

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

Official School Name Pittsburg Intermediate School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 209 Lafayette Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Pittsburg State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75686-1629

County Texas

Telephone (903) 855-3395 Fax (903) 855-3398

Web site/URL https://www.pittsburgisd.net/464281_3 E-mail tnewman@pittsburgisd.net

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* Mr. Terry Waldrep E-mail twaldrep@pittsburgisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Pittsburg Independent School District Tel. (903) 856-3628

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 Mr. Greg Miller
(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
- 5 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	0
K	0
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	141
6	158
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	299

*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
 - 0.7 % Asian
 - 17.9 % Black or African American
 - 44.6 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 32.4 % White
 - 4.4 % 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	17
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	23
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	40
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	334
(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, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 31 %
94 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 87 %

Total number students who qualify: 259

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 18 %
Total number of students served 54

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>3</u> Autism	<u>26</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>18</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>26</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>18</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>10</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 15 %
Total number of students served: 44

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 2

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.	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	13
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 15:1

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	95%	95%	96%	95%	96%
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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2016

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

Pittsburg ISD, in partnership with our community, will empower each student to make the most of his or her abilities through a safe, nurturing, and challenging educational environment.

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

https://files.gabbart.com/957/pittsburg_isd_nondiscrimination_policy_new2020.pdf

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

Pittsburg is a rural northeast Texas town, founded in 1874, located within an hour and a half from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The population is roughly 5,000 people. U.S. Highway 271 separates the town in half from north to south and Texas Highway 11 further divides it from east to west. Pittsburg is the home of former poultry-producing giant Pilgrim's Pride (now JBS), racecar driver Carroll Shelby, western-wear mogul James Cavender, as well as the Ezekiel Airship. Many students attend Northeast Texas Community College, which is shared with surrounding communities.

Pittsburg Intermediate School is a fifth and sixth grade Title I campus in rural Northeast Texas. The school and the community are very diverse with regard to race, religion, and socioeconomic status. The student population is generally between 340 and 390 students, although during the 2022-23 school year the campus has experienced having the least number of students since its origin in 2009-2010, currently housing only 300 students. Historically, these two classes of students have been significantly smaller than the district's typical enrollment. The Intermediate School student population is a great mix of predominantly Hispanic, White, and African-American students that come from a range of backgrounds. Some of the families work hard to make ends meet, while others are business owners or have more high-profile jobs.

Pittsburg Intermediate's campus vision is to educate, empower, and encourage excellence in all students. Staff and administration do everything possible to bring out the best socially, emotionally, physically, and academically in all students. The school motto is recited every morning on the announcements and comes from Riney Jordan. "Today I will do more than I have to do, I will treat others as I want to be treated and I will try to become a better person" is what staff members try to instill in students every day.

Over the years, teachers and administrators have implemented many strategies to ensure that all students are successful academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. Some examples are different types of schedules, curriculums, teaching methods, and reward systems. The overall conclusion has been that although fine-tuning certain aspects of what goes on at school can definitely help, the most important reason this campus is successful is high expectations for all students, all the while building trusting and caring relationships. No matter what schedule, curriculum, or teaching method has been tried, teachers and administrators always expect the best from their students. It is communicated from upper administration, through campus leadership, all the way down to teachers, the school counselor, and support staff. This campus simply does not allow students to give half effort in anything, whether it is one of the core subjects, Physical Education, Art, Computer, Band, or Athletics. This comes from maintaining a close-knit staff that communicates amongst each other and is constantly looking for ways to bring out the best in students.

Pittsburg Intermediate is lucky enough to have three 5th grade interventionists and two 6th grade interventionists to help serve the diverse student population. The school is currently made up of 18% Special Education students and 31% English Language Learners, as well as 44 Section 504 students. One of the most important strategies leading to success is being able to give students extra support during the school day in core subject areas. Interventionists use data from previous state assessments and local benchmarks along with information from teachers to tailor their interventions to what individual students need to be successful. Intervention groups change regularly so that about 90% of all students get some type of intervention during the school year.

Another strategy that aids in this school's success is parent communication. The leadership team urges each staff member to contact parents for student updates, whether they be positive or negative. Each teacher and administrator is required to submit a weekly parent contact log to the office that shows all forms of contact with parents. Most teachers have become very comfortable contacting parents for anything. Several bilingual staff members are available to translate for non-English-speaking parents. This has greatly improved the relationship between staff and parents.

Pittsburg Intermediate received the National Blue Ribbon School award in 2016. The recognition that has come from that has helped in so many ways that it would be hard to mention all of them. Although campus enrollment this school year is down from previous years, typically any time someone moves to the area and

looks at surrounding schools, they normally choose this campus. Being a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School has given the Pittsburg community a sense of pride and has challenged all members continuously to improve in order to live up to expectations. Receiving this award has also helped by allowing staff to share some of the things that lead to school success with other campuses in the area and around the state.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

Pittsburg Intermediate teachers and administrators believe reading is the foundation for all learning. Reading teachers receive support from other subject areas, such as science and social studies, to ensure that students are improving their reading skills. The study of Reading and English Language Arts is not simply confined to one class period. The reading curriculum is aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Each 90-minute block includes four parts: independent reading practice, word study, a shared reading text, and writing. The main focus within each of these parts is that students are reading and thinking about what they are reading.

Students' independent reading skills are developed and strengthened through independent reading practice that is tailored to their individual needs and interests. Students are assessed using an online reading program at the beginning, middle, and end of each year to determine their individualized reading level and point goal for the week. Students are then able to choose their own books within their level for independent reading practice. Teachers conference with students daily to monitor their progress and understanding.

Vocabulary development is another important part of the reading program. Each week students work with reading content words, character traits, figurative language phrases, prefixes and suffixes, and commonly misspelled words to better understand the way the English language works and aid in their comprehension of texts. This also ties in with the shared reading text of the week. Shared reading texts are authentic texts that cover a wide range of genres and topics. Students are guided through the reading and thinking processes involved in each different genre.

Writing instruction is woven throughout each lesson. The first thing students work on in every reading class is daily editing. This portion of the lesson is designed to teach students the conventions of writing. Students also write about something that they have read each week. Teachers show students how to use the RACE model (Restate, Answer, Cite, and Explain) to develop their writing. This gives students a concrete method to help them learn how to prove their responses using text evidence. Teachers guide students throughout the entire writing process. First, they model how to brainstorm, compose a rough draft, and revise and edit before completing a final draft. Then, as students are writing independently, teachers conference with individual students to support their learning and increase understanding of the writing process.

Students are assessed through a variety of methods. Each week students are given vocabulary tests over their word lists that they have studied and worked with all week long. Since much of what is done in the reading classrooms is done together, teachers rely heavily on their observations to determine which students need to be retaught a particular concept. At the end of each genre study, students are given a unit test based on skills learned during the unit. In addition, students take two reading benchmark tests each year that direct lesson planning and instruction to ensure that every student is being taught exactly what they need to be successful.

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

Math teachers at Pittsburg Intermediate believe that hard work empowers all students to be successful. Teachers embody this belief by adhering to a strict “bell-to-bell” teaching philosophy. Throughout each class period, students may be found participating in whole-group direct instruction, small-group activities, or independent work. Teachers are constantly providing direction and feedback using a “check and correct” system.

Each day students begin with problem solving, known as a “Practice for Learning” (PFL) activity. Skills incorporated in this section vary and are spiraled accordingly as outlined by readiness TEKS with an emphasis on skills that must be learned and mastered. In this component, the emphasis is on basic understandings of number, operation, and quantitative reasoning; patterns, relationships, and algebraic

thinking; geometry and spatial reasoning; measurement; and probability and statistics. This is also a time when other TEKS, as determined by the teacher using the student performance data from the previous unit assessments, or weekly assessments, can be reviewed and differentiated.

New content is introduced during the next portion of the lesson through whole-group direct instruction. Teachers use a scaffolded approach, such as “I do, We do, You do” to ensure that all students are receiving the level of support necessary to be successful. Teachers provide detailed notes and model several examples to guide students as they learn new skills. An emphasis is placed on using problem-attack skills that have proven to be effective with Pittsburg Intermediate students throughout the years. This is also a time when teachers incorporate engaging instructional videos through an online subscription to complement their instruction and support the needs of diverse learners.

Students complete the day with small-group or independent practice of the new skills taught that day. This provides students with the opportunity to clarify misconceptions and increase their independence in problem solving. During this time, teachers observe students and provide guidance to ensure students understand the new material. Teachers identify students for extra support from one of the seasoned interventionists during a "Homework Help" time based on these informal classroom observations.

Process Standards are woven together within multiple representations and multifaceted story problems that lead students to build logical reasoning that allows them to make mathematical connections to real-life situations. All process standard TEKS are practiced with embedded dual-coded skills to ensure students are prepared to work at the highest levels of mathematical reasoning.

Foundational math skills are also vital to the success of Pittsburg Intermediate math students. Teachers focus on developing quick recall and automaticity of basic math facts through daily practice in an online platform to build students' confidence and increase their success when completing more challenging computation problems such as fractions and algebra.

During teaming meetings each week, teachers and administrators review campus-wide student data and reflect on the effectiveness of the lessons the prior week. Teachers utilize this time to adjust their lesson plans to ensure adequate review of difficult concepts. Administrators act in a support role to provide teachers with the resources they need to accomplish their goals.

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

Pittsburg Intermediate School science teachers utilize the TEKS to guide instruction in both 5th and 6th grades. A variety of resources has been collected to develop a strong curriculum that addresses each learning standard. The teacher-compiled curriculum focuses on engaging students while they learn about scientific investigation and reasoning as it applies to physical, earth, and life science concepts to better understand the world around them.

The common goal of the science teachers and administrators is to teach students about science concepts and science safety through the use of laboratory experiments, field experiments, demonstrations, and videos. Each classroom is equipped with lab materials to allow as much hands-on learning as possible. Technology is incorporated into the science classroom with the use of virtual labs and experiments to teach students about the many varying scientific processes and cycles.

The teachers have created curriculum supports throughout the years that have proven to be an effective testing strategy to aid in student success. One of the most advantageous is a word association strategy that the teachers have entitled, “Married Words.” The teachers have found over one hundred words or phrases that when linked together help guide students in recalling science vocabulary, tools, and topics during assessments. For example, the word hypothesis is linked, or “married,” with the phrase, educated guess. This strategy along with many different curriculum supports has provided students with confidence in understanding both weekly lessons and rigorous test questions.

assessments. This data combined with a fall and spring benchmark help the teachers, interventionist, and Special Programs Administrator determine intervention groups, which change every four weeks. The data gained from assessing the types of questions that are missed by most students also guide teachers in spiraling the necessary content for student success.

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

As with all other subjects, teachers follow the TEKS curriculum for Social Studies in 5th and 6th grade. Instruction aims to teach students about the history, culture, geography, and political systems of the United States and the world. The curriculum focuses on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students practice interpreting and analyzing information, as well as formulating evidence-based opinions.

Key objectives in the curriculum focus on the development of political systems, including the structures and functions of government. Students learn about the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the role of citizenship responsibilities in a democratic society. Another objective is to cover major events and important historical figures that contributed to the foundation of the United States. Characteristics of regions around the world are also taught, including map studies, climate zones, and exploring various cultures, religions, and economic systems that make the world so diverse.

Content is presented through a combination of textbooks, articles, lectures, and class discussions. Technology is integrated into lessons in the form of PowerPoint presentations, videos, and images related to content. To engage students in the learning process, teachers utilize game-based learning as well as primary resources such as diaries and eyewitness accounts. Project-based learning is often used to encourage independent and collaborative learning while exploring a real-world situation.

Teachers use assessments to identify strengths or weaknesses, provide constructive feedback, and to implement re-teaching opportunities for students. To evaluate students' understanding of skills and concepts, teachers employ a variety of summative and formative assessments. Some of these strategies include vocabulary quizzes, constructed response essays, performance-based presentations, end-of-the-year model projects, class discussions, and unit tests.

Overall, the Social Studies curriculum provides a foundation for students' understanding of the societies that make up the world. The goal is to instill an appreciation of history and culture, and a sense of active, responsible, and informed citizenship.

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

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

Pittsburg Intermediate staff members believe that quality art education helps students develop skills that improve their academic performance and guides them to become better students and citizens in the future.

5th grade students participate in a rotation that includes 45 minutes of art class per week. This course focuses on the four basic strands identified in the TEKS; foundations; observation and perception; creative expression; historical and cultural relevance; and critical evaluation and response. The art teacher prioritizes creative and engaging activities that guide students to learn about art techniques and create original artwork.

6th grade students may take one semester of art as an elective. This course builds upon the foundation created in the 5th grade art curriculum and extends student learning in preparation for upper-level courses. Other 6th grade students participate in the beginner band course. The high school band directors spend two class periods per day on the Intermediate campus. In this course, the directors teach the basic foundational skills of reading music and playing a specific musical instrument.

Other art programs available to 6th grade students include extracurricular activities such as choir. The choir meets before school and during lunch recess periods. The choir performs at least three times a year at various school and community events.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Physical Education (PE) is a vital component in the development and well-being of Intermediate students. The PE program incorporates the TEKS into a multi-faceted program that teaches students various ways to stay physically fit. Fifth grade students attend PE for 135 minutes per week as part of their special area rotation. Sixth grade students attend PE or Pre-Athletics daily for a total of 225 minutes per week. The Pre-Athletics program is offered to sixth grade students to prepare them for participation in University Interscholastic League sports.

All students participate in the annual FitnessGram, measuring students' flexibility, strength, endurance, and overall physical health. The PE program has also hosted the American Heart Association Kids Heart Challenge for 21 years. Students and teachers raise awareness of heart conditions and increase knowledge of heart-healthy habits, while raising thousands of dollars for PE equipment and continued research for heart conditions.

The PE program coordinates with the counselor and school nurse to include the Health Education TEKS. They focus on: continuous reinforcement of physical health; healthy eating and physical activity; injury and violence prevention and safety; and alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The PE teacher collaborates with the school counselor to organize events for the annual Red Ribbon Week.

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

2d. Technology/library/media

In recent years, technology education has become a critical need of Pittsburg Intermediate students with the increasing focus on online assessment. The Pittsburg Intermediate campus has established a Computer and Technology program that teaches students to use a variety of digital tools and resources to improve their communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills

5th grade students receive 45 minutes of Computer and Technology instruction as a dedicated class in their weekly special area rotation. Students participate in an online typing program, and begin learning about Google platforms such as docs, sheets, and slides. Students utilize skills to draft, edit, and publish digital products individually and collaboratively as outlined by the TEKS.

6th grade students may choose a semester of Computer and Technology as an elective. This course focuses on developing the skills introduced in 5th grade as well as introducing visual media production. Students work to create more advanced digital content such as videos, infographics, and high-quality presentations.

In addition to a strong technology program, the Intermediate also maintains a library program that provides students with physical and digital access to a variety of books and resources. Each year the school librarian surveys students and teachers to ensure that the library continuously improves its selection and organization of books for independent reading.

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

The counseling program at Pittsburg Intermediate empowers students to achieve academic success, personal growth, and career readiness. This is accomplished by offering individual and small group counseling, crisis intervention, classroom guidance lessons, college, and career education, and connecting students to community resources.

Every three weeks, students receive guidance lessons following the school counseling TEKS and data from a needs assessment. In addition to the guidance lessons, the district provides character education through online activities and classroom discussions to help students think critically about topics such as responsibility, good citizenship, and integrity. Each month students who demonstrate the designated character trait are recognized.

Connecting students with resources to meet basic needs is a crucial aspect of the program. One resource that students can access is a Care Closet on campus that provides clothing and hygiene products. Students also have access to food sacks that provide meals every weekend to help fight hunger. Parents can also request to have their child placed on a Holiday Gift List to ensure that their child receives gifts during the holiday season to meet their individual needs. Families are referred to the Camp County Christmas for Kids program if the school receives more referrals than can be fulfilled.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Intervention is key at Pittsburg Intermediate to help all students, but especially students that are performing below grade level. In fifth grade, there are full-time math, reading, and science interventionists. In sixth grade, there is a full-time reading interventionist and a part-time math interventionist. Teachers create “wish lists” based on observations and students’ assessment scores. Interventionists meet and group students in the appropriate intervention classes based on the students’ greatest needs.

The last thirty minutes of core instructional classes is a built-in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) time. Math students receive small group instruction on the week’s concept. Students, who are reading below grade level, participate in a specially designed reading intervention program. Students also attend intervention classes for math, reading, and science to receive instruction in a smaller group setting. There is also daily math intervention focused on math facts and a pull-out program for students with Dyslexia. Students often receive one hundred extra hours of instruction in reading or math for the year.

Students also attend after-school and summer school programs. These programs are designed to close gaps for students who have fallen behind over the last few years, due to COVID and distance learning. After-school is a 90-minute program, four days a week. Students performing below grade level are invited to attend. A team of teachers and paraprofessionals help students complete homework, study vocabulary, and provide TEKS-based accelerated instruction. The summer school program works in a similar way. Students performing below grade level are invited to participate in a four-week program to build their math, reading, writing, and science skills.

One thing that sets this school apart from others is the approach to student assessments. Staff works to provide every student with the accommodations and supports they need to be successful daily. On benchmark and state assessments, students are offered small-group and one-on-one testing.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

At Pittsburg Intermediate, the main objective is to engage every student at each learning level. Students who are performing above grade level are a valued subpopulation. Teachers aim to nurture and encourage every learner including those students who are performing above grade level. The master schedule provides a time of increased learning for these students each day. During an enrichment period, struggling students attend intervention classes while advanced students are placed into small groups for academic extensions of weekly concepts. Data from content-based assessments, progress monitoring, benchmark scores, and teacher input drives the formation of these groups. During this enrichment period, students that are above grade level have

the freedom to choose how to extend their learning while also receiving small group instruction and help from their teachers on weekly concepts and assignments. Teachers provide these students with opportunities for critical thinking by allowing them to select projects of interest to research both independently and collaboratively. Students are encouraged to base these projects on topics that are being studied in their core classes to broaden their learning and understanding. This time allows students to engage in higher order thinking while also fostering connections to classroom instruction and teamwork.

Many students who are performing above grade level participate in the Gifted and Talented (G/T) Program. These students attend a class guided by a G/T certified teacher daily where project-based learning is provided. The G/T Specialist meets with core curriculum teachers during teaming periods to assist in creating differentiated lessons that will challenge student learning of topics currently being studied in Math, Reading, Science, and Social Studies. The G/T program strives to create a learning environment where students can foster creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and practice teamwork.

3c. Students with disabilities:

Pittsburg Intermediate staff strive to meet students where they are academically and provide the support needed for academic, social, and emotional growth. Many students with disabilities are serviced in the regular education classroom. These students have an individualized education plan (IEP) with accommodations and modifications that are to be used in the classroom. Students who need more intense modifications of the curriculum are placed in a smaller classroom in which they receive instruction from a certified special education teacher for math and reading. These students are mainstreamed into general education classrooms for all other subjects. The leadership team ensures that these students have a paraprofessional in the mainstream classrooms who can assist as needed. Students who have more severe disabilities are instructed in a self-contained classroom with certified special education teachers and paraprofessionals to build the skills necessary for success.

Teachers of students with disabilities along with the IEP committee meet to discuss progress, strengths and weaknesses of the students, and accommodations. This committee also sets academic and behavioral goals for the students. Parents attend IEP meetings as a valuable member of the committee and actively participate in setting goals, discussing placement changes, and setting accommodations for their students.

Teachers who feel that a student may have a disability notify administration for a special education referral. The parents of these students are contacted to discuss present levels and teacher concerns. If parent consent is given, a full special education evaluation takes place. The diagnosticians at Pittsburg Intermediate work closely with teachers and administration to provide the necessary testing and give teachers the tools they need to ensure student success. Teachers and administrators strive to ensure students are provided with the appropriate support necessary in the least restrictive environment. All students, including those with disabilities, are nurtured and supported by highly qualified staff.

3d. English Language Learners:

English language learners (ELLs) make up 31% of the student population here at Pittsburg Intermediate. Supporting them is one of the top priorities. Instruction is planned with these students in mind. Reading teachers are English as a Second Language certified. They strive to consistently implement the English Language Proficiency Standards in their lessons. The goal is to meet them where they are and give them the tools that they need to be successful.

Teachers focus heavily on vocabulary instruction using strategies such as native language support, simplified language, pre-teaching, extra processing time, and more. In 2021, all classrooms received an interactive flat panel, which allows teachers to create lessons that include visuals that help students better understand unfamiliar concepts. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are addressed in all content areas and intervention classes. These small-group classes give ELLs a space where they feel more comfortable to speak out and ask questions about concepts they may not understand. They also have access to the after-school and summer school programs, which gives them more opportunities to work on the skills on which they need help in a smaller group setting. There are several bilingual teachers and

paraprofessionals that help reach every learner. This also helps in communicating with parents and ensuring that they are involved in their child's education. Students benefit greatly from having a support system that includes their parents and the school system. Lastly, when assessments are given, each student receives supports and accommodations based on their own individual needs; this includes small-group and individual testing.

The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee meets three times a year. With teacher and parent input, they make decisions about program placement and reclassification, as well as assessment accommodations. This team helps ensure that ELLs are being adequately served.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

“Work hard, play hard!” has been a motto of Pittsburg Intermediate for many years. This campus creates a positive learning environment to increase engagement and foster each student’s social and emotional growth while also working on academic gains. Students are told throughout the year that one of the main goals is for them to have options when they grow up. Whether students want to attend college, vocational school, or enter the workforce, the school aims to prepare them to achieve their goals and desires. Students and teachers also participate in a monthly college day. Everyone wears college shirts and teachers share information about the colleges they attended.

Teachers attend teaming meetings to find new ways to engage students while continuing to provide academic rigor in a positive environment. Staff have a shared philosophy that relationships with students and parents have an impact on student engagement. Creating and maintaining relationships with students increases their social and emotional growth and allows them to feel safe in their learning environment. This campus has found that students aspire to perform well for those who set high expectations for them, but also celebrate all stages of the learning process.

Incentives are another approach to student engagement at Pittsburg Intermediate. Teachers and leadership seek out ways to engage students through new and exciting incentives and goals to strive toward. For example, every student has individual reading goals. With the importance of fluency and comprehension in all subject areas, students are given weekly rewards as an incentive to read. Students select books of interest while teachers set daily and weekly goals for them to achieve. “Freaky Friday” takes place each week for students who have reached their goals. Students play games and enjoy extra recess. There are also bigger reading rewards at the end of each grading period, such as field trips to the movie theater.

Small celebrations take place throughout the year in which students are paraded to the office and to other teachers to celebrate their success. Staff shout-outs are often heard during announcements where principals celebrate students who were observed doing something great. There is a student of the month award guided by teacher and administrator input based on varying character traits. Students who have high academic and behavioral expectations set before them will often rise to those expectations and do great things when they are engaged academically, emotionally, and socially.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

As in most small towns, the school district is one of the largest employers of citizens. Pittsburg takes great pride in the school’s role in educating students, but also understands that is only one part of the equation. Many stakeholders contribute and the school works to provide opportunities for communication and fellowship between school staff, parents, local businesses, and other community members. There are several ways the school comes together with community members to foster shared expectations for all students.

One way the staff has found to bring community members together is by beginning each school year with a convocation for all district employees. It is a time to get back together and the Rotary club solicits local businesses to donate prizes for which to be drawn. Several thousand dollars of cash and prizes are given to employees. The food service department has breakfast for everyone and the superintendent addresses the attendees about the state of the school district. Each principal introduces the new staff that will be on their respective campuses and it is a great way to get back into the swing of things.

Pittsburg Intermediate also participates in an annual Back to School Tailgate Party. It is held at Fair Park and all campuses, central office, food service, athletic boosters, and many businesses pass out popsicles, bottled water, school calendars, pens, etc. to parents, students, and other community members. Local businesses cook hot dogs, barbecue, hamburgers, and hot links to give away to the crowd. The Pride of Pittsburg marching band plays for the people and all the volleyball and football players are introduced. Many parents and students attend this celebration. It is a time of camaraderie and sets the tone for the school

year.

The school also hosts a Meet the Teacher night each year before school starts and it has become a much-anticipated event. Additionally, Report Card Pick-Up occurs once each semester on an early release or staff development day. Teachers meet individually with parents. The local grocery store also contributes to the end-of-the-year celebration, “Work Hard, Play Hard,” for students who have taken care of business throughout the school year. They donate hot dogs that the administrators cook for students to eat at the park.

It is imperative to involve as many community members as possible in the social, emotional, cultural, and academic development of students. These are a few of the strategies utilized to help students and the community be successful.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The Pittsburg Intermediate campus is known for being a place where teachers and staff feel valued and supported. The administrators work hard to make the Pittsburg Intermediate family feel appreciated. One way they accomplish this is by being readily available. If anyone needs them, they are a phone call, text, or email away and they have an open-door policy. When teachers go to them with a problem, they are more than willing to help find a solution. A common question they ask is, “What can we do to help?” This is not a question meant to placate teachers, but rather their way of making sure teachers know that they have support. They can often be found making parent phone calls, meeting with teachers and students, stepping in to cover a classroom, or attending teaming meetings. In addition, they are not afraid to roll up their sleeves to make the campus a better place in every way. It is very normal to see them sweep floors, repair doors, fix toilets, paint walls, or lay carpet. This is the definition of going above and beyond. Another way they make employees feel supported is by letting staff have a voice. They ask for opinions on programs, curriculum, handling student behavior, etc.

Making sure teachers have resources and professional development that they need is another way administrators equip teachers to do their jobs to the best of their ability. In-service is held at the beginning of each school year. Administrators work throughout the summer to provide the most up-to-date training on safety, curriculum, assessment, and other important areas. With the increase in school shootings, administrators have put an emphasis on school safety and security training. This includes the Standard Response Protocol as well as local policies and procedures. If teachers need professional development in a certain area, administrators find a workshop for them to attend or make it a part of training at school. For example, to help teachers with recent changes to state testing, they were able to participate in a regional workshop tailored to the redesigned assessments.

Administrators also meet with subject area departments during weekly teaming meetings. During this time, they disaggregate data from recent weekly tests, unit assessments, and benchmarks with the teachers to help guide lesson plans and intervention decisions. All of these things, and so many more, make for happier and more productive teachers and staff.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at Pittsburg Intermediate is built on high expectations for all students and staff and with high expectations comes a multifaceted approach to leadership. The leadership team is made up of the Principal, Assistant Principal, and a Special Programs Administrator. It is commonly known as the Instructional Leadership Team, or ILT. Each member has their responsibilities but there are no clear lines where those responsibilities end. They play any role necessary to see that the needs of the campus are met to foster success. Not only does the ILT lead by example, but also they work hard to create a culture of family amongst all students and staff. The ILT creates relationships with students and staff that, in most cases, last long after the student or teacher has left the campus. Everyone on campus is expected to exceed expectations, and the leaders are no different. The ILT is skilled in curriculum, MTSS, testing accommodations and coordination, Special Education, 504, and safety, to name a few. Their responsibilities overlap and they make themselves available to staff and students daily to help make the campus run more smoothly.

This leadership philosophy starts from the top. The superintendent and deputy superintendent have created an incredible school district that operates as one big family. These two leaders are passionate about education and do everything in their power to help nurture and educate all students. They have high expectations for each campus and they inspire campus leaders to do their very best to build relationships with all stakeholders to make this school district the best it can be.

The Intermediate campus has achieved success for many years because of the consistency of staff. There is not much teacher turnover and a major contributing factor to that is campus leadership. Administrators believe in taking care of the teachers and staff so they do not want to go anywhere else. Monthly teacher appreciation days are one way teachers and staff are celebrated.

The teachers on campus are also great leaders. A team of teachers attends monthly meetings with the ILT to help plan school activities and organize the campus calendar. They disseminate information covered in the meetings back to their colleagues. This gives teachers the satisfaction of having a voice in what goes on in and out of the classroom and not feel like they are being micromanaged.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Pittsburg Independent School District addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff. Administrators and staff are trained annually in cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, and equity. In the classroom, teachers incorporate lessons from diverse perspectives and experiences, providing students with opportunities to learn about different cultures. While recognizing, respecting, and valuing the diversity of humanity in active instruction, students are encouraged to have open, respectful dialogue about social, economic, and political issues. Campus librarians and teachers are cognizant of selecting books that appeal to a variety of ethnicities, religions, and identities. Considering cultural backgrounds when expanding libraries exposes students to literature that allows them to relate to their own experiences and perspectives or consider an opposing viewpoint. Additionally, campus counselors and administrators support families that may need extra assistance in dealing with difficult issues. For example, more than half of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged. Because of the high homeless population, PISD participates in the Community Eligibility Provision, which provides free breakfast and lunch for all students. Many students are also given a weekend to-go bag with meals. Each school year, PISD and businesses throughout the community facilitate events in which students can be gifted with free school supplies.

Traditionally, the Pittsburg Intermediate campus invites students and staff to participate in the cultural celebration of Black History, a production performed for parents and students. This production recruits students from other grade levels throughout the district in addition to guest speakers, who are invited to share poetry and cultural experiences. Students memorize lines, dress in costumes, and sing African-American hymns. Students learn about important African-American historical figures that contributed to the foundation of America.

PISD supports Spanish-speaking families by offering language translation in IEP and educational planning meetings with parents. While maintaining positive parent communication, campus translators assist teachers and staff in making phone calls to parents in their native language. On the PISD website, parents and students can find resources in both English and Spanish as well as any notices and school announcements dispersed which are offered in both English and Spanish. The security officers, also bilingual, assist administrators with home visits when needed. At the beginning of the year, Spanish-speaking centers are designated on campus to assist families in explaining and helping in the registration process for the school. Culturally responsive learning is an ongoing process at PISD to ensure students feel respected, valued, and supported throughout their educational journey.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

Campus leadership, faculty, and staff at Pittsburg Intermediate work collaboratively to ensure that high expectations with positive outcomes remain continually in place for student academic success. The employees of this campus are passionate about and fiercely dedicated to all of their students. They simply will not accept failure from any student. This “failure is not an option” belief is the one best practice that sets Pittsburg Intermediate apart. Everyone on campus expects excellence from one another and every student, every single day. The entire staff is committed to supporting that expectation.

The leadership team has created a climate of support, teamwork, and trust that allows teachers and students alike to excel and infuses a sense of pride and excellence in all endeavors. Many aspects of teamwork must come together to allow this “no failure” belief to thrive. Administrators, counselors, and staff share in the monitoring of behavior and attendance and intervene if needed in collaboration with the teacher. Campus personnel also provide avenues for social and emotional support for students and their families. If an economic hardship is found to exist, then help is provided for that as well. This ongoing support and collaboration with teachers increases academic time on task for students and allows teachers to focus on academic interventions and student mastery of skills and concepts. It also serves to meet the needs of students in a variety of ways and places them in the best possible position for engagement and learning. In short, the “failure is not an option” mentality encompasses any impediment to student success and is addressed as quickly and effectively as possible.

Everyone in this school is committed to surpassing expectations for student learning. There is no “my student” or “my class” or “my parents,” only “our students”, “our classes”, and “our parents.” This shared philosophy serves to set high expectations, fosters hard work every day for all involved, and builds strong relationships among staff, students, and parents. It creates self-motivation for staff and students alike. The entire campus celebrates student successes and bonds are strengthened for all involved. This steadfast belief of “no failure” across all aspects of the school has been the most instrumental in the success of Pittsburg Intermediate. Failure is not a recognized word in the vocabulary of this school. It has been replaced with words such as confidence, pride, valued, successful, and teamwork.