

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Sonya Palmer

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

Official School Name Hillside Academy for Excellence School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2014 Dairy Road

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

City Garland    State TX    Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75041-2001

County Dallas County

Telephone (972) 926-2550    Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL  
http://www.garlandisd.net/page.cfm?p=1085    E-mail stpalmer@garlandisd.net

Twitter Handle  
https://twitter.com/Hillside\_Eagles    Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_    Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_    Blog \_\_\_\_\_    Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr Bob Morrison    E-mail bmorrison@garlandisd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Garland ISD    Tel. (972) 487-3151

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 Mr. Larry Glick  
(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, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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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

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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):
- 47 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 13 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 8 High schools
  - 2 K-12 schools
- 70 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	28	29	57
1	40	38	78
2	36	49	85
3	35	45	80
4	42	42	84
5	52	41	93
6	0	0	0
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
<b>Total Students</b>	233	244	477

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 14 % Asian
  - 13 % Black or African American
  - 47 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 23 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 3%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	15
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	469
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.032
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 29%  
133 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Korean, Amharic, Bengali, Cantonese, Ibo/Igbo, Konkani, Malayalam, Pilipino

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53%  
Total number students who qualify: 253

8. Students receiving special education services: 6%  
28 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.

- 13 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 1 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 27 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: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	23
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals	8
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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     21:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	97%	98%	98%
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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
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

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.

To promote positive citizenship and responsible behavior so that all students will meet or exceed educational performance standards and demonstrate self-responsibility.

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

Hillside Academy for Excellence is a gifted and talented magnet school that serves students who are artistically or musically talented as identified by auditions and identified gifted students who rank in the 90th percentile or higher in reading or math achievement as well as in the 90th percentile or higher in cognitive abilities. Talented and/or gifted students come to Hillside from all across the school district. Also, on-grade level students who live in close proximity of the school are included in the student population.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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At Hillside Academy for Excellence, relationships, relevance, and rigor are not just current education buzz words: these words provide the foundation for the school's success. Exceptional relationships provide students, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders the stamina necessary to consistently provide an exciting and engaging learning environment for all students.

Hillside Academy for Excellence is an elementary school in the Garland Independent School District, the twelfth largest district in Texas. Hillside's mission is to ensure that every student has the opportunity to reach his/her academic potential and to develop self-control, self-respect, and respect for others. Hillside strives to promote the students' positive citizenship and responsible behavior so that all students will meet or exceed educational performance standards and all students will demonstrate self-responsibility. Strong relationships are key to motivating and encouraging students to be the best they can be in all endeavors.

The school originally opened its doors in 1970. In the fall of 1987, the campus became an academy for the talented and gifted, offering a more rigorous curriculum as well as an enriched art and music program. In 1993, a new program strand for students in grades 2-5, identified as gifted and bilingual was added to the school. By 2009, first grade bilingual was added and currently the bilingual gifted strand has been completed with the addition of kindergarten bilingual. Also included in the school population are students who live in close proximity to the school, but are not identified as gifted or talented. Some of the unique challenges of the school's community are integrating English Language Learners (ELLs) with English only speaking students and integrating a wide variety of cultures and socio-economic levels into one school. These unique challenges are also seen as opportunities for the students. Gifted and/or talented students also often work side by side with on-grade level or struggling students. These opportunities are often not available in most schools. All students, whether neighborhood residents, gifted students, or talented students, benefit from the multitude of activities offered through the magnet program.

Hillside Academy for Excellence is a Title I campus that serves 476 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Gifted and talented students come from across the entire school district. The parents come from all socio-economic levels, with employment ranging from unemployed, to blue collar jobs as well as white collar jobs. The ethnically diverse population is one of the many strengths of the school. As a Title I school with 52.8% classified as Economically Disadvantaged, Hillside earned honors as a High Performing and High Progress school from the Texas Education Agency for the 2014-2015 school year. While being ethnically and economically diverse, the school family celebrates all cultures. An example of this is the annual International Night celebration which provides students and their families the opportunity to learn about different cultures. Students complete several projects throughout the school year, including Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) projects, which are displayed during a school wide TPSP showcase night. Creating and facilitating positive relationships are a cornerstone to the school's success. To help in this, a "House System" has been implemented in the school. All students and every staff and faculty member are members of a specific house. Students earn house points for academic performance, acts of responsibility, and acts of kindness. A strong guidance and counseling program helps the students develop emotionally. A daily character trait program as well as classroom guidance on a variety of topics, done by the school counselor, yield positive results in student behavior, emotional development, school climate and academic performance. Physical development is also an important component of overall student success. The state minimum for physical education is 135 minutes per week. Hillside's schedule far exceeds this with 165 minutes per week. Not only does this allow them to be active and develop physically, but it also leads to academic success in the classroom.

Hillside Academy has been consistently honored by the district for exemplary attendance. Not only do students attend school on a daily basis, many of them stay after school for the Explorer program which offers a variety of enrichment opportunities such as Choir, Guitar, Experimental Painting, Watch Me Sculpt, Maker Space, Writers' Workshop, and SWAT (Students Working with Advanced Technology). Hillside strives to involve families with activities like the STEAM Family adventure and Dr. Seuss night. The PTA at Hillside is extremely active having sponsored events such as the Back to School Porch Party, Hillside Turkey Trot, Family Fun Fitness Night, Fall Carnival, Daddy/Daughter Dance, and Mother/Son Amazing

Race. The PTA is always willing to lend a helping hand assisting and volunteering when needed. They have assisted in funding improvements in the library and providing more musical instruments for the enriched music classes. In addition, they have been awarded the 2014-2016 National PTA School of Excellence Award for their work in the school and community.

At Hillside, everyone matters: every student, every teacher, every parent and every community stakeholder makes a difference in the success of the school.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Since curriculum plays a major role in the school culture, Hillside Academy strives to improve student learning on all levels and to meet the instructional needs of all learners. The core curriculum is developed and designed by the Garland ISD Curriculum and Instruction Department and is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Hillside utilizes the English Language Proficiency Standards to ensure the needs of English Language Learners in the Bilingual Gifted classes are addressed as well as on-grade level students receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Differentiated instruction is fundamental for all students. Gifted Students receive instruction at an advanced pace and rigor as the curriculum is designed to engage them in exploring challenging literature from various genres, cultures and periods in time. Artistically and/or musically gifted students receive the same curriculum as the rest of the student population. These students are also pulled out for an enrichment program in art and/or music that is tailored to their individual skill levels.

Phonemic awareness, fluency, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing are the basis of the English Language Arts curriculum. Foundational skills are acquired by integrating tiered small group instruction. This curriculum was selected because each lesson includes a writing assignment linked to student interests and experiences. Nonfiction leveled readers cover the same Texas TEKS content but are written on four different reading levels to improve the skills of below-level and above-level students. Differentiated small group instruction is provided for all instructional levels to improve the skills of students performing below grade level, on grade level, or above grade level. Targeted instruction that focuses on increased critical thinking skills and high comprehension is delivered not only by utilizing the state textbook adoption but also by creative teacher created lessons. Differentiated small groups are fluid and based on data. Teachers utilize their own creativity and various assessment data to ensure student needs are continuously being met.

The current Math curriculum was selected because it is aligned with the recently revised TEKS and is highly interactive and inquiry based. Students explore lessons in real-world, problem solving situations. Pictorial presentations and abstract models help students acquire foundational skills necessary for problem solving. Another strength of this resource is that its animated representations allow students of all ages to make connections to mathematical concepts. Students in second and third grade have the opportunity to learn to play chess in a structured program that teaches critical and creative thinking skills. This program engages young minds and expands logical reasoning and pattern recognition. Differentiated small group instruction is necessary because different learners have different needs. Computer based programs are utilized to meet the needs of students who require a more accelerated pace in math. Again, teachers utilize their own creativity in lesson planning and online interaction of computer programs to meet students where they are and take them to the instructional level that maximizes their academic potential.

Districtwide, a 5E Instructional Model is used in Science because of the distinct phases that it offers. Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, and Evaluate are phases of learning that allow students and teachers to experience common activities, to use and build on prior knowledge and experiences, to construct meaning, and to continually assess their understanding of a concept. The TEKS serve as the anchor and foundation of this science instructional model. The Explore component of the 5E model allows students to build foundational knowledge and extend as they work through each part of the lesson. Periodic checks for understanding occur throughout the 5E instructional pathway with additional resources provided and highlighted for remediation and enrichment opportunities. Model lessons also include extension ideas for project based learning for students working above grade level.

The Social Studies curriculum was selected because it is easily and heavily integrated with the reading curriculum. The curriculum focuses on students building a foundation in history, geography, economics, and government. The TEKS are emphasized through rigorous and creative activities designed by the teachers. Non-fiction magazines and leveled readers are used to enhance students' understanding of social studies content. Research-based instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, advanced organizers, hands-on activities and small group instruction are used to support state standards and address the needs of students

below and on grade level. Several strategies and techniques such as conceptual mapping and question-answer relationships are utilized to differentiate lessons and provide more depth and complexity opportunities for students above grade level.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In a conscious effort to educate the "whole" child, technology, fine arts, and physical education receive as much attention as core curriculum subjects. Technology is utilized throughout the core curriculum in various capacities. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are embedded within all core curriculum areas for kindergarten through fifth grades. For example, the computer literacy component in the ELAR curriculum provides online, interactive, guided practice for students, while fulfilling the National Educational Technology literacy standards. Technology is also integrated in instruction through project based learning. In addition, technology supports differentiated instruction in the core curriculum by allowing students the opportunities for remediation and opportunities to work at their own pace and surpass their grade level. Students use technology in their classrooms every day and attend class in the computer lab at least twice a week for thirty minutes.

Regular art and music classes are also offered to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. This fine arts curriculum is aligned with the TEKS which include artistic perception, creative expression/performance, historical/cultural heritage and responsive evaluation. Students in fifth grade attend the local art museum annually. Hillside students in first through fifth grade have the opportunity to learn more about musical theater by participating in a musical as either a cast member or as part of a stage crew. The most recent musical to be performed is "The Lion King Kids." Fourth and fifth grade students may participate in the Hillside Singers choir which performs for various school activities including winter and spring concerts. The choir also participates in the Sandy Lake Music Festival. In addition to regular art and music classes, students have the opportunity to participate in audition based enriched art and music classes. Talented students in either art or music receive the same curriculum as the rest of the school population. These students are also pulled out for enrichment based on their level of skills. Enriched art students experience a comprehensive art education including art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics. Students investigate, interpret, predict, and devise opinions in relation to art as well as utilize higher order thinking skills by writing and speaking about art from a critical point of view. Enriched music students attend extra classes which are intended to broaden their knowledge and experiences in music. Throughout the school year, these students are engaged on many different levels, including performing, creating, moving, and listening while being taught using a combination of both Kodaly and Orff-Schulwerk approaches. Also, enriched music students play a variety of instruments, as well as explore music and movement through folk dances and improvisation while spending time composing their own music.

Another elective offered to fourth and fifth grade students is Strings. Students have the opportunity to play various stringed instruments which include violin, viola, harp, and cello. The students perform at various events throughout the year. Strings students look forward to performing at an assisted living facility as well as attending the Garland Symphony Orchestra.

Physical Education (PE) class at Hillside is definitely an extraordinary experience. The PE program is directly aligned with the TEKS which include movement, health-related topics, and social skills. Kindergarten through fifth grade students attend PE three times a week in fifty-five minute intervals to receive instruction from a certified physical education teacher. Students participate in the Fitnessgram which is a required annual assessment for students in third through fifth grades. While the PE curriculum is directly aligned with the state TEKS and students participate in activities that provide a foundation for social development through physical activities, Hillside students are also provided the opportunity to learn less conventional sports like speed stacking. Speed stacking is the sport of upstacking and downstacking specially designed cups in different patterns. Hillside fields the largest traveling speed stacking team in the country. The Hillside Stackin' Eagles team consists of kindergarten through fifth grade students who compete in tournaments. Participation in this sport has proven effective in enhancing hand-eye coordination, ambidexterity, concentration, and reaction time.

Every week, first through fifth grade students have the opportunity to participate in a class called Movement. In the Movement class, students are taught balance, movement, and dance skills to improve the development of fundamental motor skills as described in the TEKS. Participation in the Movement class helps improve social skills, increases the spirit of cooperation, and enhances mutual respect among students. As a culminating activity, students show off their talents in a program where they move and groove for their families and friends. Each year there is a different theme for the program and all students are allowed to participate. Each grade level performs two routines with their grade level and the final two routines are performed together by all grade level participants.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

As a magnet school that serves students identified as gifted/talented and a Title I school that serves students on various academic levels, Hillside is challenged to make sure that all students continue to show growth and make progress in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for all subject areas. Instruction is differentiated and driven by formative and summative assessment data. A district adopted norm referenced test is given three times a year and is instrumental in identifying and forming differentiated instructional groups. Teachers also utilize various progress monitoring tools and fluency assessments as resources. Fifty minutes of instructional time per day is allocated for intervention through the district wide intervention model which emphasizes tiered teaching. During this time, a team of campus based intervention teachers provide specialized instruction using a tiered approach. Classroom teachers also work with small groups of students to help close student deficits during this time. Students who are not in need of remediation work on enriching Think Tank activities or Texas Performance Standards Projects (TPSP). TPSP is geared toward but not limited to students identified as talented and gifted. The TPSP provides guidelines for independent learning experiences and research projects. These projects are based on the TEKS and connect English Language Arts, Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies in an interdisciplinary manner. As a culminating activity, families are invited to a TPSP Showcase where students present and explain their projects to their parents.

Formative and summative assessment data is utilized to drive and differentiate instruction based on individual student needs and learning styles. In mathematics, the instructional focus is for students to use manipulatives to build their concrete understanding before moving to abstract thinking. Real world situations allow students to apply their learning and make cross-curricular connections. Problem solving and critical thinking skills are heavily practiced as the campus implements rigorous instruction. Reading requires systematic, targeted instruction and a strong partnership between students, school, and home. Staff members have been trained in utilizing resources that focus on priority knowledge and skills while ensuring alignment with State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and the TEKS. Hillside strongly emphasizes the use of high yield instructional strategies which include similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, reinforcing effort and recognition, homework and practice, nonlinguistic representation, and cooperative learning. Other strategies include setting goals and objectives, providing feedback, generating and testing hypothesis, as well as, utilizing cues, questions, and advanced organizers.

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

Teacher teams, the intervention team, and administrators meet weekly in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to have meaningful academic conversations which include sharing data from formative and summative assessments and instructional strategies to address needs discovered in the data. Teachers also utilize classroom daily and weekly assessments, computer assisted assessments, unit curriculum tests, and benchmarks to track student performance and progress. Teacher teams set goals for student achievement and growth in PLCs after assessing students using common assessment instruments. Initial benchmarks are determined and student growth is measured periodically. These goals are reached through the sharing of teaching strategies, resources, and best practices. Teachers use the Response to Intervention (RtI) model for providing targeted assistance in conjunction with the district-wide intervention program. The Explorer program, which is an extended after school program, targets students in need of rigorous differentiated instruction beyond the school day. There is a fifty minute intervention time built into the daily schedule for all grade levels to receive intervention and for teachers to reteach material as necessary. Students performing at high levels complete enriching think tank activities during designated

intervention time and are also provided enrichment opportunities in the extended day program. Decisions to make changes to the curriculum and/or how it is implemented during instruction are based on the level of student progress and whether or not assessment goals are being met. Collaboration among staff members is important in building relationships because that dynamic has a direct effect on student success. When those relationships work in developing and maintaining appropriate academic rigor, the outcome for students is positive.

In line with efforts to keep parents and community stakeholders actively involved and informed of the current achievements and educational results of the school, Hillside Academy shares the state developed school report card and student performance indicator reports. The reports keep parents informed about how their children are performing on state assessments. The school report card is posted on the website to keep all community stakeholders informed of student performance and progress. The annual Title I meeting is open to the public. During this meeting, current assessment tools, instructional programs and curriculum components are defined. At this time, the meanings of the four indexes used to calculate the school ranking on the report card is also explained by the principal and the Campus Improvement Team. The Campus Improvement Team consists of parents, teachers, and community stakeholders who meet to discuss the academic and budgetary needs of the school.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Hillside Academy strives to provide each student with an enriched learning environment that gives him/her multiple means for success and growth. Essential to creating and maintaining a positive school climate where students grow academically, socially and emotionally is the idea that educators need to educate the whole child. Each experience is planned in order to give each student multiple means for success and growth.

While Hillside is one Eagle family, the family is divided into four "houses." All students and staff/faculty members are members of a specific house. Individuals receive house points for academic performance, acts of responsibility, acts of kindness, and volunteerism. Houses earn parties based on the number of points earned. This provides everyone motivation to achieve more. Within their houses, students also learn to function in and to support a group of all ages, academic abilities, cultural backgrounds and socio-economic levels. A couple of examples of other meaningful experiences at Hillside are trips that grade levels take. Fifth graders take an annual trip to camp. They are introduced to outdoor education in a hands on way from the moment they step off the bus. The students work all week on outdoor activities, academics, and end the week with a bon fire and group skits. It is an experience filled with learning, having fun, and creating memories. In addition to promoting academic goals in all subject areas, the trip also promotes social and emotional growth through team building activities as well as through groups to which students are assigned. Another annual experience is the fourth grade trip to Austin where students visit the state capitol and museums. Like fifth grade camp, students learn their academic information in a fun and exciting way. Through the teams students are in for the trip, students also learn social and emotional skills needed to function within a group.

Having students who are engaged and motivated keeps the faculty equally motivated and engaged. Providing opportunities for collaboration and team building during weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) meetings gives teachers time to work together to share resources and ideas. The PLCs give teachers extra planning time so that they can be more prepared and thus better able to keep students motivated. PLCs, along with Vertical Team Meetings, allow staff to work more closely together and to support each other. Teachers are recognized and rewarded for their efforts through house points as well as being recognized on the school's recognition wall. Building and nurturing relationships through PLCs, Vertical Team Meetings, recognition, and team building creates a climate among staff that in turn strengthens the learning environment.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Hillside Academy hosts several activities that focus on building relationships with the community such as Back to School Porch Party, an event to welcome families back to school and place school supplies in classrooms. Meet the Teacher Night allows teachers the opportunity to speak with parents about curriculum and expectations for the school year. The annual Grandparent's Breakfast draws over a hundred grandparents and celebrates their contributions to the schools and community. STEAM Family Adventure gives families the chance to participate in mini experiments and build small projects. Thanksgiving Taste Feast is a learning experience where kindergarten students dress as Native Americans and Pilgrims and give short presentations followed by a feast with their families. Dr. Seuss Family Literacy Night is an evening where families read together, play games, and visit with "special guests," in the form of The Cat and the Hat and Things One and Two. In addition to many educational and social activities, Hillside hosts a Parent University which includes a variety of informational sessions that include topics on Internet Safety, Standardized Test Preparation, Raising a Reader, Fresh, Fast, and Fun Family Meals, Math is Everywhere, Bully-Free Zone, and Goal Setting. The sessions are led by teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Parents and community stakeholders who attend Parent University receive a Hillside backpack with a Hillside notepad and pen, as well as academic glancers that contain useful information relating to STEM, College Readiness, Math, and Reading. This event offers parents a wealth of information for supporting and nurturing their child.

One of the most anticipated events on the campus each year is the Veterans' Day Celebration. Students prepare and distribute invitations to veterans asking them to join them for the celebration which includes a light breakfast and performances by second grade students. During the celebration, veterans are invited to the stage to share their name and branch of military they served or are currently serving.

Fall Carnival, Family Fun Fitness Night, Father/Daughter Dance, and Mother/Son Amazing Race, just to name a few, are all fun and engaging activities sponsored by the PTA. A strong PTA is an important component in building positive relationships between the school and community. The PTA at Hillside is filled with dedicated individuals who work tirelessly toward the benefit of students and the school. In addition to many other positive and beneficial activities, the PTA hosts Spirit Nights as fundraisers at local restaurants. Watch Dads of Great Students (Watch DOGS) are a very important part of the school community. Not only do they provide a male role model presence to support students, they also provide a sense of security by patrolling the hallways, as well as volunteering in the classrooms.

### 3. Professional Development:

Professional development is only relevant at Hillside if it leads to increased student achievement thus creating real improvements to student learning. Hillside teachers, faculty and staff, are exposed to a wide variety of professional development opportunities at both the district and the campus levels. Each year, a campus needs assessment process is conducted. This process includes both state and local assessment data as well as classroom walk-through reports. This information, along with input from Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and instructional team leader meetings, is used to design campus based professional development.

Professional development at Hillside is defined by a commitment to raising student achievement as well as providing students with increased opportunities for rigorous instruction. Teachers are consistently encouraged to seek out and attend professional development that will have a direct impact on their classroom instruction and student achievement. The district Organizational Learning Department provides multiple professional development opportunities with a wide variety of topics being offered. Another source for professional development learning experiences is the Region 10 Educational Service Center. Several teachers on the campus have received training at the prestigious Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta and are a part of the district cohort. Garland ISD has invested heavily in training teachers in methods and strategies utilized at the Ron Clark Academy. Teachers who are a part of this cohort demonstrate and share with colleagues many techniques and strategies for student improvement that are engaging, energetic, and display passion for thinking outside the box. This, along with required annual Gifted and Talented professional development, help to target the unique populations at Hillside.

The staff is encouraged to maintain a growth mindset with regard to professional learning. Not only do teachers collaborate weekly in PLCs, they also share and demonstrate strategies and instructional tools derived from trainings they attend. Utilizing a protocol from the Schlechty Center, teachers present a lesson to their colleagues. In the presentation, teachers describe what students were expected to learn and what actually happened. Following the presentation, colleagues ask clarifying questions and analyze the lesson. This protocol allows teachers to improve their lessons and reteach them or apply the feedback received to future lessons.

Teachers collaborate regularly through PLCs to ensure that the instructional strategies introduced through professional development are implemented consistently and effectively. During both vertical and horizontal PLCs, teachers discuss different methods used to teach the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This collaboration promotes consistent implementation throughout the campus. The staff takes learning and growth seriously. This means taking the initiative to find opportunities that meet individual learning needs. Assessing professional development is an ongoing, collaborative process.

#### 4. School Leadership:

Educating the whole child, shaping a vision of academic success for all students, improving instruction, creating a learning environment and cultivating leadership in others are key ideas in the school's leadership philosophy. The Hillside administration team consists of a principal and assistant principal who work tirelessly on behalf of the students and staff while at the same time working to delegate responsibility to empower other staff members. Though the principal and assistance principal both have specific roles and responsibilities, a collaborative team approach is what helps make Hillside successful. Team leaders represent each grade level, special subjects, and special education. The team leader is the person who communicates celebrations, concerns, and logistical information to and from the staff and administration for their respective teams. In addition to instructional teams, various committees are focused on different needs of the school such as attendance, technology integration, discipline, and mentoring students. Each faculty and staff member is a member of at least one committee.

The Campus Improvement Team (CIT) at Hillside consists of parents, teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders. This committee discusses the yearly campus needs assessment and provides input on how the school's resources will benefit students in the best manner.

Data analysis is what drives the campus based instructional decisions. As the instructional leader, the principal is the primary leader on campus responsible for shaping a vision of academic success for all students. In order to effectively shape this vision, the principal must empower other individuals on campus to make decisions and act in the best interest of student achievement. Professional Learning Communities are dedicated to collaboration and instructional decision making. The principal, assistant principal and grade level teachers and intervention teachers meet to discuss differentiated instruction, create assessments that are both formative and summative, review objectives to determine student needs, and to monitor student progress. During these meetings, strategies to increase student success are determined. As PLCs make decisions together, they are also mindful of how their decisions will affect the entire school. Vertical Professional Learning Communities discuss curriculum alignment as well as areas of strengths and weaknesses. Vertical professional learning communities also work on technology integration and enrichment projects.

The collaborative efforts of the administration, instructional team leaders, the campus improvement team, professional learning communities and various school committees, in partnership with stakeholders, will continue to excel the academic performance of all students at Hillside Academy for Excellence. Effective school leadership plays a major role in developing a professional community of educators who guide one another in improving instruction.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Teamwork makes the dream work! Teamwork is the practice that makes Hillside Academy for Excellence successful. Effective teamwork involves building relationships to work cooperatively toward the common goals of student success and achievement. A healthy respect for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences helps the staff at Hillside work cooperatively and have a personal sense of responsibility to meet the needs of all students. Teamwork is not always easy; however, the common belief that all students can be successful allows the staff to overcome difficult obstacles and achieve challenging goals and objectives. The staff motivates each other, learns from each other, and is continuously developing a culture based on humility, hard work, excellence, and learning. The school team is always willing to go the extra mile on behalf of the students and each other. The cohesiveness of the staff allows everyone to be confident that each team member is doing his or her share of work.

While the staff does not always agree on everything; they are typically able to come to a consensus to make decisions and act in the best interests of the students and their overall success. A culture of constructive feedback and shared decision making is beneficial in building a climate and environment where the team is comfortable sharing their expertise in various academic and social circumstances and situations. At Hillside, teachers genuinely look forward to opportunities to share and work collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and extra curricular activities. The teachers are extremely adaptable and willing to cross lines of responsibility and do things that may not be in their job description but it is what is required to get the job done. Not only is the staff ethnically diverse, they bring diversity of thought, experience, and skills as a team. The staff is made up of tenured teachers with years of experience, teachers in the mid level experience range, and teachers fresh out of college. This variety in the staff provides a healthy balance for the students.

At Hillside, people can rely on teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to follow through on their commitments and not only talk the talk, but most importantly, walk the walk. Everyone pulls together to do the most important job of taking care of the students' academic, social, and emotional needs. It's not just the teachers who care for and nurture the students on a daily basis, it's the entire Hillside community.