

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. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
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. 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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 18 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 3 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 26 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	49	49	98
1	53	49	102
2	52	50	102
3	54	49	103
4	51	49	100
5	54	47	101
6	42	33	75
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	355	326	681

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 29 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 4 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 38 % White
 - 7 % 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 2014 – 2015 school year: 2%

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, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	694
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.019
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %
75 Total number ELL

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

Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Korean, Filipino, Portuguese, Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic, Armenian, Farsi (Persian), German, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu, Cebuano, Gujarati, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Kannada, Other Non-English Languages

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 16 %
Total number students who qualify: 109
8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
9 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 1 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 2 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 5 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. 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 27:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **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 2015.

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%

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

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

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

Vista Elementary is dedicated to academic excellence within a structured learning environment that maintains a high level of commitment by students, parents, and staff.

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

Vista Elementary is a school of choice in the Simi Valley Unified School District. Enrollment is by lottery for kindergarten registration during the month of February. Waiting lists are maintained after this point for each grade level. During the month of March an update letter is mailed to the names on the waiting list. This includes a postcard to be returned indicating the student's intention to remain on the list or be removed. Openings are filled only during the months of June and August.

PART III – SUMMARY

Vista Elementary School is nestled in between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills at the eastern edge of Ventura County, CA. Simi Valley is the former home of the Chumash band of California Indians, and their rich history forms a backdrop to our local culture. Our school serves 674 students this year in kindergarten through sixth grade. Built in 1962, our sprawling campus has 25 full size classrooms, a multipurpose room, The Ronald Reagan Resource Center, which is home to our computer lab and library, and a fully equipped Makerspace, devoted to STEM-based activities. TEAM VISTA, Together Everyone Achieves More, is our long standing motto that has empowered our students, parents, and staff to work together as a unified team for decades. Vista's team-based commitment to excellence is based on a three-part basic belief. The first is empowering students to believe that high achievement is an attainable goal and one which they should consistently embrace and strive to obtain. Second, are our parents, whose dedication to children and staff supports and enriches the educational environment and provides the necessary home-school link for success. Third, our motivated staff whose passion and professionalism drives them to pursue excellence and to constantly improve their program, year after year, so that all students can thrive.

Training students for future challenges and careers of the 21st century is integral to our approach to teaching. Towards this goal, in 2011-2012 the Vista 21 Technology Initiative (V21) was formed. V21 is a concise framework, which details our step-by-step plan to provide teachers with the skills and technologies necessary to deliver engaging and diverse learning experiences to our students. We recognize it is no longer adequate to use a teaching model that merely imparts knowledge using paper and pencil. Instead, we must engage our students academically in ways that promote their technological literacy as well as the inquisitive exploration of their world. Currently on campus we have a fully equipped computer lab and three mobile Chromebook carts. Classroom technology includes document cameras, projectors, laptops, Smartboards, 75 desktop computers, and a class set of iPads. District technology coaches provide ongoing support to all staff throughout the year.

As we moved forward with our V21, it seemed logical to transform our school into a STEM focused community since they are naturally complementary. By combining proven STEM pedagogy with interactive instruction, our technological classrooms serve as the catalyst for higher-level teaching and learning. Our fully equipped Makerspace classroom provides additional resources to engage students in STEM activities. Fundamental to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is project-based learning and experiential activities that actively engage students in real-life curricular activities. V21 combined with STEM and CCSS will propel Vista to become a school of the future.

Students at Vista enjoy a safe and trusting school environment. Respect for all people, both adults and children, is expected and demonstrated on our campus, and is a school wide behavior standard that is stressed in the classroom, at assemblies, and via home-school communication. At Vista it is understood that to gain respect you must give respect, and this is done throughout the campus by all stakeholders. Second Steps, Motto of the Week, Caught Being Good, Citizenship Award Assemblies, and Spirit Assemblies reinforce our dedication to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students.

The staff considers themselves not only employees but also mentors who provide a sense of family and community for the students. Students continue the mentoring process through the Study Buddy program where older students assist their younger partners in academic activities. Student Leadership is promoted, and our Student Council organizes events to support our school, local, and international community.

Parent commitment to excellence plays an integral part in the Vista success. The range of their participation includes presenting art lessons, working with small groups, assisting individual students, prep work, creating bulletin boards, assisting with physical education, and a vast array of other tasks that allow the teacher more time to focus on the children's learning. Additionally, parents are actively involved as part of the Vista PTA, planning fundraising activities in order to earn funds that provide for technology, instructional supports, field trips, and assemblies. With over 12,000 hours of parent volunteer hours logged each year, Vista parents are as passionate about the students' success as the Vista staff.

Home to school communication is vital to our responsibility to keep parents informed. The Vista principal communicates weekly via the Parent Update, voicemail, school webpage, and email. Teacher communication to parents is frequent and ongoing throughout the year and takes many forms including webpages, letters, and email. In the classroom, weekly assignment sheets/agenda books, behavior notices, emails, and phone calls are used as communication tools to address concerns before serious problems occur and to celebrate successes. The community is invited to our annual Science Fair/STEM Night as well as grade level musical performances throughout the year.

Vista Elementary School is a vibrant learning environment where students, parents, and teachers all work collectively towards the common goal of providing the highest quality education for our students. Vista parents are welcomed partners in the educational process. While academic performance is important, collaboration, mutual respect, communication, hard work, and citizenship are attributes that help our students achieve their academic potential while enjoying a safe and encouraging atmosphere where all believe in a common purpose. At TEAM Vista, truly everyone achieves more.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Vista Fundamental School fosters an environment of student engagement in all the curricular areas. Integration across the subject areas is fundamental to our educational philosophy. By making connections between the various subjects, student motivation and knowledge acquisition is enhanced. As we have transitioned to the CCSS, the new state assessments, and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), we have embraced the challenge to transform our curriculum in order to improve higher level thinking skills, conceptual understanding, and application of knowledge across the subject areas. As a STEM-Focused Learning Community, our entire student population receives fully integrated instruction utilizing a variety of teaching modalities and instructional practices that weave throughout the focus curricular areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Common Core Literacy Standards are emphasized so that the STEM subjects are integrated into our English Language Arts program. All students are exposed to Common Core lessons and units, which place an emphasis on research using informational text.

The joy of the written word is embraced by all students, kindergarten through sixth grade, at Vista. Through grade level collaboration and the use of varied reading materials, curriculum is developed that focuses on the four CCSS English/Language Arts domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Students work with a variety of printed and online reading materials, to explore fiction and nonfiction text. Use of multiple sources for analysis of a single topic helps foster mastery of significant standards in CCSS. Writing opportunities abound at Vista and are offered across the curriculum. From the development of ideas through publication of completed work, all genres of writing are taught with special emphasis given to craft and articulation. PowerPoint, Google docs and Google classroom are a few of the exciting 21st century tools available that enable students to create, collaborate, and research cross-curricular projects. In 5th grade, students create PowerPoint presentations on a historical topic related to the novel *The Terrible Wave*. 4th grade students weave historical facts and images into PowerPoint presentations utilizing the Six Traits of Writing methodology. Our 2nd grade students delve into their exploration of insects by reading the nonfiction book *ANT*, followed by multimedia research and the creation of a diorama and research project.

Mathematics instruction has always been a fundamental focus at Vista. The 8 Standards for Mathematical Practice outlined in the CCSS drive our curriculum. Conceptual understanding is essential and towards that end, students are encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts using multiple methodologies. Frequent assessments enable the teacher to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of all students. Project based learning units are used to engage all learners in real-life mathematical applications. For example, geometry is the catalyst for our students' experience with engineering when constructing their Polyhedraville, City of the Future. Students working in teams use polygons that are divided into cubic units, determine the cost per unit, brainstorm possible buildings needed in the future, and then create 3-dimensional polyhedrons that are within their allotted budget and which strictly adhere to required geometric guidelines. Buildings are placed on boards that are decorated, resulting in a spectacular "city of the future."

As a STEM school, science is a major component in our curriculum, and is integrated across the subject areas. Students have opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge with a variety of topics while developing their understanding of the scientific process. Fundamental to CCSS is project-based learning and experiential activities that actively engage students in real-life curricular activities. Students perform investigations through experimentation and research. In the classroom, teachers utilize the Science adopted curriculum (FOSS) and are beginning the process of integrating the NGSS into their instruction as well as having a school-wide science fair. Grade level collaboration ensures seamless transitions for students as they develop their foundation of Science skills. The ability to observe current real time images and data is an exciting improvement. An example of this is when our 1st grade students observe sea animals in their natural habitat from the vantage point of a real time scuba diver who is exploring the ocean depths.

Social Studies instruction is project based with living history experiences woven throughout the curriculum. Rather than merely reading about the 19th century in a text book, the entire 3rd grade is transformed into a

19th century community with their Apple Valley Days unit. All students dress in period costumes and embrace the lifestyle and cultural history of the time period as they learn the history of the age. Fifth grade students participate in an interactive Oregon Trail unit that includes mapping the trail on Google Earth. This provides a fascinating look at the 19th century landscape as compared to present day. Students work in “family” groups, facing the hardships of the trail, analyzing distances between landmarks, and experiencing common recipes of the time. Journals are maintained, supplies are budgeted, and weight limitations of the Conestoga wagon are monitored. By integrating all of the curricular areas, students at Vista Fundamental School can find greater understanding to the interconnectedness of knowledge.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Engineering plays a vital role in our STEM focus at Vista, and its footprint can be seen in every classroom school wide. From Goldilocks chair building in 1st grade where students create chairs that will withstand the weight of a teddy bear to creating elaborate circuit quizzes with buzzers announcing correct answers in 4th, engineering offers an exciting addition to an already diverse and engaging curriculum. Incorporation of our engineering curriculum into the other academic areas is an essential component of STEM, so while 6th graders design and build bridges, they must also focus on the quality of building materials, the mathematics of bridge design, as well as how geology impacts a successful project. To further develop the engineering component, Vista has successfully written multiple grants to help fund the purchase of an engineering unit for every grade level. In keeping with our leadership philosophy, all grade levels collaborated to determine which units they wanted for the school wide grants, paying particular attention to the newly adopted NGSS. Our upgraded Makerspace provides opportunities for our students to create innovative solutions to current real-life problems using a plethora of interesting materials.

Technology has transformed the delivery of instruction and the production of student work. Throughout all core and non-core curricular areas, technology has been integrated to enhance productivity, creativity, communication, and collaboration. All staff use document cameras, projectors, and Smartboards during instruction to better engage student learners. The use of PowerPoint and Google Slides as dynamic presentation tools for students enables groups and individuals to share data and insights in a cohesive and coherent manner, thus emulating real-life presentation modalities that have applications throughout the workplace, from the boardroom to the lab. Student driven research projects are empowering our students to explore diverse educational pathways, using applications such as graphics and animation as display devices, which greatly enhance the students’ engagement in the subject matter as well as the entire class. The Hour of Code program takes place in all classrooms throughout the year. Computer Science Week served as the kickoff for the Common Sense digital citizenship curriculum. At Vista we recognize the importance of teaching students how to become responsible digital citizens in a media rich world. Using technology wisely is an essential life skill that we focus on throughout the year as we fully prepare our students for the 21st century.

Drama and music are alive at Vista Elementary School. Focusing on a different theme, every grade level produces a musical production each year that incorporates vocal and instrumental music. Additionally, all 4th grade students learn how to play the recorder. Their performances of such varied works as Oh Susanna and Fur Elise are spectacular occasions which bring huge audiences of supportive family and community members.

At Vista, healthy living is actively promoted. All students participate in 100 minutes of carefully organized physical education per week. The Physical Education program used in Simi Valley is Game Day, which provides the structure for the program where month long activities focus on a single sport. To support PE, we have a fully stocked equipment room available to any classroom throughout the week. Additional athletic activities on campus include a school wide jog-a-thon fundraiser, which promoted the virtues of exercise as well as social responsibility.

After school enrichment programs offer a variety of engaging activities. From Robotics and programming by Sandbox, to Academic Chess, Young Rembrandts, Design in Wood, and Sports n More, opportunities abound at Vista during the after school hours. As part of our partnership with Santa Susana High School, our 6th grade students work jointly on Lego robotics in an after school program.

Great Works of Art, a monthly fine arts program focused on the great masters, is offered by the PTA and parent volunteers. Each month every student learns about a historically significant artist, and then recreates a masterpiece by that artist. All necessary materials are provided by the PTA. The results are a spectacular display of talent and artistic understanding that are displayed throughout our campus.

Every student has access to our exemplary library, which is located in our Ronald Reagan Student Resource Center. After the creation of V21, we realized the need for a library/media center that could propel our students into the 21 century. At Vista, we strive for the best and reached out to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library/ Annenberg Presidential Learning Center, to see if they would partner with us to reach our dream. After meeting with members of V21, they agreed to lend their name and support to Vista, the only elementary school in SVUSD to have such an honor. Today, with over 11,000 titles, 36 student computer workstations, and a Smartboard, students can delve into the print-rich world of knowledge. Staffed with a resourceful library clerk, students may request titles, do research, or just explore exciting new genres. Our newly expanded library/computer lab is the heart of flourishing learning and research on our campus, contributing to every student's success.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Vista Elementary School implements a variety of instructional methods throughout the year with the essential goal of helping every student fully attain their academic potential, as well as nurturing their social and emotional skills. Thoughtful observation of student progress is embraced by all teachers with a clear understanding that communication with parents is a vital link towards student success. Teachers meet weekly in grade level teams to develop and adjust instructional strategies. All students are provided Universal Access to the core curriculum and are expected to meet or exceed the standards at their grade level. Differentiation for different learning styles allows students to have creative and engaging educational opportunities towards meeting the academic standards.

Technology is an outstanding teaching tool because it is engaging to all students. At Vista, all curriculum is combined with technology and every Vista student has weekly access through the use of the computer lab as well as three Chromebook carts containing class sets of individual devices, and a class set of iPads. Resources including Google Classroom, Docs, Sheets, Accelerated Reader/Renaissance Place, Tumblebooks, Microsoft Office, MobyMax, and many more enable individualized instructional supports are available for students that align with different learning styles while helping all students master the CCSS.

At Vista, a three-tiered intervention model is in place to support student learning. English Language Development (ELD) instruction and support, classroom accommodations, and Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies/programs are provided to those students who are at risk of not meeting grade level standards. In conjunction with other formative and summative assessment data, grade levels identify the most "at risk" students to refer for a universal reading screening (BRI – Brief Reading Inventory), and the data is shared with teachers to identify the students with greatest need in grades 1-6. The identified students then receive Tier 2 literacy intervention via targeted small group reading intervention, Reading Club taught by a credentialed instructor utilizing the research-based intervention programs, SIPPS Reading Program, and Soar to Success. Students in Reading Club meet three times weekly for 30 minutes over an eight-week session. The BRI is re-administered to determine progress and support grade levels teams in identifying the next group of students for intervention. There are three sessions of reading intervention scheduled for the 2015-16 school year. Students deemed, as not making adequate progress in Tier 2 interventions will be referred to Student Study Team (SST). The SST develops appropriate supports, interventions, and strategies for the classroom teacher to implement in the classroom. Students who need further support may be referred for more targeted and intensive Tier 3 interventions with the Special Education Teacher.

Vista is committed to providing positive emotional and behavioral supports on a continuous basis in order to meet the developmental needs of every student. Each classroom has a positive behavior management system in place which is individualized to provide daily encouragement and recognition to foster individual responsibility.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Vista Elementary School's commitment to excellence philosophy presumes a tenacious dedication to analyzing and determining the ever-changing needs of our students. Each year begins with a thorough analysis of student data, documenting each student's progress over time, year to year, to best determine how to improve academic and social success. Yearly test data is disaggregated to develop a clearer picture of student growth and also to identify areas of improvement needed in particular grade levels. The California Assessment of Student Performance (CAASPP) data was used for that purpose this year. Multiple focus areas for improvement were identified, and plans were developed to enhance instruction in those areas. It is not acceptable for us to do well without improvement. Rather, at Vista we consistently strive to improve student outcomes each year.

Projects and curriculum are implemented, monitored, and evaluated using a wide variety of assessments. District-wide benchmark assessments have been developed to monitor progress towards goals set by the CCSS. Formal and informal assessments, tests scores, student work, authentic applications, multiple levels of questioning, and district and site-based rubrics are just a few examples of evaluative tools employed at Vista. MobyMax, math assessments, and STAR Reading assessments through Renaissance Place offer online options for assessment as well. Assessment results drive differentiated instruction in all curricular areas, and identify students needing additional support. Teachers collaborate in grade level meetings weekly to adjust and refine instruction based on assessment results and to share intervention strategies and plan modifications. Assessments are designed that specifically correlate with learning objectives.

Communication plays a vital role in the success of our program. Staff meetings, leadership meetings, grade level articulation meetings, ELAC meetings, School Site Council meetings, and PTA Board meetings are all vehicles for ongoing dialogue regarding curriculum and student achievement. Parent involvement is a critical component to academic success at Vista. The use of grading rubrics, which highlight understanding, content, presentation, and creativity, provides students and families specific feedback regarding how best to improve. Parents participate in their student's assessment by acknowledging receipt of all data with a signature. Parent/teacher conferences are held early in the year to initiate an ongoing year-long dialogue that will maintain family engagement, accountability, and academic success. Review of assessment data and progress, and goal setting take place at parent/teacher conferences. The result is a program that involves all stakeholders with pertinent data and tools to best enhance student success.

An active Student Study Team meets at least twice each month to review and monitor at-risk students. In-class reading inventories and RTI monitoring administered by the Reading Intervention Specialist are given to all students needing additional support.

Vista's primary goal of providing the most exceptional learning community for children is enhanced by our ongoing focus on assessment results and participation of all stakeholders as part of a successful team.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

TEAM VISTA, Together Everyone Achieves More, our mantra for over twenty years, guides our philosophy and is embraced by everyone at Vista. Student success is a shared responsibility by all stakeholders and a common focus throughout the school. Parents maintain a constant presence on campus adding to the sense of family and a deep commitment to our focus on academic excellence. Community partners are embraced as Vista family members and their expertise is valued. Promoting personal responsibility, cooperation, and empathy towards others is key as we endeavor to create the future scholars of the 21st century.

Displaying respect for all people is expected and demonstrated on our campus and is a school wide behavior standard that is stressed in the classroom, at assemblies, and via home-school communication. At Vista, it is understood that to gain respect you must give respect, and all people do this throughout the campus. The principal sets the tone at the beginning of the year at the Safety Assembly where all students revisit acceptable behavior expectations of the school and appropriate conduct. The feeling of trust and safety prevails as all students can visit her with her open door policy. Our school climate promotes a safe environment, free from bullying and harassment, and promotes a sense of belonging. Second Steps, Motto of the Week, Caught You Being Good, and Citizenship Award Assemblies reinforce our dedication to providing a safe and supportive environment for all students.

The Vista faculty work as an educational team. They consider each other as extended family members, giving support, setting goals, and celebrating successes throughout the year. Many teachers have been trained in the Medal of Honor character development curriculum at the Ronald Reagan Library.

Our principal is instrumental in creating a positive school environment. She actively gets to know each staff member personally, and welcomes all teachers to meet with her as needed. She interacts with students on a daily basis through classroom observations and visits to the playground, thus creating an atmosphere of trust for the students. The principal opens the year with a page from Second Steps that focuses on mutual respect and anti-bullying tools leaving students with the knowledge that we all need to have respect for one another.

Excellent citizenship is a fundamental outcome of our commitment to excellence. Throughout the campus and in all interactions, whether it be with teachers, office support staff, parents or other students, Vista students display polite, respectful, and cooperative behavior. Integrity, honesty, cooperation, self-discipline, trust, caring, responsibility, and trying your best are all essential characteristics of the Vista philosophy. Good citizenship is promoted by our Student Council and PTA with many community and international fundraising efforts including Pennies for Peace, Red Cross blood drive, the Angel Tree holiday program, and the monthly community outreach programs which include a blanket and coat drive and canned food drive.

At Vista, we have a culture of inclusion for all stakeholders. Parents are an integral part of our community and our principal and all teachers consistently communicate with parents about their child's progress, educational plan, and all activities occurring on campus. Communication via email, letter, phone, text, our district app, and in person ensure that Vista parents are actively engaged in all activities on campus.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

August 29, 2013 will be a day that will forever live in Vista Elementary School history. As our unoccupied and soon to be remodeled administration building was burning to the ground, Vista was truly "on fire" with the announcement of our API score of 961. Refusing to be dispirited by the loss of our cherished office, students, parents, and staff together rose above the fire and C4 Bond work/construction distractions to celebrate our highest API ever. Parents, teachers, and students frequently refer to the "Vista family" and that term truly exemplifies who we are. No matter what challenges we face, from school wide construction

to a devastating fire, we all pull together as one unified force, focused on our goal of academic excellence and success for all students.

The Vista PTA is truly an outstanding example of parental involvement. Yearly, they provide needed funds for such diverse programs as field trips, instructional supplies, and technology. The V21 Initiative, which has helped bring state-of-the-art technology to Vista, is a branch of the Vista PTA. Before the V21 Initiative, technology was sorely lacking on our campus. With the coordinated commitment of our parents, we now have a beautiful, fully equipped computer lab, new monitors in every classroom, Smartboards, document cameras, projectors, and more. In addition to technology, the PTA has fundraisers and contests, and provides support for all campus events. At our recent jog-a-thon, parents ran along-side students and teachers to show their support. Throughout the year, the Vista PTA is a constant presence on our campus.

The Great Works of Art program is run by parent volunteers. Each month they provide an engaging art lesson highlighting a great master. They provide all the art materials and guidance needed for every student to successfully complete an art project that is truly frame-ready.

Each year Vista parents volunteer over 12,000 hours of their time to help teachers, students, and the school succeed. Their support is seen throughout our campus with activities such as helping in the classroom working with small groups, copying, filing, and preparing bulletin boards. Parent participation on decision-making committees such as the School Site Council, ELAC, and the PTA helps to shape Vista's focus and direction. They volunteer their services in the library, the bi-annual book fair, and the computer lab. The Junior Olympics team, which participates in a district-wide yearly athletic event, is coordinated, coached, and staffed by parents each year. Parent assistance is also evident on all field trips.

Communication is a fundamental component of our parent and community engagement. Each week on our Vista website we publish an electronic parent update with important school information for our families. We host community events such as our STEM Night and Grandparent's Dinner. Our Vista website provides school wide information. At our annual STEM/Science Fair Night, parents, students, and the community gather to celebrate all of the amazing STEM activities created by Vista students. From looking at the stars through telescopes brought by our community partner, the Ventura County Astronomical Society, to student experiments on water conservation, science, engineering, math, and technology abound for all to enjoy.

3. Professional Development:

The Simi Valley Unified School District is committed to providing relevant and significant professional development opportunities for all teachers. Each year they offer Core Connections where teachers can choose 4 classes from 120 different sections covering approximately 30 topics taught by teacher leaders in the district. The day's atmosphere is the same as at national conventions and fosters a desire to learn new methods and ideas. The district has also provided trainings on many other relevant topics such as Google, MobyMax, and NGSS.

Vista teachers are tenacious in their desire to provide a vibrant, progressive delivery of instruction. Inherent in that goal is a continuous engagement with professional development required to stay informed of the newest strategies and educational trends. Throughout the year, the staff attends a variety of professional development opportunities. The Ventura County Office of Education has been an invaluable resource as teachers have attended seminars there on Makerspace, STEM Symposium, and Engage 11, Engagement Strategies with Common Core through Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). Teachers are also members of educational organizations such as the Gold Coast Science Network and the Ventura County Astronomical Society. Simi Valley Unified School District maintains a core of Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA) who provide professional development at organized Staff Development Days and are available throughout the year to meet the needs of teachers.

As needed, experts from representative organizations have been brought in to provide support. Smartboard, School City, and Google are examples of business representatives who have provided training.

Teacher leaders and our principal share their expertise and information learned at seminars during staff meetings and as needed. Grade level teams regularly research new curriculum and incorporate new methods and lessons into their instructional practices.

In order to provide the very best level of instruction for our students, we as educators believe that it is incumbent upon us to stay at the forefront of current pedagogy. Towards that end, we continually seek out professional development opportunities to enhance our knowledge base and expand our understanding. As we instill a love of learning in our students, Vista teachers serve to be role models as lifelong learners.

4. School Leadership:

At Vista, it is our mission to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and a culture of learning. Our staff enjoys a collegial environment where ideas are shared both formally and informally, and decision-making involves all stakeholders as equal partners. The Vista principal, teachers, parents, and educational leaders all come together to work cooperatively with a shared vision to plan and make decisions that will provide our students with an exemplary educational experience. The Vista school culture is one of high expectations and success for all.

The first staff meeting of each year is devoted to studying student data and determining areas of growth needed for each grade level. Multi-grade articulation takes place during these planning sessions. Goals are then established and prioritized, based on the information gleaned from the data. Grade level teams plan collaboratively to address each area of need and to create plans to improve instruction for all learners.

Staff meetings are held monthly where teachers with the principal brainstorm methods for teaching particular standards, improving instruction, and school wide concerns are addressed. Parents on the Vista School Site Council (SSC) are involved in the decision-making process. Suggestions and ideas generated at the SSC are brought to the staff for additional collaboration and decision-making.

Student Council members plan high-interest, school-wide activities as well as community and international fundraisers. The student council also plays a significant role in each Spirit Assembly as well as running a campus cleanup program. Their participation in the decision making process is an integral component of leadership at Vista.

The Vista PTA is a vital partner in our school's leadership team. Throughout the year the PTA plans engaging events that strengthens our school's sense of family. They hold events that include the Book Fair, Red Ribbon Week, Reading Day, Jog-a-thon, STEM/Science Fair, movie night, monthly dine-out events, Reflections, primary fun day, Harvest Festival, Junior Olympics, blood drive, and assemblies throughout the year. The V21 is now a part of the PTA, and their dedicated fundraising has enabled Vista to create the modern Ronald Reagan Resource Center and provide not only Smartboards and flat screen monitors throughout the school but also offer exciting field trips to every grade level and provide needed supplies for all teachers. The PTA executive board includes a teacher representative as well as the principal and meets monthly. They communicate regularly through a monthly newsletter as well as shared information on the school-provided weekly communication.

We feel quite fortunate to be a part of a school district that is as approachable and responsive as Simi Valley Unified School District. Principals collaborate weekly with senior district personnel and work on problem solving for the improvement of student outcomes. All district leaders regularly visit school sites and collaborate for decision making on curriculum and site concerns.

Vista maintains a school climate of trust and a sense of belonging where our principal, teachers, parents, and students' efforts are all valued. The result is a nurturing environment where all students thrive and exceptional learning takes place.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The Vista 21 Initiative (V21) is a true modernization and redefinition of our decades old motto TEAM VISTA, Together Everyone Achieves More. In order for us to continue providing our students with the most progressive and relevant education available, our focus had to evolve. TEAM VISTA's "can do" attitude towards academic excellence has propelled our V21 Initiative forward with fervor and excitement. V21 refers to our entire student population receiving fully integrated instruction utilizing a variety of technology. The result has provided the impetus for Vista to become a 21st century learning center.

At Vista we set our goals towards implementing technological improvements in a methodical, step-by-step basis. To achieve our most immediate short terms goals, all classrooms were equipped with projection monitors and document cameras. These two devices transformed the way lessons were presented to students and greatly increased their engagement. No longer limited to transparencies, students could actively present work to classmates, interact with lessons, and view materials from any multimedia source. Smartboard technology as an innovation and interactive tool revolutionized our instructional delivery. Teachers are now able to bring the world into the classroom and students have become active world learners, thoroughly empowered to seek out knowledge wherever it can be found.

As we moved towards our 21st century education model, V21 incorporated STEM as a natural partner. Science, technology, engineering, and math have an affinity for each other, and blending the curriculum for all four areas happened in a very organic way. Our technologically integrated classrooms have become the stimulus for higher-level teaching and learning. The CCSS emphasizes project-based learning and experiential activities that actively engage students in real-life curricular activities. V21 combined with STEM does just that.

Parent involvement in the V21 Initiative is widespread. In addition to their monthly PTA meetings, the V21 subcommittee meets quarterly to identify school needs and provide support. To achieve the technological advancements we wanted, the concerted commitment of all stakeholders at Vista and within the Simi Valley community was needed. Their dedication to the V21 ideal is not only through fundraising but in educational support as well. At our yearly STEM Night, parents brought in community leaders and industry representatives to provide expertise and additional learning opportunities. District partners also contributed their invaluable know-how. The result was an enthusiastic crowd of hundreds of people gathered together for a night highlighting our school focus.

The change in the past four years has been palpable. The results highlight the success of V21. Our performance on last year's CAASPP results were the highest scores in English Language Arts and math in our district. Since its inception, our students, parents, and teachers have embraced the V21 Initiative. Our parents have worked fervently at making technology on campus a reality. Students have eagerly accepted technology as an integral part of the curriculum, and have moved towards becoming 21st century problem solvers and critical thinkers. Teachers have charged forward in updating their curriculum to reflect innovation, technology usage, and a STEM focus. Together, all stakeholders have proven that not only is the V21 Initiative attainable but has become the driving force in our ambitious goal of preparing our students to become scholars in the 21st century.