on diverse characters and international settings so the learners gain a worldview through an open mind. Collections of books center on IB's global themes, concepts, and attributes. As learners study global issues, books highlighting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals expand their knowledge. The library is a space that nurtures the love of reading and the joy of knowledge gained from research.

Fourth and fifth graders participate in a trimester of broadcast journalism in Communications Lab called News Crew. They apply for jobs, write segments, and set up studio equipment to produce a daily newscast. During this immersive experience, learners collaborate in their different roles to develop their technological literacy skills.

2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share

As an IB World School with a STEM focus, Casita has unconventional spaces that allow learners to grow their passions.

The Sustainability Lab encompasses the garden, two-acre Schoolyard Habitat wetland, and Kitchen Lab. Students develop their green thumb and engage in environmental literacy and stewardship. Learners study footage from night cameras and scat to see what types of animals are in the habitat and their behavioral changes between seasons. The seed to fork program engages learners by starting seeds indoors, harvesting plants, and cooking and baking in Kitchen Lab. Learners become more knowledgeable about the nutritional value of each dish and how to lower carbon and water footprints. Learners are risk-takers by trying out new foods.

In Imagineering Lab, learners' critical thinking skills grow by engaging in design challenges with low technology prototyping, circuitry, CAD, 3D printing, and programming with robotics. Learners also develop their social skills as they collaborate.

Fourth and 5th grade learners also attend a weekly Climate Science class where they unpack climate change and ways individuals can take action. For example, learners study invasive species of plants, harvest the invasive ice plants from the schoolyard habitat, and pickle them in Kitchen Lab to demonstrate eating sustainably.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Students identify, monitor, and work toward their learning goals. Using a myriad of formative assessments, Casita's team identifies opportunities for development or intervention for each child. As assessments indicate delays to the progress of individuals or subgroups, interventions are implemented according to the MTSS framework. Casita has a robust MTSS system, delivering a solid Tier 1 system, Tier 2 support system, and Tier 3 interventions.

For learners performing below grade level, teachers increase the frequency and duration of small group instruction. For learners who are needing more intensive intervention, teachers meet with them in small groups daily in addition to the Tier 1 instruction. Casita's Learning Support Teacher works with K-3 learners during the day, four to five times a week to meet their Science of Reading needs that include, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. For learners in grades 3-5, Casita has begun to implement the Structured Word Inquiry approach to help below grade level learners develop their morphology and orthographical understanding of language and the meaning behind words at their level.

Formative assessment such as writing responses on whiteboards gives teachers information to adjust teaching in real time. After the math application problem and concept development portion of instruction, learners demonstrate their understanding on exit tickets. Teachers pull small groups to target math concepts and skills that need reteaching with manipulatives.

Casita also evaluates group trends to improve our overall school system. After monitoring and analyzing math data, a need for more support in 5th grade became apparent. The schedule was adjusted and specialty teachers were deployed to pull 5th graders struggling with math by scaffolding the problems, conceptually then procedurally. Additionally, equity gaps appeared with students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to all students, 10% in ELA and 11% in Math. Identifying those who need extra support prompts Casita teachers to provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 support for each child in small groups.

After school extended learning tutorials are offered to support learners in 2nd through 5th grades to strengthen number sense and mathematical reasoning skills.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Every learner has talents and gifts to contribute to the community, and it is Casita's mission to empower each individual to take action that benefits the world.

Learning experiences are designed to promote critical thinking and creativity. If a student is performing above grade level, experiences are designed to allow learners to engage in a productive struggle. They are challenged by complex performance tasks that require them to use different perspectives to describe how they might solve the problem. Agile thinking is emphasized during these challenges.

After a formative assessment, differentiated tasks and challenges are provided to learners who perform above grade level. For example, with a partner, they engage in open inquiry to investigate or research an issue they are passionate about. This journey takes learners to new heights by designing their own investigation to explore hypotheses or ideas with a thought partner. Once they find their conclusions, they share this with the class and post it publicly. Engaging learners in inquiries developed by their peers elevates the knowledge of the entire classroom community.

Learners explore their interest to develop a passion through after school enrichment opportunities. This includes taking their understanding of abstract and concrete math concepts and applying them to woodworking projects, such as designing a human size soap box car. Learners utilize their measurement skills in the Kitchen Lab as culinary artists. They learn that by adjusting ingredients, recipes can evolve. They take their understanding of aerodynamics and physics concepts and apply them in the Rocketry Innovation Lab.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities (SWD) are fully included in the general education classroom. Teachers scaffold instruction based on formative assessments to support SWD's improvement of expressive and receptive language skills, social skills, peer interactions, and connections with their community of learners during IBPYP units.

At least once a year, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team reviews progress, sets baselines, and creates new goals. Per their IEP, learners have access to service providers such as a speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, school psychologist, or education specialist to work on individual goals according to service minutes. With the guidance of case managers, Instructional Aides also support students in class and at the Learning Center, a dedicated support space.

Analysis of state testing shows a meets or exceeds standards discrepancy between SWD (44% in ELA and 40% in math) and all students (70% in ELA and 68% in math) in grades 3-5. Using this information as well as diagnostic test results from district adopted assessments, general education teachers and Education Specialists collaborate frequently, to develop an effective learning environment with an array of strategies to meet the individual needs of students. An instructional aide or the Educational Specialist may push into the classroom to provide guidance through deconstructing complex math word problems allowing the learners to chunk out the steps.

A full-time school psychologist not only assesses students, but also supports their social/emotional and behavioral development. Some learners require long term counseling support while others may only need a few sessions of support. Additionally, the school psychologist is available to work with teachers to provide strategies and supports they can use in the classroom setting. For more intensive behaviors, the IEP team collaborates with the District's Behavioral Support Team (DBST) who makes observations, recommendations, and model modifications and accommodations to support learners.

3d. English Language Learners:

Removing barriers and providing equal access for all learners to the rigorous IBPYP program is a priority. Support is provided to English Learners (ELs) systematically and individually through a combination of personalized designated ELD and integrated ELD. During weekly collaborations, teachers identify language skills necessary for each line of inquiry in the IBPYP unit. Teachers anticipate vocabulary and grammatical

structures needed to engage in academic conversations and writing and address these during instruction. Learners study language through the IB key concept lenses of form and function. For example, learners might analyze the form of language by deconstructing complex language in central ideas or through structured word inquiry of unknown words. Students learn language function by using it purposefully through actions such as analyzing content, explaining causation, or presenting findings.

Casita's English Language Development (ELD) resource teacher provides individual monitoring and support for learners through the ELD proficiency levels. The resource teacher trains learners in an online, at-home ELD program, monitors student data, attends triads to determine support for learners, and consults with parents about upcoming testing and reclassifications. The resource teacher also arranges Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategy training for teachers and integrates GLAD strategies into written IB curriculum units.

Casita uses formative and summative data to inform our instruction. Analysis of English Language Arts and Mathematics California State data revealed a meets or exceeds standards discrepancy between all students (72% in ELA and 69% in Math) and English Learners (44% in ELA and math). The 28% in ELA and 25% in math differences prompted a return to Casita's equity mindset and a shoring up of support for ELs. With this information, teachers choose appropriate scaffolds and strategies such as productive partnering, allowing ELs to engage in academic discourse to access core curriculum.

3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Casita, learners' sense of belonging through three lenses, capability, connection, and contribution is of the utmost importance.

Teachers foster learners' capability by activating student curiosity through inquiry-based learning, the leading pedagogical approach of the IB program at Casita. Drawing upon the six globally relevant themes, learners ask questions when presented with a provocation or phenomena. The knowledge and skills they attain from their answers cultivate an understanding and appreciation of other cultures and perspectives. Stories are woven from books, guest speakers, or testimonial videos that draw out the characteristics of the individuals being represented and reflect how they're connected to the IB Learner Profile attributes. Teachers design experiences to prepare learners for trade, college, and career. In the Who We Are unit in 4th grade, learners focus on their own strengths, interests, and values and explore the world of work through career planning. They explore their passion pathways and how postsecondary experiences can fulfill these. Third graders develop their financial literacy skills by studying human capital, how it aligns with local careers, and the impact it has on families' livelihoods. Through these learning journeys, students develop their habits of mind, leading them to be capable stewards of the world.

Connecting learners through voice, choice, and ownership in their classroom community is of the utmost importance. The flexible seating environment enables social learning as a whole group, collaborative stations for learners to have thought partners, and individual workstations. Each day, learners are embraced in a morning meeting or soft start. Community circles connect learners and bring comfort by discussing and interpreting scenarios and developing social skills. As a way to develop their self-management skills, teachers will facilitate a discussion with learners to co-create a success criteria. Learners are empowered to align their work to the co-constructed criteria set forth by the class and set goals for themselves.

Opportunities for contribution help foster a sense of belonging. Teachers design relevant learning experiences that compel learners to take action. Lively classroom discussions, research, and investigation drive learners to decide which actions they should take. Contributions through action could also include advocacy, whether it be through social justice or writing letters to politicians and organizations. These actions can be individual or collective, a small step or a large act such as organizing a food donation drive. Learners reflect on qualitative or quantitative feedback to measure the success of their action.

Learners are engaged at Casita because they have confidence in their capabilities, comfort in building connections, and a found purpose through their contributions. Socially connected classrooms support empathetic learners to discover the power of shared goals and take ownership of their part of society.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Casita values the connections and relationships with its learning community. Families are well-connected to Casita through the weekly newsletter, which includes upcoming events, photos and videos of happenings on campus, and opportunities to keep learners and families engaged. To support families, Casita's Community Liaison works with local organizations, including the Vista Community Clinic which offers parenting classes or workshops and the Got Your Back organization which provides food for families with food insecurity.

Several events support learners' academic, social, and emotional success. Kindergarten Community Day engages students to interact with individuals in the community and learn about their roles and responsibilities. The annual Habitat Campout is an overnight experience where families engage in environmental science lessons with an inflatable planetarium, state-of-the-art telescopes, a reptile petting zoo, and activities in the schoolyard habitat and garden. Guest speakers inspire learners and provide expert knowledge. Jacque Nunez , a descendant of the Acjachemen indigenous people shared her story and promoted the uniqueness of cultures. Individuals with spinal cord injuries shared their capabilities with

upper grade learners during Ability Awareness Week. Knowing that Casita has many student athletes, Ronnie Lott of the 49ers read his story 'Ronnie and his Grit' to all 680 learners. Vista community members such as council members, law enforcement, fire, and medical teams share their contributions to the community. Many family members also serve as experts in their fields for 5th graders during the IB Exhibition journey.

Volunteerism is valued at Casita. Family members can volunteer in the classroom with reading and math groups, crafts, or preparing materials. The WatchD.O.G.S (Dads of Great Students) program brings in male family members to volunteer for the day. Cafecito is where family members can volunteer to help the school in preparation work while meeting other family members. Parent Teacher Association (PTA) raises funds, hosts a variety of school events and celebrations, and rallies parents to stay involved in the learning community. The Green Team meets regularly to discuss our environmental science program. This team originated from our Schoolyard Habitat Restoration project where stakeholders restored the wetlands at the back of the school to its natural state. Grants funded through organizations such as Rockwell Collins supported this endeavor and established the Computer Science program.

Family voice is essential in developing programming for Casita learners. Families share their perspectives and provide feedback through surveys. Monthly Coffee with the Principal sessions engage families with the Principal to further develop understanding and communication on relevant topics. School Site Council (SSC) discusses policies and budget to make stakeholder-informed decisions that will impact all learners. The English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) discusses and approves decisions that impact English Learners.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Casita's professional culture is grounded in the belief that everyone is a lead learner, learning alongside each other. Professional learning is designed through three systemic actions: a two-hour weekly collaboration led by an IBPYP coordinator, targeted professional development during monthly staff meetings or Monday workshops, and a culture of high expectations and continuous learning that fosters distributive leadership.

Casita teachers are continuously growing as IBPYP educators by engaging in the Science of Improvement cycle (plan, do, study, act) during weekly collaboration with the IB coordinator and grade level peers. Teachers design rigorous and relevant inquiry-based experiences for learners. They collect student artifacts, analyze what worked pedagogically, and what can evolve. Teachers take risks by co-creating units and success criteria with learners. Additionally, partnerships with the International Baccalaureate organization continuously develop teachers' pedagogy and classroom systems. Every year, a cohort of teachers attend professional developments with IB, elevating their pedagogy with new research-based approaches and novel ideas from other educators.

The distributive leadership team analyzes data to determine a yearly instructional focus for professional learning during weekly staff meetings. Teachers are asked questions about the focus and their wonderings are recorded on a Phenomena Board (a chart with columns of inquiries, experiences, what was figured out, connections to the provocation, and new questions). During professional learning, leaders model visible thinking routines and pedagogical strategies that teachers adapt to their classrooms.

Casita values the diverse strengths, skills, and experiences of its staff. In Casita's collaboration room, teachers' strengths from CliftonStrengths are posted. These strengths are utilized to build diverse teams and leveraged to support one another. Monday workshops, facilitated by lead teachers, highlight innovative or thinking pedagogies. Topics include Thinking Classrooms in math, Introduction to Inquiry, Science of Reading, Structured Word Inquiry, Quality Small Group Instruction, and Behavioral Systems for a Positive Learning Environment. These bite-sized professional learning opportunities allow teachers to learn from each other, make subtle shifts in their pedagogy, and be change makers themselves.

Three times a year, grade-level teachers visit classrooms and labs to capture artifacts and evidence of student sense-making. This could be seen through in-the-moment pedagogy or through environmental evidence in the learning space such as co-created success criteria. Teachers open up their classrooms to learn from each

other. After sense-making walks, there is a grade-wide reflection to discuss inspirations, ideas, and affirmations. In many instances, teachers will circle back to another teacher to discuss how a lesson was facilitated.

Anytime there are new staff members, onboarding workshops help teachers to be well-versed with expectations and pedagogy. Casita has a low turn-over of teachers which is attributed to the value placed upon teachers and the investment in the support of their success.

4. School Leadership:

School leadership begins with relationships. By building a positive relationship with a deep understanding of the individuals' strengths, interests, and values, leaders on Casita's campus can best lean into others to service learners.

Leadership is characterized by three teams: Site-Based Decision Making represented by a leader from each grade level and the Principal, Pedagogical Leadership team represented by teachers at different grade levels with the Principal, and the Care and Connections team represented by the School Counselor, School Psychologists, IB Coordinator, Assistant Principal, and Principal.

Teams are fueled by the IBPYP Approaches to Teaching philosophy. First, a collaborative relationship between teachers and learners is fostered. Secondly, the inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning is embraced and utilized. A strong emphasis is placed on learners finding their own information and constructing meaning. Next, conceptual understandings are emphasized to develop a deep disciplinary understanding and to help students make connections to transfer learning to new contexts. Fourth, student assessment-capabilities are fostered so learners will be able to reflect on their learning, identify learning goals, and consider the next steps required for their learning. Fifth, teachers differentiate to meet the needs of students and make learning relevant. This is when international mindedness truly becomes real and authentic for learners.

The Site-Based Decision Making team focuses on how to operationalize the Approaches to Teaching philosophy. During this time, the team articulates the standards and practices school-wide while analyzing patterns that help students develop a deeper learning as they progress in grade levels. The impact of Casita's programs is analyzed, and opportunities for growth are brainstormed to improve the school system. For example, the unpacked state testing data to look for opportunities to create a schedule that offers extra support for learners who are in need.

The Pedagogical team ebbs and flows through theory and new practices to determine strengths and opportunities for teaching and learning. After a book study on The Power of Making Thinking Visible, lead teachers implemented pedagogical strategies and shared reflections during staff meetings.

Behavior is communication and Casita's Care and Connections team monitors social emotional behaviors that may impede a student's learning. In response to COVID-19, there has been an unprecedented amount of unique behaviors which attributes to the formation of the Care and Connections Leadership Team. Each child in need is assigned a Care and Connections champion, who collaborates with classroom teachers to implement a positive behavior system. With a book study on the Explosive Child, the team shares strategies and interventions.

Various leadership teams create Casita's strategic distributive leadership structure. Through this, the leadership capabilities of staff and families are developed and nurtured to make informed decisions and use resources effectively.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At the core of Casita's teaching and learning is equity and being learner centered. The diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures of learners are embraced and valued. All staff members have been trained in anti-bias, trauma informed care, and positive behavior interventions and supports. The School Counselor

routinely teaches social and emotional lessons that are tailored to each classroom. These lessons promote inclusion through empathy and perspective.

Casita is committed to meeting all learners and staff where they are and to the understanding that they bring with them valuable experiences, knowledge, and talents that contribute to the learning of staff and students. To ensure all learners and staff have the conditions they need, they are asked to co-construct Essential Agreements for the year, valuing their voice and ownership. Equity and respect are honored in each space, as Essential Agreements are revisited and modified throughout the year. Opportunities to co-create such as success criteria, goal setting, or collective visible thinking routines are a common theme throughout the school.

Representation matters even in Casita's book selections. Protagonists, authors, and illustrators represent diverse genders, races, and capabilities. Different cultures as well as stories of various upbringings are curated to help learners develop appreciation, respect, and empathy for others.

During the IB Exhibition, studying the UN Sustainable Development Goals, 5th graders also research underrepresented changemakers in that particular goal or topic. This year, one group studied gender equality which prompted them to look at the uneven pay between the men's and women's athletic teams. Becky Sauerbrunn, a player on the US women's soccer team and president of the United States Women's National Team Players Association, was identified as a changemaker.

Casita embraces the cultures of its learners and staff through school-wide events. International Night is a festival where families and staff join in to share their cultures, food, language, and artifacts. Learners and families travel from booth to booth with their Casita International Night passport. As students visit each booth to learn about new cultures, they receive a new stamp on their passport, a sticker representing the flag of that country. During Black History Month, fifth graders study an African-American changemaker and write a biography about them. Then to showcase their work, learners embody themselves as the African-American changemaker and develop a speech to share with others at the Living History Museum based on their biography writing. During the Ability Awareness Week, students learn more about disabilities and neurodiversity through videos, learning experiences, and book studies. Individuals from the Triumph organization also share their quadriplegic journey with upper grade learners.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Casita's learning culture is defined by the spirit and practice of the Constructivist Approach: Inquiry-Based Learning. The pursuit to continuously reflect and revise learner-centered programming to be inquiry-based is grounded in the pedagogical theory of How People Learn, commissioned by the National Research Council. This study presented conclusions in cognitive science with the implications on teaching and learning. The most recent 2018 report shared that individuals learn through prior knowledge, conceptual frameworks, metacognition, social learning, and motivation.

Whether exploring biological phenomena in science or deciphering word problems in math, questions are bound to surface. Why am I supposed to divide by zero? Why do crickets make that sound even though they are so small? How can we make Mars inhabitable? With the 5E instructional model, adopted from Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS), learners can explore life's mysteries all while being active participants in their learning through inquiry-based experiences. Coupled with the study on How People Learn, the 5E model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate) allows students the opportunity to explore new concepts critically and preserve information through meaningful learning experiences.

The impact of Casita's inquiry-based approach is seen in high academic achievement with 70% of learners meeting or exceeding on the California state testing for language arts and 68% of learners meeting or exceeding on the mathematics portion of the assessment.

At Casita, the knowledge and experiences its teachers hold impacts what is taught and how it is taught to learners. For the constructivist approach to permeate through school culture, it is essential that teachers have continuous professional development (PD). Weekly grade-level IB collaborations include a nano PD provided by the IB Coordinator where teachers engage in reading professional literature and journals, networking with colleagues, or being in the learners' shoes by having the IB Coordinator model pedagogy.

Through inquiry, the idea that "experience before label" permeates the learning culture. Creating learning experiences that allow learners to construct knowledge, build their own representations, negotiate ideas with peers and teachers, and reflect on their learning journey is a priority. Students construct meaning and develop a deeper level of understanding by writing down their observations, thoughts, and discoveries in sense-making notebooks. Learners are encouraged to step outside their comfort zone and develop a deeper appreciation for the natural and built world. Through inquiry, learning is purposeful, engaging, and an active endeavor.