

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Vanessa Ortegon

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

Official School Name Farias Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1510 Chicago Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Laredo State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78041-4108

County Webb County

Telephone (956) 273-3400

Fax (956) 273-3495

Web site/URL <https://fariases.elisd.org/o/ffes>

E-mail gacruz@laredoisd.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. Sylvia Guerra-Rios

E-

mail sgrios@laredoisd.org

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

District Name Laredo Independent School District

Tel. (956) 273-1000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Monica 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

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):
- 20 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 28 TOTAL

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

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

☒ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 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	74
K	63
1	92
2	85
3	86
4	88
5	75
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	563

*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
 - 0.5 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 99 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0.5 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 12%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	12
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	58
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	70
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	563
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 59 %
332 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 100 %

Total number students who qualify: 563

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 11 %
Total number of students served 63

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.

<u>19</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>28</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>15</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>33</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>3</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 3 %
Total number of students served: 17

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 4

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.	28
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	7

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 20:1

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	96%	99%	99%	96%	97%
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 ☒

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.

At Francisco Farias Elementary School, our mission is to provide all students with a high quality education that enables them to be contributing members of a multicultural pluralistic society. We seek to create an environment that achieves equity for all students and ensures that each student is a successful learner, is fully respected, and learns to respect others.

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

<https://fariases.elisd.org/o/ffes/documents>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Francisco Farias Elementary School (FES) is located in the heart of what is known, colloquially, as the Canta Ranas neighborhood in West Laredo, Texas. Local Mexican restaurants and shops, family homes, train tracks, and an after-school club for neighborhood children surround FES. FES is a well-established and revered part of the neighborhood, with many parents and grandparents recounting when they were students at FES. The Farias family, considered one of Laredo's founding families, donated land to Laredo Independent School District (LISD), and, in 1963, FES opened its doors.

Laredo and our sister city, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, are separated only by the Rio Grande. Thus, Laredo has a unique blend of cultures that is exceptionally evident in the various neighborhoods on the city's west side. The Canta Ranas neighborhood comprises multigenerational families proud to call the West Side their home. Many families live near or below the poverty line and travel between the sister cities to work and live. Many of our students and their families speak predominantly Spanish and struggle to afford necessities like electricity, food, clothes, and running water. FES aims to provide our students, and their families, with a safe and welcoming environment that will always remain consistent. Our students are offered a quality education, breakfast, lunch, supper, counseling, clothing, and referrals to outside agencies that can assist with other struggles they may be facing at home.

At FES, our core beliefs are that all children can become responsible and productive citizens. Our school promotes individual growth and intellectual and moral values necessary to function successfully in our changing society. Our curriculum allows children to develop to their maximum potential by providing rigorous lessons and hands-on activities to meet their learning styles and needs. Educators at FES are aware of the ever-changing needs of our students and community. We always strive to maintain the highest standards and cultivate the unique culture of the Canta Ranas neighborhood and our predominantly Hispanic community.

FES services students from Prekindergarten 3 thru 5th grade. Many of our students, especially those in the Early Childhood Center (ECC), are labeled as Emergent Bilingual (EB). FES aims to facilitate English language acquisition and development for recent immigrants and English learners. FES students are provided all content instruction in English with a focal point on vocabulary development. Teachers are provided professional development on language acquisition and bilingual content development through the school district. In line with our target on vocabulary development, teachers are asked to focus on cognates and word associations for an easy transition, many things around the school are labeled to help focus on the acquisition of practical words and terms, and we have a word of the week that encourages students to deconstruct the word, identify its meaning, and to use the word in a written/verbal context. While these actions strengthen the vocabulary of our EB students, we have found that they ultimately enhance the vocabulary of all of our students, including those who are not considered EB. Eventually, the goal for our EB students is to be proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English to surpass state standards. By fostering early development in these four key areas, we hope all FES students will continue to post-secondary education and return to better service the city of Laredo and the Canta Ranas neighborhood.

While our foremost anchor is education, FES educators are keenly aware of the need to promote excellence in all areas to encourage well-rounded students. FES spotlights the complete academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural aspects of development. Through educational activities and unique clubs, we aim to increase awareness of, and pique interest, in various cultural experiences and hobbies. We celebrate holidays like Cinco de Mayo and participate in local festivals like the Hispanic Festival hosted by the Vidal Treviño School of Communications and Fine Arts that encourage the community to come together and observe and acknowledge cultural aspects like food, song, dance, and poetry. In addition, our students can join various programs and committees in the school district, including the Child Nutrition Program Menu Advisory Committee, the National Honor Society, Superintendent Advisory Committee, and the Junior Achievement Program. On campus, our students can sign up for different University Interscholastic League (UIL) chapters and technology clubs focusing on coding and robotics. Many students participate in sports teams for football, cheer, dance, basketball, soccer, and track to encourage an appreciation for movement and health. Teachers foster good habits through hobbyist clubs like Kindness Club and gardening. Finally,

creativity is cultivated and encouraged through art and music programs for artistry, choir, guitar, and mariachi. FES celebrates our students for their uniqueness and differences with many different awards programs, recognitions, and activities like our school float in the local parade hosting students from all our clubs.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

The English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curriculum at FES aims to promote independent thinking and foster a lifelong love for reading/writing. FES celebrates reading through reading fairs, book projects, and teacher reading academies. FES classroom libraries are filled with age/level-appropriate books. The library holds weekly classes for all students where after discussing a book, they are allowed to check out books from the library and take Accelerated Reader (AR) quizzes to gain points and win prizes.

Prekindergarten students learn the building blocks of literacy, including syllable segmentation, alliteration, letter recognition and sounds, rhyme, onset, and listening skills that build comprehension. FES provides students in kindergarten through 2nd grade with 120 minutes of daily reading and writing instruction while addressing the 5 components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension). Teachers at FES strategically use guided reading practices to build students' confidence, fluency, and comprehension. Teachers craft questioning catered to the passage/story and skills that the students are expected to learn. During independent practice/reading time, teachers work with small groups or one-to-one and use the time to provide feedback to the students and clarify misconceptions. Students in 3rd through 5th receive 90 minutes of uninterrupted daily reading and writing instruction. During these reading blocks, students build on what they have learned years prior while practicing Reading/Writing techniques. Teachers use frequent classroom discussions to enhance comprehension of all reading material and respond analytically to constructed response prompts.

Teachers at FES and the district ELAR dean use prescriptive methods after analyzing testing data for all ELAR instruction. Teachers meet as teams with administration and instructional deans to break down data from state/local testing, classroom assignments, and formative assessment to plan and guide their daily lessons. All ELAR curriculum on campus is aligned with state standards, College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). All skills learned by students on campus aim to enhance literacy development and promote reading and writing fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness/understanding, and phonics. FES students are encouraged to write multiple times a day.

Therefore, teachers use The Fundamental Five, where one of the five components tasks students with daily critical writing. FES has found that students should be given the opportunity multiple times a day to write critically and creatively in their academic journals. Teachers are expected to craft rubrics for students for writing done in the classroom. Many teachers have created this rubric with their students at the beginning of the school year to allow students to be active in their learning and feedback. All teachers are asked to allow students to write with every assignment through open-response questioning. The school writing team of writing teachers, the instructional specialist, and administration, delineates what should be learned for writing from year to year to ensure that students build upon prior knowledge and receive the most prescriptive writing instruction possible. FES enhances writing instruction with site-based writing projects and competitions open to all students.

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

FES Math teachers utilize the district's Curriculum Alignment Resources for Educational Support (CARES) which is aligned to the focus, rigor, and coherence with the state's implementation of the TEKS for Mathematics and with a partnership with an independent consultant. The scope and sequence of the CARES units, activities, and representations are designed to help students develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts, build fluency with procedures, and solve mathematical problems that reflect their lived experiences. More so, CCRS addresses what students need to know and be able to accomplish to succeed in entry-level college courses.

Through the Gradual Release of Responsibility framework (GRR), teachers are expected to provide 60 minutes of rigorous instruction, including guided and independent activities. An additional 30 minutes of enrichment and intervention time are allocated to the student's daily schedule specifically for the extension of math instruction. Prekindergarten, Kindergarten, and our Autism and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) units have designated time assigned for math instruction. FES 1st thru 4th grade classes are semi-departmentalized, where the teacher does the math instruction for two blocks, allowing more time to be dedicated to math instruction. 5th grade has departmentalization where expert teachers conduct their lessons with multiple classes during rotation throughout the day.

Math vocabulary is developed through the process of actively exploring and learning mathematics. Students make sense of mathematical concepts using informal language before academic terms are introduced. Embedded within the curriculum are mathematical language routines to support academic language development for all learners. These routines also provide opportunities for EBs to engage in the specialized academic language demands of reading, writing, speaking, listening, conversing, and representing in math. Instructional materials are designed to affirm students as they build positive mathematical identities. Units and lessons begin by inviting students to use their prior mathematical knowledge, funds of knowledge, language, and culture to make sense of new mathematical concepts. Activities and math manipulatives offer collaborative learning opportunities and instructional routines that center student thinking and encourage students to bring their whole selves to math class. In addition, teachers' usage of inquiry-based instructions, hands-on activities, manipulatives, and the utilization of technology is used to extend students' knowledge and improve their math skills. The administration of Checkpoints, Benchmarks, Curriculum Based Assessments (CBA), or weekly assessments demonstrates TEKS mastery and targets non-mastered skills. Teachers use data to create a plan of action to monitor weekly progress, small group instruction, and peer tutoring. Furthermore, many math skills taught in the classroom can be "gamified." Teachers use math games and puzzles to capture student interest and maintain engagement in the lesson. Students love to practice new skills when there is a game involved. These games include math manipulatives to extend skills recognition further and provide real-world examples to students who struggle with new or abstract concepts. Students attend after-school tutorials to ensure they understand concepts and skills. Teachers provide reflective feedback to validate students' responses to extend and build on their personal experiences.

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

The FES science curriculum is aligned with the TEKS's current supporting and readiness standards. Teachers in Kindergarten through 5th grade provide students with engaging opportunities to learn about the earth, life, and physical sciences through hands-on, inquisitive exploration and activities that are essential in creating a solid foundation of scientific knowledge needed for success in academics and life. Through vertically aligned collaborative planning during PLCs and after-school meetings, teachers develop lessons that allow students to explore, analyze, discover, predict, and explain through critical writing and thinking that awaken students' curiosity and develop their scientific reasoning skills. Centered around the 5-E Model, students engage in the scientific process, observation, and reasoning. Technology also plays a major role in our daily lessons and activities.

Doing real science starts with a question, followed by activities to explore and seek an answer. Students have access to science labs where teachers plan and facilitate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) lessons, allowing students to gain valuable hands-on experiences while fostering and developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students at FES participate in the district's annual Science Fair. They create experiments using the scientific method. Students participate in person and virtual lessons, nature walks, and field trips that provide real-world, hands-on experiences. FES has partnerships with East Foundation and the Texas Farm Bureau. Our students become familiar with our local and state environmental resources. Furthermore, students become responsible land stewards and proud conservationists for our state. CBAs throughout the year are valuable tools that support the rigor and relevance of state accountability and allow teachers to monitor students' progress throughout the year using the district's student database platform. CBA's, Checkpoints, and Benchmark assessments provide teachers data to plan and differentiate instruction for tutorials, small-group, and interventions. Teachers address the needs of all diverse learners.

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

FES believes in guiding our students to become responsible and productive citizens. Students are taught to respect individual and group ideas and identities while celebrating and embracing diversity. The Social Studies curriculum is integrated into other interdisciplinary content. FES educates students on the importance of history, geography, economics, culture, and citizenship. Rigorous lessons provide students with the ideas needed to become competent and responsible citizens who are actively involved in their community and exhibit the utmost moral and civic virtues.

Our school's virtual reality technology enables our learners to immerse themselves in culture and travel the world. Teachers collaborate and plan lessons that allow students to learn about our world's geography, history, and cultures through inquiry-based learning, group presentations, and independent research activities. Students utilize their right to freedom of speech to think and write critically about different topics and issues that affect our local and global communities in our daily lives. Historical artifacts such as photos, news articles, and historical texts are some items students analyze critically as part of their daily learning. These artifacts are displayed and discussed to develop knowledge and understanding of events from the past. For example, students are asked to interview and bring in a photo of a Veteran family member during our Veteran's Day Celebration. Mock trials, debates, mock elections, and class discussions also allow students to voice their concerns and opinions about their world in a safe and respectful environment that supports inclusion and equality for everyone.

FES is actively involved in our surrounding neighborhood and community. One example is Career Day which allows our students to become familiar with various jobs and services in our community. This event also helps students identify employment they may be interested in and establish future career goals.

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

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

At FES, we provide a full instructional day for three and four-year-olds through our early childhood program. Students are taught ELAR, Math, Science, and Social Studies through an adopted Prekindergarten program that aligns with the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines and the district-created CARES, including Children's Learning Institute Engage (CLI Engage). Along with the instructional curriculum, the adopted program supports social-emotional development that aids in self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills. The Prekindergarten classroom is conducive to learning with developmentally appropriate, multi-sensory learning centers with various activities to enhance student learning by incorporating the utilization of the Comprehensive Instruction Reinforcing Collaborative Learning Environment (CIRCLE). Every early childhood classroom incorporates a print-rich environment to display English and Spanish vocabulary. Teachers utilize student data to drive their instruction and provide intervention or enrichment through the use of learning centers which include ABC, Math, Library, Writing, Science, and Technology.

In collaboration with district deans and practitioners, students are monitored using a tracking sheet and teacher action plans to ensure that all students reach grade-level potential. Furthermore, teachers communicate the student's progress with parents to help them become knowledgeable about their child's development and support learning at home. To provide high-quality early childhood education focused on each child's unique needs, student progress monitoring, and kindergarten readiness are measured across multiple domains of development. In addition, FES equips parents with the tools necessary to enhance and further extend their children's learning by providing monthly parental involvement and engagement, family projects, monthly parent sessions, and online parent resources. Our high-quality Prekindergarten program significantly impacts our early childhood students by building a solid foundational platform by providing a learning environment that inspires curiosity and confidence. It fosters a love for learning while preparing and creating successful and confident learners.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The FES Fine Arts Department comprises our Music, Choir, and Mariachi group, "Los Halcones del Oeste," the first and only elementary Mariachi group at LISD, as well as the "Gems" Dance Team. The visual and performing arts program aims to inspire, motivate, and encourage students to acquire various skills while exploring their artistic side, thus enhancing and nurturing the whole child. FES Fine Arts provides opportunities for students to participate in district-wide events throughout the academic year. FES provides our students with memorable experiences and bounteous moments to highlight their talents in various appearances such as Veteran's Day, Farias Christmas program, Family Reading Night, Washington's Birthday Celebration Association (WBCA) Youth Parade, Mother's Day, and End of Year Awards Ceremony. Not only do we display our students through such programs, but we emphasize the importance of providing music lessons through our weekly music class for grades Prekindergarten through 5th, where all students learn the fundamentals of music. Music students learn about beats, tempos, pitches, and rhythms. Furthermore, our students learn about musical notes and how to read them. Additionally, they supplement their musical knowledge by learning about musical instruments and gaining real-world knowledge by using these instruments during music class time.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

FES provides a strong Physical Education (PE), Health, and Nutrition program. The PE department at FES addresses the TEKS in grades Prekindergarten 3 through 5th for 45 minutes daily by providing moderate to vigorous physical activity and lessons about physical education. Through PE TEKS, the students are educated on the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle by being physically active. All FES students are required to complete the Fitness Gram twice a year, which assesses student cardio, flexibility, strength, and endurance. Data collected allows PE staff to create necessary drills and activities to ensure student growth for post-assessment. Upon completion, the state evaluates student activity levels and Body Mass Index. The PE coaches provide students opportunities for personal goal-setting, motor-skill development, tools to reduce stress and anxiety, and increased personal fitness for 45 minutes daily. In addition to physical well-being, the FES instructional program also focuses on health and nutrition. While teachers conduct lessons on health aligned to the TEKS in their classrooms weekly, the campus also has the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (FFVP), where students learn about and try all types of fruits and vegetables, many of which are native to our area. FES places value and importance on staying fit and eating healthy.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

Technology is an integral part of the FES instructional plan and the academic success of all students. FES has adopted technology integration to provide meaningful lessons that promote skills needed for a 21st Century learner. Teachers develop technology activities that engage students and enhance academic growth. Teachers use iPads, document cameras, virtual reality, 3 Dimensional Printers (3D), and online keyboarding programs to support instruction. Additionally, every student at FES has a Chromebook, which increases creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills through assignments and activities. Students are encouraged to use Technology Application Skills in class. Our Digital Learning Specialist (DLS) supports teachers and students by developing training to enhance content knowledge and pedagogy through digital activities and resources in the curriculum from Prekindergarten to 5th grade.

The library's curriculum at FES is aligned with the TEKS. Once a week, the librarian teaches all students from Prekindergarten through 5th grade to increase literacy skills. Library classes are an extension of the classroom and support instruction. The librarian encourages family engagement by having students participate in AR, Read Across America, Family Reading Night, Reading with a Loved One, National

Library Week, extended after-school library hours, and summer library services. The purpose of the FES library is to develop a love of reading.

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

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

FES plans strategically for students who do not perform at grade level by providing progress monitoring to track the student's academic progress. Students who are at-risk of failing due to performing below grade level are provided with an intervention plan that targets specific skills for three weeks. Teachers complete a failure prevention report every 3rd marking period of the six weeks to identify students at risk of failing the six weeks term. Student referrals to the counselor can identify possible causes of why a student is struggling academically. The counselor collaborates with all stakeholders, including Communities In Schools (CIS) and the student's parents, to make a plan of action to resolve the student's difficulties. Periodic follow-ups are utilized to assess the student's academic progress and social-emotional state and to ensure that the student is back on track. Ongoing communication and consistent monitoring are essential for all stakeholders to assist in continuing academic support for all students performing below grade level. Parents and students can also track student progress via the district website's parent/student portal. Furthermore, students who did not pass the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessments must complete 30 hours of accelerated instruction for each subject area below performance. The leadership team ensures that these students receive prescriptive tutorials to address areas of need to meet their 30-hour requirement.

Students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade who perform below grade level are encouraged to attend prescriptive tutorials several times weekly. FES also implements Friday Lock-Ins for two hours every other Friday of the month and Saturday tutorials for four hours twice monthly. Teachers and FES practitioners provide small group instruction, providing more tailored education to smaller groups or individual students. The FES practitioners focus on the fundamentals of Reading and Math to strengthen the students' foundational skills and knowledge.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students who perform above grade level are provided with various learning opportunities. FES high-achieving students are assigned to flexible groups that can share learning experiences with children who have similar academic abilities. They get to appreciate, learn, and respect each person's individual self. In addition, peer tutoring allows students to make choices throughout the learning process. Students improve their ability to govern themselves, regulate their learning, and cooperate with others by exercising choice. Students above grade level are provided prescriptive tutoring with challenging activities and real-life projects. Some students who perform above grade level are placed in Trailblazing classes, receiving differentiated instruction and strategically planned activities with higher expectations than students in regular classes. Most 4th and 5th grade Trailblazing students are members of the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS), where they participate year-round.

GT students are part of the group performing above grade level. They are expected to design and present a project of their choice twice a year, once in the fall semester and again near the end of the second semester. These presentations, which include research on their topic, allow them to develop skills such as data collection, organization, and analysis which follow the Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) guidelines. For example, some students' presentation topics were Animal Nation, Mathematics in Nature, and Enigmas. Their final presentation is celebrated with a ceremony where GT students have the opportunity to present their projects to peers, parents, teachers/staff, district guests, and community members. In addition to the TPSP project, the GT program provides student-centered learning experiences with greater depth and complexity by encouraging students to develop higher-order thinking skills.

Delivering their projects gives them a chance to practice their oral skills for public speaking while refining other interpersonal skills such as confidence building and self-awareness.

3c. Students with disabilities:

The FES Special Education Program serves students with disabilities who require individualized education plans (IEP). Our special education students have equal access to learning and are included in all school events. FES Special Education students are divided into two units: one for autistic students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade and another for 2nd through 5th grade students. The third unit includes our youngest students in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) from Prekindergarten to Kindergarten. The student-teacher ratio is 3 to 1. Certified Special Education teachers and teacher assistants support the instructional environment. FES ensures that SPED students receive the accommodations and modifications they need to improve and advance academically while adhering to all state and federal guidelines. Our SPED students receive adaptive PE and physical/occupational therapy. Aside from using the TEKS and CARES curriculum for instruction, SPED teachers also follow the recommendations in the students' IEPs.

A student with a physical or mental impairment that significantly restricts one or more main life activities may be eligible for an Academic Education Plan (AEP) that the 504 committee has recommended under the 504 program. Students who struggle with dyslexia can also participate in the 504 program. The strategy entails proximity, rerouting, condensed assignments, and additional time. Dyslexia students are pulled out and given prescriptive Reading and Math instruction for 45 minutes twice a week by a certified Dyslexia teacher.

Our mainstreamed students with special needs in grades 2nd through 5th receive small group instruction from a resource teacher licensed in special education. Students are recategorized by ability every six weeks based on assessment results. The teacher delivers instruction that incorporates modifications stated in the students' IEPs. These learners partake in prescriptive after-school tutorials. The resource teacher plans and collaborates with grade-level teachers to encourage students to perform on grade level.

3d. English Language Learners:

FES teachers are highly encouraged to be certified with their Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test (BTLPT) which makes them highly qualified to teach our EB students. Teachers implement the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocols (SIOP) model, which is research-based and proven successful in addressing the academic needs of EBs. Teachers implement the Think-Pair-Share strategy across all grade levels to pair up students with classroom discussions, promoting organized instructional conversations. FES teachers incorporate visuals as scaffolds for vocabulary development, academic concepts, sentence stems, cognates, graphic organizers, bilingual dictionaries, manipulatives, and extensive modeling to support the academic instruction for EB students. In addition, teachers implement the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) into their daily lessons for all content areas.

FES uses an evidence-based standard-aligned online instructional program for intervention, progress monitoring, and assessment. EBs use the program for a minimum of 45 minutes three times a week in the classroom, computer lab, or from home. The online educational platform helps identify student strengths and weaknesses and creates an individualized learning path in two areas: listening-speaking and reading-writing. FES teachers monitor student progress and utilize individual and classroom reports to drive instruction and provide additional interventions. The district and campus monitor EB progress through the online program's checkpoints to measure student growth during the school year and before the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) administration. Furthermore, the district's Bilingual department assigns a Bilingual Strategist to each campus to provide ongoing training and support for all teachers to enhance effective instruction and student success.

The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) monitors the progress and needs of EBs and makes assessment decisions based on individual needs for state exams. In conjunction with the Admission, Review, Dismissal (ARD) committee, the LPAC composes and documents assessment participation decisions for students with disabilities.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At FES, we provide our students with many extracurricular activities that foster academic, social, and emotional development and prepare them for college and future careers. Administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and community members work collaboratively to create opportunities for students to feel safe while engaging in fun learning activities. FES works collaboratively with the city's Boys and Girls Club to coordinate sports events at our campus. Volleyball, flag football, basketball, track, and soccer are just a few of the extracurricular activities parents volunteer to coach. Other sporting events which FES participates in are Special Olympics and dance. Additional clubs include UIL, NEHS, robotics, chess, technology, coding, choir, district and city spelling bee, Math World Day, Math Olympics, and mariachi organizations are all sponsored by teachers. On March 8th, during Math Word Day, one of our 2nd grade students won 1st place in a competition with students worldwide.

Besides academic clubs, FES involves students in leisure activities such as dance, kindness, and gardening. Moreover, we have a 12-week after-school program called The Little Medical School that focuses on the medical industry. The classes are held twice a week in 45-minute sessions where instruction is provided by a community member who is in the medical field. A total of 15 students interested in the medical field are selected to participate in the program from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. Students gain knowledge of various body systems, medical terminology, and life-saving techniques. The program includes practical exercises that help students visualize what they are learning. For example, students act out an emergency, make casts using balloons, and practice first aid skills. FES encourages all students to be part of a school club or sports activity to promote a sense of belonging, encourage teamwork, and build self-esteem.

Furthermore, NEHS students are considered to be school community ambassadors. During campus events, these students assist in escorting any visitors to the event location. They hold project drives to donate to nursing homes, animal shelters, and food banks. These students serve as role models for our campus and inspire others to follow by demonstrating leadership qualities, providing services, and demonstrating exceptional character to our school and the community.

In addition, FES teams up with Junior Achievement to inspire and prepare students to succeed in a global society. Junior Achievement volunteers provide activities to support student learning in financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

An "open-door" policy is in place at FES because providing excellent customer service is a top priority. Parents and other interested parties are grateful to have them as part of the school community and feel welcomed. They encourage decisions made at school, resulting in fruitful and solid cooperation between the two. Parents and teachers are accountable for their student's achievement as partners in education. All parent communication, including monthly flyers informing parents of all school activities and events, is sent home in English and Spanish. Through events like Open House, Christmas Program, Family Reading Night, and our End of the Year Awards Ceremony, to name a few, FES aims to draw parents to the school. Relationships between educators, students, and parents are forged through various activities. Parents appreciate taking the time to enjoy spending quality time with their children, which also contributes to their children's success. FES collaborates with families and community members to support student success. As student success grows, so does campus perception, influencing the school's overall performance.

Students have participated in city-wide competitions such as poetry, drawing, sporting events, and parades. Students can practice and improve their academic tenacity through competition in these contests and events. Through community involvement and participation, FES enhances students' success. Opportunities for Community involvement include career days, Junior Achievement, and the Elementary Menu Advisory Committee. Additionally, FES provides volunteer opportunities with community agencies and entities through Red Ribbon Week, Pennies for Tennis, United Way, and the NEHS. Due to these opportunities,

Farias students develop academic excellence and leadership qualities seen in community leaders. Community organizations such as Angel of Hope, Blue Santa, Texas State Guard, Deputy Santa, Toys for Tots, and Knights on Bikes Christmas Bicycle Drive make donations to our students to encourage them to stay in school and succeed academically. Students are encouraged to pursue and maintain high academic excellence by receiving donated school supplies, jackets, and toys.

To stay in touch with family and community members, monthly newsletters, calendars, and newsletters are employed physically and digitally through social media and our campus website. Parents are informed about school improvement projects and invited to assist in promoting student success. Parents attend award ceremonies, reading nights, Kindergarten graduation, and student field trips to celebrate their children's triumphs and victories. FES credits community and parental involvement as part of its academic success

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At FES, Teachers and administrators support current trends by investing in professional development training to support professional growth. The district's Curriculum and Instruction Department (C&I) focuses on professional development across the curriculum. Teachers attend training sessions to prepare for the forthcoming six-week TEKS, design personalized lessons, and incorporate weekly assessments. These trainings help teachers identify what skills must be applied for students to succeed. One goal of professional development workshops is for teachers to share best practices that align with the TEKS for student growth. Our district provides campus and district training throughout the school year.

Teachers are required to attain a minimum of 20 hours of technology training to help enhance and enrich not only their technology application skills but also their students' learning. In addition to the technology, teachers need 6 hours of GT updates through an online portal that requires teachers to view video presentations, answer questions, and take quizzes while learning about best practices when working with GT students. Teachers then apply those strategies, and the latest technological skills learned with their students.

Administrators, teachers, and support staff gather in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss data analysis, student growth, monthly event planning, support, action plans, attendance, recognitions, celebrations, student progress monitoring, interventions, and enrichments. Instructors create demanding and sophisticated reasoning lessons for students to use on district and state tests to achieve development on Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels. Administrators and teachers collaborate to share effective practices that improve academic achievement across all populations.

In addition to academic achievement, FES recognizes and encourages teachers' and employees' social and emotional well-being. At the end of the first semester, FES employees participate in breakfast socials, where they receive breakfast every day for a week thanks to various groups supplying the meals. In addition to the breakfast socials, there are monthly socials at which different grade levels and support staff present "meriendas" after school. FES also comes together to celebrate holidays during our Thanksgiving feast and Christmas Posada, which take place during the first semester. The second semester includes a continuation of festivities and recognitions, including Counselor and Teacher Appreciation Week and our regular Teacher and Staff of the Month acknowledgment, where a teacher and staff are selected each month for their efforts, hard work, and dedication. These individuals receive a gift card, personalized parking space for the month, and recognition on our social media platforms and campus digital signage.

4. School Leadership:

The primary function of the leadership team is to ensure that all stakeholders carry out the school's mission, vision, and goals. The leadership team at FES consists of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Instructional Specialist. Each member plays a distinct role that is critical to student success. The principal develops the strengths and talents of other leaders to create a cohesive and focused team. She ensures that all policies and procedures are followed, improving instruction and academic success. Through conferences held at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, the principal mentors teachers and staff. By conducting daily walkthroughs, administration monitors that high-quality effective instruction is taking place in all classrooms.

The assistant principal is also fundamental in the school. Aside from conducting daily walkthroughs that assess the effectiveness of programs and instruction, she also shares responsibilities that include school and student safety, attendance, and discipline. She keeps parents updated on attendance, discipline, instructional programs, and academic performance. She is the local/state assessment exam coordinator on campus. Her duties and responsibilities ensure the effectiveness of student success and that FES has a prosperous school year.

The counselor is an essential member of the administration team. She focuses on students' social, emotional, and physical well-being to maximize academic performance. Collaboration between the counselor, teachers, parents, and staff contributes to academic success. She advises and organizes community presentations on drug awareness, bullying, and other issues. When dealing with sensitive issues, the counselor refers students to Child Protective Services (CPS) and Serving and Adults in Need (SCAN).

The instructional specialist is a crucial component of the administrative team. She models lessons and provides resources to improve classroom instruction effectiveness. She assists in analyzing local and state assessments from Prekindergarten to 5th grade. She advises on mastery level performance while collaborating with administration and teachers to interpret student data. High levels of mastery maintain student success by informing teachers about district initiatives and ensuring academic performance.

The leadership team ensures that all interventions, programs, and staff development efforts are directed toward student success. Compliance with district and campus policies and procedures is critical to the campus's success and is, therefore, closely monitored by the team. The leadership team collaborates and shares responsibility for ensuring all school operations are in place for student success. FES firmly believes in developing relationships with teams, instilling passion, and instilling trust to produce leaders who can sustain the trajectory toward academic success.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

FES is largely Hispanic/Latino, accounting for 98% of our student population, with a tiny percentage of Asian and Caucasian pupils. The staff composition of FES is comparable to the student enrollment. The fine arts programs expose students to various musical genres, such as mariachi bands and classical music. Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, 16 de septiembre, and Cinco de Mayo are particularly honored on campus through a variety of events including assemblies, shared read-aloud, journal writing, and hands-on classroom activities. To expand the lesson on the significance of Veteran's Day, students are asked to deliver a presentation on their loved ones' history aside from a Veteran's Day parade and school presentation. The school library fosters an environment that embraces our common Texan culture by housing a significant collection of Texas history books and texts from other cultures.

As a rural and predominantly low socioeconomic school, students' experiences with cultural and social happenings are routinely blended into curricula to keep them up to date on current events and their overall influence. Culturally responsive education connects families' cultures, languages, and life experiences in ways that fully reflect students' realities while providing rich experiences outside the community's bounds.

In collaboration with the counselor, FES teachers concentrate on character-building activities that contribute to students' overall social-emotional well-being. FES has established a culture that gives our kids a safe place to thrive as individuals and as members of a diverse community. FES teachers know that our students come from various and diverse backgrounds. Our students may live with grandparents, extended families, or other relatives.

Regarding family outreach, all our staff members are bilingual, which helps us communicate with non-English speaking parents. In addition, our monthly parent meetings/classes like "Los Tamales de mi Abuela" and "Familia por siempre/Family Forever" in English and Spanish are meant to educate them and strengthen their parenting skills. Our CIS coordinator is also bilingual and serves as a resource liaison for needy families. Additionally, the CIS coordinator manages home visits to help non-English-speaking parents who

visit our school feel less frustrated. FES collaborates with local community organizations to assist families in need. The CIS coordinator collaborates with the school counselor to ensure that all families needs are fulfilled when they require assistance. Activities for parent involvement include Read Across America Family Reading Night, school Jamaica, Family Book Fair evenings, and Meet the Teacher events.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

FES takes pride and ownership in the hard work put into becoming a thriving campus. However, one strategy that sets us aside from everyone else is the ability to build relationships and open lines of communication. It begins with our leadership team, which consists of the principal, assistant principal, instructional specialist, and school counselor. What binds us together is our work ethic and passion for education. The leadership team maintains an open-door policy which aids in building trusting relationships with teachers and staff. We demonstrate empathy when difficulties arise and are always willing to show support by listening and helping. One example is recognizing teacher and staff birthdays by making public announcements over the public address system.

Furthermore, when we learn that teachers or staff members are ill, we send them a get-well text message. Employees perform better when they feel respected and valued. FES is our home away from home, and we have formed lifelong bonds with our staff. We all have "one vision with one mission in mind," which is nurturing the whole child by establishing vital connections between each stakeholder. These relationships are all interconnected for the success of students. Relationships are built on trust, an indispensable element that helps embellish those relationships.

Teachers in turn build relationships with their students. Teachers acknowledge students as they get to their classrooms and get to know their students as the year progresses. FES teachers are encouraged to celebrate student successes and empathize with students having a rough day. This strategy helps the students feel acknowledged, welcomed, and validated. FES students want to be at school because they know that the staff at FES cares about them from the moment they are greeted at their cars or buses until they are returned to the same vehicles and buses at the end of the day. Teachers capitalize on students' enthusiasm to make learning enjoyable and meaningful. Once relationships are established, teachers can better push students to achieve at their highest levels and use their resources to expand on student-centered, learning experiences. Moreover, teachers build relationships with families by communicating about their child's attendance, academic progress, and celebrations via various social media platforms. Community relationships are critical in helping our students form meaningful connections between real-world experiences. As a result of the collaborative efforts of everyone involved in the child's life, opportunities are provided for everyone to be actively engaged in the educational success of each child.