

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

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

School Mailing Address 2500 W. Alton Gloor Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Brownsville State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78520-9524

County Cameron

Telephone (956) 698-1100 Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://ortiz.bisd.us/> E-mail jpena1@bisd.us

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

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

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

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mrs. Jessica Gonzalez
(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.

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

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):
- 35 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 7 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 52 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	84
K	52
1	71
2	66
3	76
4	69
5	84
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	502

*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
 - 0.2 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 99.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 0.2 % White
 - 0.2 % 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: 15%

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

Due to the proximity of Brownsville to Mexico, it is not uncommon for students to move back to their home country.

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	51
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	25
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	76
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	508
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.15
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 28 %
142 Total number ELL

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

Total number students who qualify: 502

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 21 %
Total number of students served 103

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>12</u> Autism	<u>37</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>11</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>40</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>5</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>5</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %
Total number of students served: 10

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 1

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.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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 18:1

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%	95%	97%	97%	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.

In partnership with parents and the community of Brownsville, the faculty and staff at Ortiz Elementary are committed to producing well-rounded students who can think critically and independently, communicate effectively and be responsible, productive members in our society. Ortiz Elementary believes education is the key to success and is committed to preparing all students for college and their future.

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

<https://ortiz.bisd.us>

Please scroll to the bottom of the page to see the District/School nondiscrimination policy.

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

United States Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz Elementary School is part of the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD), located in Brownsville, Texas. A small community in deep South Texas, as the locals call it, On the Border, By the Sea. The school was founded in 2004 with blue and gold colors and a cougar as a mascot. During the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Snapshot, Ortiz had 502 registered students. The demographic data showed 99% Hispanic. The At-Risk population is 59%, and its economically disadvantaged population is 92%. Twenty percent of students receive special education services, while 28% of the population is classified as English Language Learners. Ortiz Elementary offers an Early Exit Bilingual Program, Early Childhood Special Education Program (ECSE), and three self-contained classrooms for children with severe cognitive, physical, or behavioral impairments. It offers special education resource setting and provides an inclusion program for students with specific learning disabilities. The school also offers a dyslexia program geared toward students who qualify for this service. The school holds strong ties with the community and prides itself on its students' roots. It is a school full of culture and academic principles. Parents are an integral factor in the school's academic and social success. It is a relationship that bonds the school and community. The school's atmosphere is positive and inviting. Visitors walking through Ortiz's doors have mentioned countless times that it has a warm and welcoming climate. Ortiz Elementary believes every child can succeed and inculcates this message in teachers, parents, and students.

Our school mission is as follows:

In partnership with parents and the community of Brownsville, the faculty and staff at Ortiz Elementary are committed to producing well-rounded students who can think critically and independently, communicate effectively, and be responsible, productive members in our society. Ortiz Elementary believes education is the key to success and is committed to preparing all students for college and their future.

The school has earned many accolades, including the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) Award, Honor Roll School, Best Practices, Texas Education Agency Distinguished School, and many more. These recognitions have been obtained through the arduous work of students, teachers, staff, parents, community members, and administration. It takes a village to make this happen. At Ortiz Elementary, they identify and address students' academic and social-emotional needs. Students realize that they can all learn and be proud of themselves. If they see it and believe it, they can obtain it. Scores have increased tremendously through the hard work of teachers who devote countless hours to promote and be the child's most prominent advocate at school and home. Teachers are dedicated curriculum writers for the district and implement it in their classrooms. The extracurricular activities have also allowed students to grow physically and socially. Cheer, Blue Crew, Dance, Football, Volleyball, Basketball, and Running Club have inspired students to become good role models and seek to reach their highest potential. Leadership is instilled in students as they are responsible for morning announcements. Taking initiative and responsibility are strategies that allow students to better prepare themselves and become successful.

Ortiz Elementary is all about involvement and innovation. The school has implemented many programs that allow students to take part and feel a sense of belonging. Its extra-curricular activities go beyond the regular stem of a traditional elementary school. The athletes club began with the running club and now incorporates football, volleyball, basketball, and soccer. A chess team and coding club allow students to challenge their mental abilities and represent the school in tournaments. Cheer, Blue Crew, and Dance are a representation of our spirit squads. The art, choir, and violin club are alternatives for musically inclined students who prefer the fine arts. All these programs are offered to Kindergarten through 5th grade students. It was a school initiative to create well-rounded students with many opportunities outside the classroom. The school was recognized and mentioned in a book study by Duncan Van Dusen, Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Global Foundation, for its physical fitness program. The morning programs at Ortiz Elementary have been well recognized and visited by schools across the district and region. The Reading Rooms allow students to begin the day with literacy. The program starts at 7:30 a.m. Students are separated by grade level, and staff members conduct Read Alouds, something that many lack at home. They enjoy a good book while reviewing vocabulary and comprehension skills. Students are able to make text-to-text

and/or text-to-world connections. In conjunction, the primary grades revisit letters and sounds. The school also offers homework assistance after school. The Extended Day Program allows students to seek help and receive enrichment every Monday-Friday from 3:30-5:30 p.m. and provides supper. It takes a dedicated school community from all levels to make Ortiz Elementary a success, from cafeteria staff to solid leadership.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Ortiz Elementary is the home of rich, challenging, and empowering reading instruction. Students at Ortiz receive high quality, targeted, and well-planned lessons that focus on strong foundational skills. The teaching rigor begins in pre-kindergarten (Pre-K), and it continues throughout the grade levels, following the Pre-K Guidelines and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Student achievement in Pre-K entails focused planning that targets phonemic awareness. Lessons actively focus on giving students opportunities to engage in identifying essential sounds. Teachers use direct instruction, small groups, music, and play to ensure students have ample opportunities to actively engage in learning. Students receive three read-alouds daily for enjoyment, comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition. Students are assessed often using informal teacher observations and a formal system that tracks progress from the beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year.

The fantastic kindergarten team picks up the baton and focuses instruction on rigorous phonological awareness skills. Using the beginning of the year tracking system as a method of formal assessment, teachers develop targeted lessons that address whole-group and specific needs. Teachers make excellent use of daily “centers” to address skills using different activities. Visuals and print rich classrooms are essential elements to the core of foundational reading skills throughout Ortiz.

First and second grade highlight the critical role that foundational skills play in building skilled readers. Teachers spend ample time planning targeted instruction using evidence-based instructional resources that include powerful programs that build fluency using decodables and other learning materials to help build a solid reading foundation. Teachers design and implement lessons that focus on enhancing reading through phonics, phonological awareness, graphophonemic knowledge, decoding, fluency, and comprehension using enrichment programs that share the same vision. Teachers collaborate to create similar activities and assessments. Students are periodically grouped by ability, skill, purpose, collaboration, or interests. Teachers monitor progress using various informal tools and grade level, campus, or district benchmarks.

Third, fourth, and fifth grades continue to promote effective instruction by highlighting and utilizing essential reading programs that enhance students’ vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. These grade-levels are also print rich and promote visualization, clarification, independence, and critical thinking. Students are constantly given opportunities to actively engage in highly effective group activities that promote cognitive strategies such as inferring, questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and organizing. Ortiz students spend an entire day in the fall and one in the spring on inferencing activities where students present to other grade levels. This celebration is known as “Inferencing Day.” Students learn by teaching!

Along with their instruction, students are assessed on a regular basis through informal and formal assessments, which include teacher observations, teacher created tests, campus mini marks (focused on TEKS needing additional support), district checkpoints and benchmarks, as well as the end of year state assessments.

Excellent teacher modeling, collaboration, daily reflection, creativity, communication, student and content knowledge, environment, engagement, professionalism, rigor, dedication, and effective teaching are only some of the ingredients that make Ortiz Elementary an optimal place to learn.

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

Mathematics curriculum at Ortiz Elementary is based on the TEKS and CCRS (College and Career Readiness Standards). In Kindergarten-5th grade, teachers provide 90 minutes of math instruction. In the lower grades, starting in Pre-K and Kindergarten, instruction is focused on number identification and

formation, making the connection between the value of each number, one through ten, using manipulatives and advancing to computations when students are ready. First and second grades focus on number sense, computation and problem solving. The upper grades focus on numerical representations and relationships, computations and algebraic relationships, geometry and measurements, data analysis, and financial literacy. Students move from solving problems with concrete examples, to being able to solve problems abstractly. Teachers use the district adopted math curriculum throughout.

The school uses an individualized approach of instruction for all students to improve overall academic excellence and/or improve progress to close achievement gaps among student subgroups such as: English Language Learners, Gifted and Talented (GT), At-Risk, Special Education, Dyslexia, and Behavior Unit.

The campus demonstrates that it is possible to make an enduring, positive difference in students' lives. Ortiz Elementary creates a safe and welcoming environment where students master challenging content. Teachers always strive for excellence, making sure all students receive the education that is needed to be successful leaders of the future.

Mathematics instruction is implemented using various teaching styles to meet the needs of all students and their learning abilities. Teachers also use a variety of instructional methods through whole group, small group, and individual instruction, depending on student needs. Teachers implement a daily spiral review to provide the students with ample opportunities to master the grade level TEKS. In group discussion, students can share, analyze, and solve problems in several ways. Anchor charts and academic vocabulary are used before, during, and after each lesson to reinforce the skill being addressed. Moreover, lessons are delivered through graphic organizers and visuals. Videos and multiple online resources are used to reinforce students' learning along with manipulatives and hands on activities. Through learning centers, our early childhood instruction also teaches with manipulatives and hands-on activities during rotations. Calendar time is used to teach the number of the day, place value, money, fractions, and rote counting to gather instant data. Throughout the grade levels, students receive well-planned daily math instruction, vertically aligned curriculum, and student-oriented lessons. Teachers continue to adapt and adjust instructional practice and deepen their own professional learning, while students create individual goals and track their growth and progress. Teachers monitor student data through the continuous use of formal and informal assessments, such as teacher observations, teacher created assessments, campus mini marks, which focus on specific TEKS, weekly assessments, six-week check point assessments, and campus and district benchmarks. Based on the data gathered from various assessments, students are grouped by ability where then intervention groups are formed to target their areas of deficiency. Students are then provided with after school enrichment programs, tutorials, and Saturday academies. These practices are what improve student and school performance for Ortiz Elementary.

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

Ortiz Elementary provides rigorous TEKS based science lessons and prepares students for the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The science department follows the BISD Curriculum Frameworks based on the TEKS. This curriculum integrates the Nature of Science, Physical Science, Earth Science and Life Science Standards.

Science lessons follow the 5E Lesson Cycle (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate). All classes integrate project-based learning to ensure students make connections, hypothesize, and put what they learn into practice. An example of this is the yearly campus Science Fair Competition; all upper grade classrooms participate in this event. Students who have advanced to the District Science Fair competition have received recognition year after year due to the school community's continuous support and guidance. At the District Science Fair Competition, students can implement scientific concepts learned in the classroom. This school year, 93% of the district level participants received recognition.

An integral part of teachers' lesson plans encompasses a plethora of carefully curated resources. This includes district provided science-based software along with teacher provided resources. In addition, Ortiz has adopted a campus wide initiative called Science Word of the Day/Question of the Day. All classrooms ranging from Pre-K to 5th grade analyze, evaluate, and discuss scientific questions and terms daily.

Moreover, our innovative Super Science Saturday Academies provide opportunities outside a regular school day to emphasize science concepts with hands-on activities, and real-world applications. Furthermore, to provide students with memorable science experiences, our newly acquired science and technology lab is available for all students.

Ortiz prides itself on using formative assessments to guide instruction and mini assessments, which are conducted to further identify misconceptions and reteach concepts that students have not yet mastered. These assessments are used to modify instruction and meet the needs of all student populations.

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

Ortiz Elementary follows the Social Studies frameworks implemented by BISD as a tool for curriculum alignment and development. The Social Studies instruction helps students build a foundation in history, geography, economics, government, citizenship, culture, science, technology, society, and other social studies skills. Teachers can provide their Social Studies lessons by using the district's book adoption, weekly curriculum-based newspapers, engaging videos, community awareness, and technology including current events relevant to students' lives.

Although 99% of Ortiz students are Hispanic, they are taught about different traditions throughout various cultures, the importance of family and community beliefs, languages, holidays, and celebrations. Students can celebrate these holidays and cultures throughout the school year. They offer ofrendas during Día de los Muertos, invite veterans from the community to visit the campus thanking them for their service during Veteran's Day, honor all African Americans from all periods of United States history during Black History Month, raise donations for Breast Cancer Awareness and for Heavenly Hats to help those in need, and participate in the local Charro Days BISD children's parade and festivities along with many other activities.

Teachers at the campus integrate the Social Studies content into both reading and writing instruction and through classroom discussion. They assess students' knowledge formatively and informatively to determine levels of understanding and additional student needs. They use a variety of assessment types including short answer questions, fill in the blank, and multiple-choice, giving students an opportunity to show the knowledge they have obtained. This also prepares them for the state assessment at the end of the year for upper grade levels. Based on the data analyzed after assessments, teachers can provide individual accelerated instruction that meets all their student's needs.

These opportunities provide their students the foundation needed to be model citizens in our community.

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

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

The early childhood program at Ortiz Elementary services preschool children from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The Pre-K program stimulates students by providing meaningful activities that prepare them with Kindergarten readiness skills to close academic gaps. Faculty and staff are committed to helping students be productive, independent, think critically, and communicate effectively.

The Pre-K program provides activities that target the student's developmental growth in language, cognition, psychomotor, social, and affective skills. They implement the book adoption, which correlates with the state's Pre-K Guidelines. Supplemental resources incorporated into the daily instruction are the Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE), Semillitas, and Heggerty. These resources address the ten developmental domains that guide planning and quality learning experiences for preschool children. The broad areas of learning essential to achieving academic success are Social and Emotional Development, Emergent Literacy Language and Communication, Emergent Literacy Reading, Emergent Literacy Writing, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Physical Development, and Technology. TEKS are integrated into weekly instruction to reinforce foundational learning skills that

support children from all backgrounds, experiences, and development. The lessons are vertically aligned from Pre-K to 2nd grade. Teachers follow district-created frameworks and utilize progress monitoring assessments. The data provides essential information on a child's progress, strengths, and weaknesses and helps educators understand and deliver effective interventions for desired learning outcomes. Student groups are based on ability, and remediation activities are applied to small-group instruction.

The success of the program is attributed to parental involvement. They use ClassDojo, Ortiz's Facebook page, Remind, emails, and phone calls. Communication is vital as it builds understanding and trust to support the children's well-being and maintain a positive partnership with parents.

These components of Ortiz's early childhood education have all led to Kindergarten readiness skills and success in the primary grades.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

The music program at Ortiz Elementary is structured to provide students with dynamic and motivating lessons based on the Texas music TEKS, allowing for individual and group work with numerous opportunities for performance during the school year. Students attend general music class once a week for forty-five minutes and gain awareness and skills in musicianship, analyzing music and thinking critically while expanding their social and communal participation.

Music instruction is presented concisely and deliberately to serve the student population's diverse learning styles. Music lessons follow rigorous but enjoyable concepts of music fundamentals that include Orff instruments, recorders, guitar, violin, piano, aural skills, and proper vocal production awareness. Visitors will see children enjoying lessons that include singing, playing, movement, learning through experience, making connections, interactive games, video performance excerpts from important composers, diverse cultures, and historical periods. Lessons are enhanced with strategies and best practices from important music and educational pedagogical theories.

The music program includes violin studies for elementary school children. Students explore the instrument while learning techniques to play traditional music selections and enjoy the benefits that accompany music education. These benefits include language development, improved memory, sense of accomplishment, boost in confidence, increased focus and concentration, among others.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

The Physical Education program at Ortiz Elementary provides a sequential, standards-based curriculum that empowers all Kindergarten through fifth grade students with the confidence to be physically active for a lifetime. Instruction is Monday through Friday, forty-five minutes each day, and is designed to develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors for physical activity and physical fitness. The focus is on lifelong movement, problem solving, collaborative team thinking, teamwork and individual success with the goal of students achieving their personal best. The core curriculum is integrated by introducing different core learning components in the areas of Reading, English, History, Math, and Science, related to the student's needs. Students implement their self-designed personal physical fitness plan based on the four main training principles (frequency, intensity, type and time) and incorporating the four main components of fitness, to show growth toward their personal fitness goals. Students demonstrate leadership both in and outside the classroom. They participate in the community through a great sports program that not only continues to allow students to shine, but also represents the school in a positive manner. The Physical Education program not only increases students' physical health, but also academic performance contributing to the overall success of the school.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

Ortiz Elementary is committed to building lifelong lovers of reading. Each student is able to visit the library at least once a week where they are exposed to a literature rich environment. Library resources are aligned with the state and district curriculum, and also support inquiry learning in a variety of formats. Students in first through fifth grades participate in a nationally recognized reading program which requires them to take a test after reading books at their grade level, with accommodations available based on student need. They are then awarded points based on their test score. The children who have met their point goal for the year are able to attend a special field trip. The Pre-K three and four-year old students come to the library to experience reading activities that are age and developmentally appropriate. Technology is an integral part of the school with a one-to-one ratio of iPads for Pre-K through second grade and Chromebooks for third, fourth, and fifth grades. Teachers are capable and experienced in the use of technology and are able to plan and implement strategies using the resources provided by the district. When students leave Ortiz Elementary, they are well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

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

At Ortiz Elementary we pride ourselves on our Reading Rooms. These rooms were developed to enhance their students' exposure to reading, building vocabulary, improving comprehension and active listening, and improving fluency. Students who arrive before the school day starts are sent to one of the Reading Rooms where they can enjoy hearing a story read aloud to them. They get to share in the magic and excitement of listening to a story read to them. They may participate in discussions about what is read to them. This provides them with a safe place to hear a story without any added pressure before they begin their school day. This practice is beneficial to their students, especially those that do not get this experience at home.

Another important practice at Ortiz Elementary is focused on social/emotional learning (SEL). This takes place in the classrooms starting during breakfast at 7:45a.m. Teachers start the day with a lesson that focuses on students' social/emotional learning. It may be a lesson on any of the five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. These lessons are provided digitally using the classroom's interactive panel and help the students start the day in a positive manner.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Academic support for students performing below grade level is provided in several ways to help ensure academic success. Academic support is provided through individualized instruction which allows teachers to tailor their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each student. These areas of need are based on data disaggregation from informal and formal assessments. Students needing this support benefit from one-to-one or small group instruction. Another way academic support is provided is through tutoring. Tutoring is provided two to three times a week and/or on Saturdays to meet the needs of struggling students. Tutoring provides students with extra help outside of the regular classroom. Teachers work with students on specific academic skills, such as reading comprehension, writing, math problem-solving, and science. Technology is also used for intervention. Students also use educational apps to improve their skills in math, reading and science. The strategies and techniques that are provided to students will help students succeed academically. In addition to these types of support, Ortiz Elementary also provides Response to Intervention (RtI) based on the Three-Tiered Model in the areas of Reading and Math for students who are failing in those areas. Tier one is for the whole group, tier two is for students who require more intense interventions and tier three is for students requiring additional help in addition to their tier one and two instructions. They are given specific strategies to address their needs for 30-45 minutes a day. They may also be provided with accommodations to address the areas of need, such as oral administration of assessments and/or daily work and extra time to complete assignments. Academic support is critical for students who are performing below

grade level. Individualized instruction, tutoring, technology and RtI can all provide students with the support they need to succeed academically and reach their full potential.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students performing above grade level at Ortiz Elementary are given many opportunities to highlight their academic talents. They may be identified as GT, and if so, participate in the GT program. All teachers at Ortiz are trained in teaching the GT student. GT students are assessed in the same way as other students with the exception of the requirement that a Texas Performance Standards Project be completed. It must include the following: identify the topic to study (based on student's interests), generate guiding questions to be investigated; develop a product that showcases talent/skill and present their product to an audience. Students are invited to participate in University Interscholastic League (UIL) academics, where they train to compete in various academic areas such as, oral reading, ready writing, music memory, art, and number sense. They may also participate in Brainsville Inventions where they invent a product in one of several categories and then compete by highlighting their invention. Destination Imagination (DI) is another area where students may join to participate in a regional tournament showcasing their talents in several areas, such as technical, scientific, service learning, fine arts, improvisational early learning, engineering, and instant challenge. Some of the teams have advanced from the regional competition to the state competition and on to compete at a global level. Students are also invited to participate in the school's coding club. This club meets once a week after school and offers students the time to learn about coding and grow in their coding skills. The school also offers a chess team where students can compete in tournaments throughout the school year. Ortiz Elementary is ecstatic to announce that this year they have the state champion in the primary JV K-3 division, winning the state title. All these opportunities are offered to our students to continue supporting their academic needs.

3c. Students with disabilities:

At Ortiz Elementary school, it is evident that the administration, faculty, and staff are committed to providing an inclusive and equitable education for all students, regardless of their abilities. The school strives to tailor instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the unique needs of these students. The first step in this process is identifying the needs of each student with a disability. The school's special education team works closely with parents, teachers, and outside professionals to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or an Individual Academic Plan (IAP) for each student. The IEP outlines the student's strengths and weaknesses, goals and objectives, and the services and accommodations they will receive. Instruction for students with disabilities is differentiated to meet their individual needs utilizing various strategies. In addition, the school provides specialized instruction and support for students with more significant needs, such as a Behavior Intervention Unit that supports students with academic, behavioral, and emotional needs, Dyslexia Lab that provides explicit, systematic instruction, and Early Childhood Special Education which offers young children ages 3-5 with self-contained, one-to-one aide support, and mainstream instruction. In addition, some students receive specialized services, such as content mastery services, modified content classes, in-class support, auditory impairment itinerant service, speech and language therapy, or occupational therapy. Assessments are also modified to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The school's special education team works with classroom teachers to determine appropriate student accommodations during assessments to help close the achievement gap of more than 10 percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of this subgroup. For example, a student with a math disability may be provided with supplemental aids, manipulatives, calculation aids, or a text-to-speech program during a math assessment. Finally, the school's special education team regularly updates their student's progress and works collaboratively with parents to ensure their child's needs are met.

3d. English Language Learners:

Ortiz Elementary tailors instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of English Language Learners by implementing the district's transitional bilingual early exit model. The transitional bilingual/early exit is a bilingual program model in which students identified as English Learners (EL) are served in both English and another language and are prepared to meet reclassification criteria to be successful in English-only instruction not earlier than two or later than five years after the

student enrolls in school. Instruction in this program is delivered by a teacher appropriately certified in bilingual education for the assigned grade level and content area. The goal of early-exit transitional bilingual education is for program participants to utilize their primary language as a resource while acquiring full proficiency in English. The instructional approach is to provide instruction in literacy and academic content through the medium of the students' primary language, along with instruction in English that targets second language development through academic content. The linguistic needs of EL students are met by the teachers' implementation of the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). Teachers allow extensive opportunities for speaking during classroom activities using the think-turn-talk strategy, allowing English learners additional practice with oral language. The cognitive needs of the EL students are being met through the implementation of the TEKS, small group instruction, and guided reading. Our school also utilizes a computer program that emulates the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). Students also practice the four domains of TELPAS: listening, speaking reading, and writing, and the bilingual certified teacher receives feedback from the program to closely monitor progress. Teachers then plan for instruction to target the areas of individual need for our students. The use of this program with fidelity has proven to be successful in transitioning students from the bilingual program.

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

At Ortiz Elementary, the priority is creating a safe, nurturing, and caring environment in which their students can thrive both academically and social emotionally. Two other populations being served at Ortiz Elementary are migrant and homeless students. At the time of registration at Ortiz Elementary parents/guardians are asked about their migrant and homeless status. Throughout the school year surveys are sent to families to ask about students' migrant status and parents/guardians can report if they have become homeless. Anyone with knowledge about a student's living arrangements can inform the school and the process will be initiated to correctly identify students' demographic data. If a student is identified as a migrant student they will receive supplies, tutorials, and counseling, if needed. The district also provides field trips for students who are in the migrant program. The students recently participated in a field trip that focused on architectural engineering for migrant students, where they got to interact with other migrant students from across the district and complete academically challenging activities. For the homeless students there is also a program that helps them with their academic learning. The BISD Youth Connection Project ensures educational rights and protection for children and youths experiencing homelessness. Students are provided with materials needed to attend school. If they need clothing, shoes, or school supplies they are provided with these items. Their parents/guardians are provided with information about shelters and other resources they may qualify for. Their children may continue attending school in the school where they are enrolled and may also qualify for transportation, if necessary. The school also provides counseling to these students and tutorials, if needed. With the help of these programs, we ensure that the students continue to have academic success, as well as social emotional well-being.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At Ortiz Elementary, teachers and staff engage, motivate, and provide students with a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth, and college and career readiness development. The school-wide parent/student handbook establishes clear and consistent rules and procedures that are followed. The handbook's premise is to make all stakeholders (staff, students, and parents) accountable and to allow students to grow through their personal and academic goals. Students are continuously recognized for demonstrating the school wide expectations. Students are recognized at Awards Assemblies which take place every six weeks. “Shout Outs” are also done to give special recognition to students for demonstrating great character or for various other accomplishments such as chess. Ortiz Elementary also hosts school spirit parade celebrations for students and staff. These recognitions promote the concepts of teamwork, school pride, respect, and kindness.

Classroom teachers and support staff also utilize the social skills curriculum daily which focuses on our students’ social emotional learning. At Ortiz Elementary, students are provided with the tools they need to be successful. Students needing additional support are identified, evaluated, and placed in the proper setting to achieve the best academic and social outcome. Two full-time counselors provide Guidance and Counseling Lessons once a week for all students and support students, staff and parents, if necessary. The lessons are created based on the need’s assessment provided by the teachers. Lessons are then presented using the Character Education curriculum. The counselors provide individual and group counseling sessions based on need. This support enables students to grow socially, emotionally, and academically.

Ortiz Elementary has a zero tolerance for bullying. All students are handed a bully pledge form to sign at the beginning of the school year. This contract serves as a reminder that the school environment is safe and free of any bullying behavior. This school-wide initiative has been instrumental in allowing for a safe environment where they stress the importance of respecting self and others. They also have a program stresses that students be vigilant so if they see something, hear something, that they say something. This initiative is constantly being reiterated during the weekly Counseling Presentations with the students.

Another important component is the Career and College Awareness culture they have established. College awareness is promoted by hosting Career Fairs for their students. They also participate in the district's college awareness events by sporting their favorite university shirts.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Ortiz Elementary is committed to providing high quality education for every child in the school. For this purpose, parent-community partnerships are essential. Having both entities, home and school, work together continues to promote high academic achievements for their students. Ortiz Elementary also prides itself on having been the school to lead community partnerships with every classroom. “C.A.R.E” (Caring Adults Reaching Everyone) continues to be a staple at the school. Every classroom has a designated community partner who adopts a classroom. The partner's involvement builds everlasting positive relationships with the students. The community members serve as role models for them. Students and teachers have a great rapport with the members and look forward to their visits every six weeks. At Ortiz Elementary the Parent Advisory Committee is made up of parents, teachers, principal, and community members to help develop the school’s Family Engagement Policy. This committee is another way that Ortiz Elementary brings all entities together to promote increased opportunity for parent and community involvement to enhance student success.

Parent and Family engagement helps bring parents and the school community together to embrace the student academic progress, and shows that without one another students become limited, and parents are not informed about what is happening in the school community. At Ortiz Elementary parents’ time in the school community is encouraged and valued. Over thirty parent volunteers are cleared and approved and about two to five parents volunteer per day. The parents help the school community in many ways by showing their support to faculty and staff by helping with day-to-day activities, such as, making copies of curriculum or

expediting simple tasks that teachers may not have time for, like laminating various projects or making booklets. Parent meetings are held twice a month about different topics that may be of interest, such as ways to help their students at home in core subjects to further students' academic progress. Parent meetings also explain the Title I policy and how it is used throughout the year. Parent meetings are particularly important to the school, which gives the parents an opportunity to help and revise the Title I policy for the next school year in the meetings. Communication between students, parents, teachers, and administration is a vital part in every student's academic career to help all students excel.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Ortiz Elementary does not shy away from showing the support and love they have for their teachers and staff, ensuring teachers are valued and supported. On a monthly to six weeks basis, a designated group organizes and decorates for the teachers and staff to receive a treat to show how much their time, heart, and dedication they give each student is valued. They have a little music with a delicious treat and have a poster describing what they mean to the school. For example, in the month of February, the poster read, "We Love you a Waffle Lot!" Waffles were served to the teachers and staff with much appreciation.

Lines of communication are kept open. Teachers are allowed to share their opinions and have their voices heard. This is done during the weekly grade level meetings where administrators meet with every grade level, during their planning, to discuss and analyze any academic data. This is the time when teachers are informed of any upcoming events for the week or month, and this gives the teachers an opportunity to discuss and share if anything is needed in the classroom, or any concern that needs to be addressed. They accomplish this by including an item at the end of every agenda, dedicated to comments, concerns, or questions. This dissemination of information allows the teachers to express how they feel and administration to show their support and give solutions to any problems or concerns mentioned in a timely manner.

Another way teachers are supported is by providing professional development opportunities. Teachers who are continuously learning and growing are more likely to feel engaged and motivated. Ortiz also takes a needs survey asking their teachers which professional development they would like to be a part of and provide the means necessary through the budget for them to attend. Workshops, seminars, and training sessions that are relevant to the teachers' areas of interest and professional goals are offered through the school, district, and regional center. All of Ortiz Elementary kindergarten through third grade teachers have recently completed reading academies focused on the science of teaching reading. The administration, teachers and staff regularly attend professional development provided by the district, positively impacting their capacity as educators.

Whether it be an afternoon social with nachos and fresh lemonade or inquiring about the teachers' professional development needs, Ortiz Elementary strives to obtain a positive professional culture.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of Ortiz Elementary is based on three styles of leadership: transformational, democratic, and servant. The transformational style expresses the belief that education is the key to success, and everyone works toward providing the best education possible for their students, caring about all their stakeholders and want them to succeed. The democratic leadership style is implemented to show stakeholders their opinions and input matter. Individuals that serve on the Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) committee meet with administrators to discuss the needs of the school and ensure the high expectations for success are implemented. This committee is involved in the decision-making process for the campus. They help plan the budget and how the resources will be allocated based on the campus needs, making decisions for the professional development offered to faculty and staff. The third leadership philosophy shared at Ortiz is that of a servant leader. School leaders help the school accomplish the goals of meeting high expectations and academic success. Administrators encourage, support and delegate when necessary to meet the needs of their teachers, staff, and students. All three of these leadership styles can be witnessed in the daily practices of the school principal and assistant principal. They work collaboratively for the greater good of the school.

The roles and responsibilities of the administration are shared by the principal and assistant principal. They begin their day by greeting students as they enter the school to exude positivity, so that students have a wonderful day. Other duties include cafeteria and after school, where they can be seen monitoring students during their lunchtime and dismissing students at the end of the day. Administration sits in on special education, 504 and Response to Intervention meetings. They make sure that the needs of the students are being met. They both meet with parents when the situation arises. They oversee the day-to-day operations of the school. The principal attends principal meetings held by the district to receive information and be aware of policies or programs implemented by the district. The principal's role is to ensure district expectations are met by the campus and serves as the instructional leader. She, along with the assistant principal, checks lesson plans for rigor and expectations for attaining high academic success. They do regular walk-throughs, noting best practices and making suggestions, if needed. They also meet with teachers regularly to review and analyze data to plan for instruction, leading to high academic success.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At Ortiz Elementary, all students regardless of their culture and heritage, are empowered to become lifelong learners. The whole school community strongly believes in diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students. The students' culture and experiences are an integral part of who they are as learners; therefore, the teachers place immense value on helping students become more engaged and successful. In addition, they strive to create an environment where students affirm and appreciate their culture of origin. Ortiz Elementary engages students in creative lessons throughout the year, especially during Black History Month and Charro Days, which is a local community celebration focused on the shared heritage between the two border cities of Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico. Some examples of the engaging lessons during Black History month include students learning about famous African Americans such as Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, and Simone Biles and their importance to history, during their visits to the school library and in their classrooms. The lower grades spend the month reading stories about famous black Americans and their culture. One class had one student share about how her hair was braided in a way that is specific to her African American culture and she shared the clothing worn by people in Africa. During the week of Charro Days, students may dress up in Mexican attire representing the outfits worn in specific states of Mexico. This helps affirm the acceptance of our recent immigrants from Mexico. An incredibly special "Children's Parade" is held annually within the school grounds to enable students to dress in traditional costumes/attire depicting their own culture and heritage. We welcome their families to partake in the festivities by attending the school parade and cheering on the students.

Students and families are also supported by providing school messages in both English and Spanish. School flyers are in both languages to help families who are not fluent in the English language. If a parent needs help with understanding forms or completing them, they can come to the school where someone can translate for them if needed. Parent meetings are held in both languages for ease of understanding. Ortiz Elementary fosters a sense of belonging to ensure that all students feel respected and valued regardless of their culture and heritage, thus empowering them to become successful lifelong learners. We have two counselors available to our students to help support them in their transition from other countries to school in the United States.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

The one practice at Ortiz Elementary that has been the most instrumental to the school's success is teamwork. At Ortiz Elementary, teamwork has helped all stakeholders (teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students) collaborate to achieve common goals and improve student outcomes, attaining an exemplary high performing school. There are several ways in which teamwork is instrumental to the school's success. It has led to the sharing of ideas, support for professional development, improved communication, better student outcomes and has enhanced the school culture. Teamwork has enabled teachers and staff to share their ideas, experiences, and expertise with each other, through grade-level meetings, parental meetings, and planning sessions for teachers. This collaborative approach fosters creativity and innovation in problem-solving, which has led to improved learner outcomes, new and effective teaching strategies, and overall better results for the students. Teamwork promotes a culture of continuous learning and growth, which is essential for teachers and staff to stay current with the latest pedagogical methods and technologies. Through collaboration teachers provide support and constructive feedback to each other, which has helped identify areas for professional development. Teamwork has enhanced communication among teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members, creating a more efficient and effective learning environment. This collaboration allows for the exchange of information, ideas, and feedback in a timely and constructive manner, which can help to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts. Parents feel comfortable calling the school office to ask questions when they are not sure of information. When teachers and staff work together, they can develop and implement effective teaching strategies that meet the needs of all students. By working collaboratively, teachers can identify and address learning gaps, differentiate instruction, and provide timely feedback to students. This approach leads to improved student outcomes, including higher academic achievement and increased engagement in learning. This is evident in lesson plans, walk-throughs, and students' academic results. Teamwork has created a positive and supportive school culture. When all stakeholders work together towards a common goal, they build stronger relationships, which leads to greater job satisfaction and a sense of community. A positive school culture also helps to attract and retain quality teachers, which is essential for the long-term success of the school. At Ortiz Elementary it is evident that the faculty and staff love what they do. Everyone will come together for the good of the school community. Students and families feel welcomed, loved, and appreciated, which is evident in their smiles and the confidence they exude.