

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Tracey Bell

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

Official School Name Vega Junior High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 200 Longhorn Drive

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

City Vega State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79092-0190

County Oldham County

Telephone (806) 267-2123

Fax _____

Web site/URL <https://www.vegalonghorn.com/>

E-mail rcogburn@vegalonghorn.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.

Date

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Jody Johnson

E-

mail jodyjohnson@vegalonghorn.net

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

District Name Vega Independent School District

Tel. (806) 267-2123

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

Date

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Dr. T.J. Barclay

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

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

Date

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	21
6	31
7	26
8	32
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	110

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 23.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 73.2 % White
 - 3.6 % 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: 5%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	110
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %
11 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 25 %

Total number students who qualify: 28

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 7 %
Total number of students served 8

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>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>3</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>6</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 5 %
Total number of students served: 6

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 6

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	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	10
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 11:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	98%	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.

Through vision and commitment, the staff, parents, and community members continually work together to strive for academic excellence for all students, and are committed to establishing a challenging learning environment that encourages high expectations for life long success.

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

<https://www.vegalonghorn.com/documents/information/public-notice-of-nondiscrimination/411388>

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

Steeped in high standards, strong family ties, and long-standing traditions, Vega Junior High School (VJHS) is located in Vega, Texas, a small rural town, the county seat, and the largest community in Oldham County with a population less than 1,000. Vega is a farming, ranching, and wind energy community that is a great place to raise a family. The school district is housed under one roof, and the makeup of our public school mirrors the values of the community. The high academic expectations along with a strong involvement from parents and community members has led to the success of VJHS. The small community affords the school the luxury of small class sizes which plays a pivotal role in the success of the campus. The small school setting along with academic achievements and sports accolades makes it a big draw for students to transfer from other districts.

The vision statement at VISD is, “Academic Success for All Students.” The staff comes to school each day prepared to make that vision a reality. A large part of that success comes from continued education and collaboration among staff members. Key ingredients implemented into the curriculum are the utilization of technology, a research-based curriculum, and project-based learning strategies. At VJHS, the high expectation mindset has been the foundation for success.

Vega Independent School District (VISD) houses under one roof three separate campuses, grades prekindergarten through the 12th grade. The junior high campus at one time housed grades 7 through 12 until 2017 when the district added a new high school wing and gymnasium. It was at that time VJHS became grades 5-8. Since all three campuses are housed under one roof, VJHS benefits from many district-wide activities: pep rallies, Shorthorn Track Meet, and Longhorn Buddies. The small class sizes along with the collegiality of the teachers has become a pivotal part of the success of the campus. The teachers are highly qualified and deeply vested in the success of students.

One element that was adopted upon returning to school after COVID-19 was a program that is focused on mental well-being. Classes start each day off with meditation and calming techniques. The data shows that this has helped not only students academically and emotionally but teachers as well.

Another program that has been successful is the agricultural based program that is offered to 8th grade students. This is a class that focuses on the basics of Ag to help students find out more before they enroll in high school. Eighth grade Ag allows students to participate in numerous field trips touring local agriculture in the area. It shows these students what careers are available within the agricultural field in the local community. This program builds on students' knowledge from participating in the local 4-H program in which students consistently come out on top at local and major stock shows around the state of Texas. These types of programs are representative of strong family and community connections with emphasis on farming and ranching.

Students are also extremely active at VJHS in extracurricular activities and University of Interscholastic League (UIL) Academics. Participation in various programs and activities offered have provided students opportunities to develop their specific talents in a safe and nurturing, yet challenging environment. VJHS has been runner-up several times, and in 2022 were the district champions in the UIL Academic competition. UIL Academics has provided historic success throughout the district with many participating at the state level.

As a way to meet the academic needs of all students, a 40-minute tutorial time (Academy) is set aside each day for students to get more targeted instruction where needed. Students have the option to attend Academy for extra help or to finish assignments or homework. Students at VJHS have busy lifestyles due to being involved in many extracurricular activities, and this Academy time allows students to stay caught up on daily assignments. Students can also be assigned to the Academy by teachers. This type of intervention strategy has been highly successful, and students take advantage of getting some one-on-one or small-group instruction at the beginning of the day. This has taken a large burden off of parents as well. By having this Academy time built into the day, it can alleviate the undo stress that can happen at home when a child needs help. Teachers also use data that comes from interim assessments to determine placement of students in the

Academy. This type of targeted instruction has proven to be very effective and beneficial to all student groups.

Over the last few years, VJHS has seen a surge in populations of English Language Learners (ELL) students, 504 students, and Special Education students. Fortunately, VJHS has highly qualified special education teachers, ESL certified teachers in all classrooms, and extremely experienced and outstanding paraprofessionals that assist students and teachers throughout the day. VJHS also has a super-lab that offers services such as reteach, one-to-one, small group, and other accommodations that can be offered to all students regardless of academic level.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

VJHS is extremely fortunate to have strong, veteran teachers in the English/Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) classrooms. Understanding the need for students to be fluent readers and to have a good understanding of vocabulary, teachers are constantly trying to find new ways to create a desire for students to read. The use of various types of resources from basal readers, novel studies, online programs, and teacher-created materials are implemented to ensure mastery of skills.

Being a small school, teachers work to vertically align curriculum. All ELAR instruction is directly aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). About 6 years ago during a Professional Development day, teachers took a deep dive into the TEKS for ELAR to get a true picture of what needs to be taught in the course of the school year. Using knowledge of the TEKS to create an instructional calendar, timelines were created to ensure that by the end of each school year all TEKS would be taught and assessed for mastery. For VJHS, the collaborative measures that teachers and staff have utilized has created a very streamlined program.

ELAR is taught primarily through novel studies, revising and editing techniques, vocabulary enrichment, as well as essay writing. The most instrumental technique employed in grades 5-8 is to push the importance of independent reading. All of the ELAR classrooms have a classroom library as well as access to the school library. There are independent reading goals set by teachers incorporating all genres of reading from poetry, fiction and nonfiction, and periodicals. Encouraging independent reading has improved stamina, test scores, and has fostered a fondness for reading for enjoyment. This has been a key component to the success over the last few years.

Another important aspect to the ELAR program is data collection. Teachers use State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores/data from the previous year as well as interim assessments to target areas of weakness. By utilizing this data, teachers can adjust the instructional calendars to the needs of the students. Teachers continually assess student progress and understanding by the use of all assessments (i.e. formal, informal, summative, and formative). Teachers use this disaggregated data from these assessments to find students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing for more individualized instruction.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, a component that was added to the day to day instruction is the use of technology. Because of the pandemic, the district realized that not only students but also staff weren't fluent in the use of technology. VISD implemented the use of technology throughout the district. In the case of ELAR, teachers discovered the importance of online books that allowed students to listen and follow along helping with comprehension and fluency. Teachers also found the need to utilize word processing for students to submit writing assignments. By increasing the use of technology, teachers were able to enhance understanding of the curriculum as well as prepare students for the future of online learning.

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

Since COVID-19, students have struggled with mathematics throughout the district. Part of this struggle can be attributed to recruiting qualified teachers to teach the mathematics curriculum. The turnover rate for grades 6-8 has been extremely high. This past year saw a little more consistency with teachers in the mathematics department, and the results showed in the end of year assessments. The teachers and the administration sat down to discuss the ways in which to increase student performance and teacher retention in the mathematics department, determining the need to overhaul the current curriculum and supplements that were being used. Parents also played a large part in making the decision to replace the curriculum due to the fact that many felt students weren't making the necessary progress.

Because the current curriculum wasn't meeting the needs of the students, a curriculum was chosen that

provided vertical alignment and spiraling throughout the year. This curriculum is aligned to the TEKS, focuses on note taking skills, guided practice, independent practice, and end of unit assessments. There are also videos that students can watch prior to a lesson to give them some background before the next lesson. These videos have been useful for students who need help with homework or who happen to be doing work virtually. Teachers are able to pick and choose assignments based upon the needs of the students. Teachers can now supplement with spiraling provided in the curriculum as well as an online program. Math teachers at VJHS campus prefer to use a variety of techniques to accommodate the students and to ensure mastery of each objective. Staff utilizes large group and small group instruction, technology, hands-on activities, and peer groups to effectively meet the needs of the diverse student population.

Teachers begin the day with a quick lesson focused on spiraling TEKS and objectives, and this is done through the use of technology. This is done independently by each student and then reviewed by the whole group. The curriculum is set up in a way that ensures that all TEKS are reviewed every two weeks which will ensure mastery of skills. This particular resource is research-based and designed with rigor and complexity to ensure student success. This is started at the beginning of the year, and by the end of the school year students have a good understanding of the TEKS and math vocabulary for each grade level.

Data collection is done at the beginning of the year and continues sporadically throughout each semester. This data is taken from benchmarks and previous year's STAAR results to help teachers target areas of weakness in students' understanding of objectives. This data drives instruction and creates an instructional calendar each school year.

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

At VJHS, science teachers use the state adopted curriculum along with supplemental curriculum to help teach all TEKS required by the state. One of the main focuses for the science teachers is to utilize the science laboratory to help solidify objectives taught in the classroom. When students are participating in scientific inquiry, students will have opportunities to answer specific questions, write in science journals about what has been learned, and then have a whole group discussion to review objectives during the assignment.

All students start out in 5th grade learning about the scientific method and science lab procedures. Teachers often co-teach across grade levels to ensure that as students move up to each grade level that teaching has been aligned and correct procedures and vocabulary has been taught. Teachers at VJHS see value in working together to make sure there is alignment throughout each grade level. Each teacher brings knowledge and expertise to make science fun.

Outside of the science classroom, students are being taught science in the art classroom as well. Each nine weeks, the art teacher covers, "Agriculture in the Classroom." This curriculum is taught to give students a real-world look at Texas agriculture virtually. Students learn about farming and ranching in Texas as well as planting and harvesting that can be seen in the local area.

Science teachers also create a Year at a Glance (YAG) during professional development at the beginning of the school year to ensure the covering of all of the TEKS requirements. The YAG includes pre and post assessments that are used to gain data that teachers use to support students at the appropriate levels. Teachers make sure to incorporate technology into science lessons to intensify science instruction. Enrichment programs are practiced on a routine basis in order to increase a students' understanding of material in a complex and rigorous manner.

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

The instruction for social studies on the VJHS campus is based on an adopted state-approved curriculum. Fifth and sixth grade students have weekly newspaper lessons based on grade level TEKS focusing on the history of the United States, civic lessons, and geography. In order to enhance learning, this curriculum offers students the opportunity to do paper-pencil assignments and project-based learning to master the objectives being taught.

Seventh and eighth grade students utilize an online curriculum that is TEKS based along with the state-adopted textbook. The online curriculum offers guided notes, interactive notebooks, videos that coordinate with lessons, opportunities for project based learning, and online quizzes and assessments that teachers can utilize to track the progress of students through data. The online supplemental curriculum exposes the students to a more enriched version of historical places and events to keep the students actively engaged.

Assessing student progress is done by benchmarks and online educational programs that track student progress through data. VJHS is fortunate to have a 1:1 device-to-student ratio due to the fact that these assessments are completed online which helps make data more accessible to the teacher. The use of this data not only allows teachers to monitor student progress, but also allows teachers to adjust curriculum to meet the needs of students. This data determines the tutorial and Response to Intervention (RtI) groups that are necessary throughout the school year.

The nice thing about Vega is that it offers teachers a variety of field trip opportunities to let students have an even richer experience with the history and culture that surrounds them. Being able to attend field trips also gives students opportunities to visit new places and to practice good citizenship. These opportunities are the building blocks to developing model citizens.

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

VISD has an extremely successful Future Farmers of America (FFA) program where the focus is on a variety of opportunities for students to gain first hand knowledge of skills that could lead to future job opportunities through various certifications. Programs incorporated for 8th grade students include an introductory course into the FFA program. Students in this course study the Principles of Agriculture and Animal Science. Students experience field trips to local farms, dairies, and the local university to see the production and harvest of agricultural products in the area as well as a time to investigate careers in agriculture. These 8th graders also compete in FFA Competitions which allows students the chance to network with other students in the area and show off leadership skills.

VJHS has provided many opportunities for girls to participate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) conferences over the years. Recognizing that there is a need to foster this side of education in young women, students have participated in STEM conferences hosted by Texas Tech University as well as at Region 16. The latest conference was put on by Pantex, showing girls the opportunities that await women in science. STEM is a fantastic way to show young girls the pathways that can be pursued when making career and college decisions.

At the end of the second semester, the counselor and the principal provide a parent and student meeting session to explain graduation requirements for various endorsements. This allows students and parents to start early on planning the pathway to graduation. There are numerous opportunities as well to meet with the counselor and principal in the second semester of 8th grade students' last year in VJHS to discuss not only future plans, but the best courses to complete graduation requirements.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)

At VJHS, shared teachers allow visual and performing arts programs to work collaboratively between elementary and high school campuses. This facilitates the vertical alignment and the mastery of TEKS throughout grade-levels. VJHS provides students with the chance to challenge themselves by participating in

UIL competitions in the performing arts. The music program has seen great success over the years, largely due to the fact that music education is fostered from an early age.

Eighth grade students at VJHS are given the chance to choose between band or choir as well as art or theater as electives. Theater students also have the opportunity to take a performance to the UIL One-Act Play competition. One-Act Play has garnered VJHS several awards over the past few years. Spring theater students put on a public performance at the end of the semester for the community as well as the school district. VISD has seen an increase in the high school theater program and contribute this to the fact that students are introduced to this division of the performing arts early on.

VJHS also offers art classes to grades 5-8. The classes allow students to improve creativity through basic art skills; drawing, painting, and sculpting.

2b. Physical education/health/nutrition

Fifth and sixth grade students work daily on physical fitness. Students are also getting to learn about competitive sports such as basketball, football, volleyball, and track which are team building.

Seventh and eighth grade students have the freedom to choose between being in athletics or physical education. Those that choose to be in athletics will engage in district UIL competitive sports such as volleyball, football, basketball, track and field, tennis, and golf. Coaching staff join together to develop each student's specific talents and skill areas. The expectations of coaches as well as the role models from high school athletes facilitates in developing good sportsmanship, positive attitudes, and determination which are fundamental to being not only a strong athlete but a good student as well.

Eighth grade students receive a semester of health through the state adopted curriculum. This school year a curriculum was adopted to teach students about health and nutrition. On the VJHS campus, this is taught by coaching staff. This curriculum is much like that of the lower grades in that the TEKS place emphasis on health, nutrition, social/emotional and behavioral curriculum. Both curriculums were approved by the district's School Health and Advisory Council (SHAC).

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

2d. Technology/library/media

Technology instruction is provided to all students in grades 5-8 as part of the daily curriculum taught by a technology instructor with an emphasis on targeted skills based on grade level TEKS. Students are taught keyboarding skills, digital citizenship, cyber security, and how to use all campus digital platforms and programs independently. By having technology classes throughout VJHS, student performance has improved in all subject areas. Through technology students receive content and TEKS specific remediation through software programs in all core subjects. These programs are utilized to support the individualized needs of students in all grades.

VJHS is extremely fortunate to have two libraries in the district to help provide quality reading materials to students and staff. We have a librarian and two librarian aides to assist students and teachers with finding books that foster the want and enjoyment of reading. As a district, there is concrete proof that the key to success is through independent reading, and by having such experienced staff members in the library we have developed a program that excites reading in our school district. All students in grades 5-8 also have the added benefit of having access throughout the year to a classroom library.

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

The school counselor provides monthly character guidance lessons through small group and individual meetings with students in grades 5-8. Recently, the counselor created a program called Longhorn Buddies.

This pairs a student, nominated by a teacher, with a high school student. These children play games, read books together, take walks around the campus, and talk with one another. Our district has seen the need for many students to have good, positive role models.

VJHS was also fortunate to become part of the Texas Tech Health Science Center that provides online counseling sessions for students. This program is free, and since COVID-19, VJHS has had many parents that have taken advantage of the free services that are provided to students. With the nearest counseling office being 30 miles away, this affords parents a method to seek individualized help for children that might be suffering from depression, anxiety, or stress.

On a different note, VJHS also offers a semester of finance to 8th graders. This program is a foundational program that gets students ready for a more advanced financial education course in high school. This course is TEKS based and utilizes technology as well as supplemental resources to gain a better understanding of financial literacy.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

As a campus, teachers and administrators work collaboratively to disaggregate data to identify the specific needs of students that require intervention. Students that are identified as in need of intervention are targeted through small groups and one-to-one instruction.

At VJHS, data is disaggregated from a variety of sources. At-risk students are then given very targeted instruction from the teacher. One of the times this can be done is through a 40-minute tutorial time. This type of targeted instruction is just another component that has proven to be very effective and beneficial to all student groups.

When a student gets to the junior high grade level and has struggled for a number of years despite previous intervention methods that have been used, often teachers or parents may request that additional testing or screening be done to determine if there are more specialized services available for that student. A dyslexia specialist can often provide support or intervention strategies to students that might qualify. Of course from time to time screening may determine that there are 504 services that can be provided or even in some circumstances special education services. VJHS has highly qualified staff that understands how to provide the necessary accommodations or modifications that students need in order to find success both in the classroom and on state assessments.

One of the most impactful portions to the tutorial process is the collaboration of teachers, parents, and students. Teachers have a pre-conference, mid-year conference, and end of year conference with parents and students to show progress that is being made on objectives. This method has been useful because it allows teachers to show parents how objectives are targeted and mastered and how much time is spent teaching those skills. By involving parents and students in this process, the stage is set for success for the future.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Fortunately, VJHS has many students that perform either at or above grade level. The primary goal for students that are above grade level is to find areas that are academically challenging. Teachers focus on increasing students' higher order and critical thinking skills without adding additional work. The teachers at VJHS do this by having students do project-based learning, online programs, and software that challenge students to use critical thinking in order to be successful. Students are able to complete these assignments without it being additional to a normal workload but as part of daily work. There is a fine line in challenging students without being overwhelming, and the staff has found an optimal way to do both.

Students excelling in academics are challenged to take part in the UIL Academics competition. Students can choose from several different areas of competition that showcase students' talents and interests. UIL Academics is a competition that our campus has performed well in over the past few years. In fact, VJHS

won our district competition two years in a row.

VJHS has a powerful Gifted and Talented (G/T) program with all core teachers certified in G/T as well. Students identified as gifted and talented are able to showcase individual areas of strength through project based learning. G/T students attend special field trips and even participate in job shadowing opportunities as well.

High achieving students are honored with A and A/B honor roll each nine weeks in grades 5-8. Students in grades 5 and 6 are given the Presidential Awards for high achievement on STAAR assessments and maintaining an average of 95% in all core classes throughout the school year. Students that achieve high academic standings are recognized in an awards assembly at the end of the year. Additionally, in 8th grade the top three students are recognized at a promotion ceremony.

3c. Students with disabilities:

VJHS has a phenomenal special education teacher along with well qualified paraprofessionals that assist students both in the classroom and in a content mastery environment. The special education department includes inclusion, resource, content mastery, and speech services. Special education students receive interventions in the regular classroom. These students can obtain interventions immediately, and if necessary the interventionist can take students back to the special education classroom for moments of reteach or other accommodations that are administered to help students master content that is being taught.

Not only do these interventions address academic needs, the interventions can also support students in behavioral and emotional interventions as necessary for the individual students. While VJHS doesn't have a diagnostician on campus daily, VISD does contract services of a diagnostician through Sunray Special Education Shared Services Arrangement. The special education teacher works closely with the diagnostician and the director of Sunray Special Education Shared Services when it comes to necessary testing, Admission, Review, and Dismissal meetings, Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and students that might possibly benefit from special education services.

VJHS has also built in a study skills class for all special education students. This class is a time for students to get individualized instruction, reteach moments, or even to get assistance on homework. One of the best things about this program is that students, teachers, and parents appreciate the fact that students learn how to study for tests, complete assignments on time, and it reduces stress on all parties involved.

Students with special needs can receive modifications and accommodations from teachers that are highly qualified and capable of following a student's IEP. Many students with special needs spend a majority of the day in the regular classroom with a variety of support methods.

3d. English Language Learners:

VJHS campus has one of the largest ELL populations in the district. All core teachers are English as a Second Language (ESL) certified and have an ELL coordinator that offers a pull-out program much like a study skills class at the end of the day for any students that require extra help getting a better understanding of the English language. The ELL coordinator not only offers classes to the ELL students, the teacher is also in charge of all Language Proficiency Assessment Committee meetings and plans. As the ELL coordinator, part of that job is to schedule these meetings to go over accommodations for each student for all class work and assessments. These meetings involve parental involvement, teachers, administrators, and a community member.

The key to success is the partnership between parents and the school community. VJHS is able to provide a translator for students and parents when necessary. VJHS always has a teacher on hand that can translate at meetings or translate necessary communication that needs to be sent home to parents of ELL students. As part of our partnership with parents and Title III obligations, a monthly newsletter goes out to all ELL parents in both English and Spanish that offers ways for parents to help students succeed.

ELL students all have access to an online program to assist in grasping a better understanding of the English language. Students also have access to Google Translator to help them translate English words into other languages to help with understanding. There is an added benefit to having one-to-one technology that makes these programs easily accessed by ELL students.

Additionally, all ELL certified teachers attend professional development on best practices to accommodate and modify curriculum to meet the needs of each individual ELL student.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At VJHS, teachers, staff, and administrators work together to find constructive ways to motivate students throughout the school year. Instructional goals in VJHS are to integrate current methodology into the curriculum that can reach all students on all levels both academically and emotionally. VJHS wants to create a challenging environment where students grow both academically and emotionally.

One element that was adopted upon returning to school after COVID-19 was a program that is focused on mental well-being. The classes start each day off focused on meditation and calming techniques. The data collected shows that this has helped not only students but teachers as well. VJHS has found that taking charge of the overall mental well-being has increased academic performance and social and emotional health.

As a campus, students are celebrated each and every day. Students are recognized for good citizenship, efforts in and out of the classroom, and for displaying positive behaviors that should be revered. Students are featured on the school website, social media avenues, the local newspaper, and on campus' bulletin boards for all of the student body to see. Photos are displayed in a manner that students can be appreciated and applauded for outstanding efforts.

Over the last few years, teachers have included students and parents in the process of using data from previous and current school years to promote students' success. VJHS holds parent conferences at the beginning, middle and end of the school year to discuss the progress students are making in school. VJHS also sends home reports that track students' progress in objectives to make sure that parents are kept informed at all times.

VJHS has looked for a number of ways to help students to begin looking at future educational pursuits in the last few years. The campus administration and the counselor have found various ways to do this by attending career fairs at the Educational Service Center and West Texas A&M University. This past year, VJHS decided as a district to hold an on-campus career fair. Over thirty career fair participants showcased particular jobs and discussed the opportunities for students pursuing that career. The career fair was a complete success, and plans are already in place for next year. The best part was that many of the participants were former students at VISD that were able to talk about personal experiences and journeys to pursue dream jobs.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

VJHS is fortunate to be part of a small town that is extremely close-knit. The community is supportive in many aspects, and VJHS is lucky to be able to take advantage of the generosity of the local citizens. An example is the benevolence fund that is donated by two local churches to assist in purchasing needed items for students and families in crisis. VJHS knows that if a need arises, the support of the community can be counted on.

Students are extremely fortunate to be able to gain valuable information about the history of this community from generations of leaders that volunteer. The local county judge, district attorney, and county sheriff host yearly tours of the courthouse. Officials talk to students about roles in the county, how trials work, and discuss the jail procedures as well. Students get first hand experience and enjoy touring the courthouse and all offices that are held within. There is also a Route 66 Museum that can be found in town as well. This is a treasured landmark that students tour routinely each year.

The sixth grade class does a community service project each year dedicated to a local woman who was a teacher for many years and a valuable and generous member of the community. The sixth grader raises funds each year during the Christmas season to purchase and wrap gifts for families in need in the community. This class donates generously to the local food pantry which is always in need of food items

especially during the holiday season. The 7th and 8th grade members of student council also do fundraising throughout the year to purchase gifts for the local Angel Tree Project that is organized by a few local churches. These types of programs teach students to be giving to those in need, and it teaches them humility. VJHS is blessed by the continual generosity from those that are always so willing to help locally.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The VJHS campus is led by a dedicated principal with over 23 years of experience in education. The staff is a combination of talented teachers and paraprofessionals that bring not only experience to the campus but have a passion to teach. A large part of the success comes from the collaboration between teachers and grade levels. VJHS prides itself on the strong bond that has been established between staff members. Staff members value each other as not only professional colleagues but as valuable resources when it comes to educating students.

The principal is the leader that assists teachers and staff in assessing concerns that need to be addressed on campus. VJHS looks at not only educational standpoints but also the safety and well-being of students and staff. As a valued member of the leadership team in the district, the principal also makes sure to offer professional development for the team that is relevant to the needs of the students on campus. The principal also continually seeks out professional development opportunities to send staff to in order to make sure there is continual learning and growth. Because of the need VISD now offers an online platform to teachers and paraprofessionals for professional development opportunities throughout the year and for comp days in the summer. The principal also makes sure that teachers are maintaining gifted and talented six hour updates each year, as well as finding other resources that can benefit students for the upcoming school year. Teachers and students continuously receive necessary technology training and updates throughout the year.

As a close group of professionals, VJHS teachers find ways to co-teach together through different grade levels. For example, the 7th and 8th grade English teacher goes to the 5th grade classroom to co-teach a writing lesson. By doing this, it's a good way to ensure that when those students become 7th graders, students have been exposed to higher level writing. Another example is the 5th grade Science teacher and the 8th grade Science teacher creating a lab that 5th graders and 8th graders complete together. Not only is this a time for teachers to collaborate, but it also gives an opportunity for students to pair up and be mentors and peer tutoring at the same time. VJHS is always showcasing these opportunities through social media and the local newspaper for people to see the ways teachers and students work together.

4. School Leadership:

VJHS has set high standards both academically and behaviorally to foster the potential for each student to be successful, and that comes straight from the top. The campus principal sets the tone for education within the VJHS campus that all students have the potential to be successful. With the right mindset and determination, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff members help ensure the quality of educational standards is set and met by the campus. VJHS is fortunate to be part of a district that is encompassed under one roof. Campus and district leaders are constantly working hard to demonstrate positive leadership and a good work ethic at all times. The academic success VJHS has had, shows that by demonstrating positive leadership, this can pass onto others that are surrounded by that type of positive role models. In effect, this type of leadership trickles down to students and is clearly seen by parents and community members. The principal does provide support and encouraging motivation while continuing to maintain high standards and expectations. By developing a strong partnership and collaboration, this leads to an overall successful learning environment.

The campus principal invites all staff to be part of the decision making process at the VJHS campus. When teachers are included in decision making processes, it becomes a strong motivator to accomplish goals set by all involved. Recent changes to the master schedule were put into place with the input from teachers to maximize student learning and provide additional opportunities at the end of the school day for added instruction for struggling students. Every teacher was able to provide insight into how the instructional day should be organized to get the most out of the day.

Part of the leadership role is to serve others both inside and out of the school walls. The principal at VJHS serves as a supporter to teachers, staff, and students by making sure that the staff and students are in a safe learning environment and to ensure that teachers know they are supported through any difficult situations or circumstances that may arise. The principal oversees instructional leadership, curriculum development, professional growth and the daily operations of the building, including discipline. It is also the principal's job to foster school-community relations by being visible at school events and to post information and spotlight achievements on the school's social media platforms. With professional leadership, successful learning will follow.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The student population at VJHS is approximately seventy-seven percent white. While that is a majority of the student population, VJHS strives to meet the needs of all cultures that make up the student body. VJHS ensures that communication sent home is sent in both English and Spanish in order to meet the needs of all students and parents. VISD provides translators and interpreters on hand to communicate with parents and students in the district. It isn't unusual to have parents that can't communicate in English with teachers and staff, therefore translators are offered as needed.

Because Vega is a small, rural community about thirty miles away from a city, opportunities for culturally diverse experiences are limited. VJHS works to expose students to experiences outside of the classroom and community through field trips to enhance cultural awareness. Teachers also do a good job of integrating cultural awareness into the curriculum through literature and cultural celebrations. VJHS prides itself on providing classroom opportunities for every student regardless of cultural backgrounds. VJHS makes sure that all cultures are respected and accepted by all students.

The core teachers at VJHS are all ESL certified. This is a district requirement as part of the hiring process, and it is done in order to provide the necessary support to students whose native language isn't English. VJHS also provides ELL students and parents with support such as translators, online programs, and communications are offered in native languages.

In many VJHS classrooms, a variety of cultures are represented through novels, social studies, and even historical celebrations. For example, as part of the curriculum in sixth grade, students focus on social studies revolving around a variety of countries and cultures. Cultural celebrations happen every six weeks by presenting projects and culturally appropriate foods. Students gain a broader understanding of the variety of cultures that make up the world through this research.

While the student population isn't balanced, VJHS does its best to accommodate and celebrate each one individually. As a campus, staff strives to meet the needs of all students both academically, emotionally, and socially each day. VJHS offers a variety of support for students and families whether it be through academics or even mental health support. The goal is to provide relevant information in a way that treats all cultures represented at VJHS with respect and equal educational opportunities.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE

VJHS attributes success to several factors, but one of the most important is that there is a commitment to academic excellence.

The key to VJHS's academic success is that all students are held to the same standard, and the bar is set high. Achievement comes in a variety of ways to all students regardless of abilities. Teachers push students to be the best not only academically, but behavioral expectations are also set high for all students.

Academic achievements come through the connections that are made between school and home. One of the ways VJHS fosters positive relationships with students and parents is through communication and collaboration. Teachers understand that in order for students to see academic success there needs to be a positive student teacher relationship. Teachers send positive messages to parents about the good things students are doing in school each day. By establishing a positive relationship between students and teachers and parents and teachers, VJHS has boosted the success of students. This is an important part of academic success, and it ensures that the stakeholders are a part of the school's success.

VJHS values the importance of excellence in academics through extracurricular activities. Here at VJHS, students have a variety of extracurricular activities to choose from whether in athletics, UIL Academic competitions, band, Ag, or theater. By striving for excellence in the classroom, the students' efforts mirror that same effort in these extracurricular activities. VJHS students put forth the best effort in all aspects because the understanding of how hard work will pay off in the end is communicated to students by support of teachers, parents, and community stakeholders.

VJHS recognizes that in order for students to meet the high academic expectations is to meet the social and emotional needs of students. VJHS offers services to students such as medical assistance through a full-time nurse, and social-emotional assistance through the school counselor and outside counseling assistance through Texas Tech Health Science Center. The nurse can also be authorized by parents to administer daily medications, and meet other vital health needs when necessary. The school counselor provides classroom lessons on character building skills, and offers individual counseling to students that require more individualized support.

VJHS strives to develop life-long learners, and students that take pride in all successes. It is these practices that have brought VJHS to be nominated for the National Blue Ribbon Award.