

**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    [ ] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Richard Gutierrez

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

Official School Name Petronila Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2391 County Road 67

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

City Robstown                      State TX                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78380-5700

County Nueces County

Telephone (361) 387-2834                      Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL

<http://www.bishopcisid.net/vnews/display.v/SEC/Petronila%20Elementary>

E-mail rgutierrez@bishopcisid.net

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ 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\*Mrs. Christina Gutierrez                      E-mail cgutierrez@bishopcisid.net

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

District Name Bishop CISD                      Tel. (361) 584-3591

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. Marc Morales

(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):
- 3 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 5 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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	4	4	8
K	5	7	12
1	12	8	20
2	6	12	18
3	8	7	15
4	11	7	18
5	9	4	13
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>	55	49	104

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 3 % Black or African American
  - 83 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 13 % White
  - 0 % 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: 32%

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	18
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	106
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.321
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	32

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 17 %  
18 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 89 %  
Total number students who qualify: 93

8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %  
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.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>1</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed               |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 15
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	1
Classroom teachers	7
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 15:1

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	97%	96%	96%	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.

<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.

Petronila Elementary strives to develop a community of learners by empowering all members of the school community to contribute their strengths to the educational process.

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

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Petronila, Texas, population 115, is a small rural community in central Nueces County. Nestled between the historic cities of Kingsville and Corpus Christi, Petronila derived its name from the Santa Petronila Ranch, located on Petronila Creek. Records indicate that Petronila was the first European settlement in Nueces County. In 1911, a school district was established with the first school opening the following year. The first teacher on record, Mattie Roy McEwen, taught 34 pupils covering a range of ages. In early years, students attended school through the 10th grade and then transferred to neighboring Robstown ISD, to graduate. After Petronila consolidated with Bishop CISD in the early 1970s, the campus became an elementary school serving Pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students. This small-town, rural school has maintained its small class size of 15-20 students per grade. Historically, the student demographics of Petronila Elementary School have been predominantly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. Serving at-risk students is challenging, but the positive campus staff continues to address the needs of diverse students. Every child is seen as an individual with different academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural needs, and staff treats every child as if he or she was their own child.

Petronila Elementary School students are fortunate to attend school in a rural environment where the entire campus is used as a classroom to make connections between classroom lessons and the real world. For example, students reinforce their knowledge about such things as the life cycle through gardening around the school researching types of plants, soil conditions, and planting seasons; and studying the effects of weather and wind conditions on plant growth. It is not uncommon to walk through the school and see students taking measurements to understand how area, perimeter, and volume apply to the real world. Students also benefit from a science lab where third through fifth grade students conduct experiments and present them to primary grade level students enhancing learning opportunities of all students. The nature of these learning activities supports the socio-emotional development of students as they learn to work together and for each other.

To keep pace with the changing times and address academic needs, Petronila Elementary School has incorporated technology in instruction throughout the instructional day. A one-to-one educational initiative utilizing tablets allowing for individualized learning in school and at home has been implemented campus-wide benefitting students who do not have access to technology outside of school. These innovative instructional supports contribute to students' individual academic development.

Campus staff strives to create an educational environment that is beneficial for parents and the community as well as students. Every grade level teacher is present to welcome incoming Pre-kindergarten students reassuring them and their parents that their teachers will be their strongest advocates in their education. It takes a village to raise a child, and campus staff embodies that philosophy. The loyalty and trust between the staff and parents is immeasurable and invaluable as they help students become responsible, productive adults.

Petronila Elementary School also shares their philosophy that healthy children achieve more. Nutrition, physical fitness, and overall health and well-being of a child are promoted by all staff. Students are provided nutritious meal options daily at no cost, and are reminded of healthy eating habits. Students are also shown the value of nutrition through hands-on care and maintenance of a school vegetable garden. Students are allotted 45 minutes of daily physical education during which a certified coach facilitates activities that follow district health goals. Petronila students learn foundation skills of various sports and develop physical abilities through participation in Petronila Field Day, Fitness Gram event, and district organized youth sports.

To support the cultural development of students, teachers provide 70 minutes per week of music and art instruction and activities. An advisor collaborates with teachers to include a variety of culturally rich music, theater, and art projects to ensure students are exposed to a well-rounded curriculum. Throughout the year, students help to create and participate in presentations including an annual talent show, a holiday program, and Texas Public Schools Week presentations.

What is it about Petronila Elementary School that inspires students to 'grasp the golden ring'? Staff believes that high expectations coupled with a welcoming and nurturing campus climate cultivates a learning environment that supports development of the whole child. Students are invited to document learning activities and milestones throughout the school year, and are encouraged to present this material at the year-end campus graduation ceremony which motivates them to take pride in their work. Providing students at Petronila Elementary School with the unique learning environment of a rural campus, supporting the educational experiences with innovative instructional programs and activities, and engaging their parents as well as the local community sets the stage for helping students develop academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. Everyone who walks through the quaint, rural school feels love and warmth of dedicated teachers and staff who promote Petronila Elementary School's mission of ensuring all children know they have a choice, a voice, and a future.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Petronila Elementary School follows the Bishop CISD curriculum to provide instruction in all areas of the Texas learning standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Bishop CISD uses a purchased curriculum that provides teachers with not only a scope and sequence for instruction, but provides a vertical alignment document, a TEKS verification document to show if a learning standard is being taught or observed in a six weeks, an instructional focus document to guide their instruction, and state testing resources in all core content areas, at each grade level. The district recognized the need for a well-developed, research-based program to provide the teachers with a whole curriculum. The program that was chosen for all content areas encourage a model of direct teach, guided practice, and independent practice component intended to help students excel to their potential.

In the area of reading/English language arts, the teachers and curriculum area specialist continually monitor student progress to ensure foundational skills are being met. The reading/English language arts department uses the process of balanced literacy to address foundational skills with all students. The teachers monitor student progress through small group, guided reading and record student progress with running records in the balanced literacy process. The campus accesses running records with an online program allowing the teacher to take notes as the student reads enabling the teacher to diagnose the students' progress and areas of weakness. Struggling students use the progress monitoring process every two weeks. Those students who are on or above grade level are formally monitored each six weeks. The data from this process is sent to the curriculum specialist where an individualized plan for each student is developed with teacher input.

Mathematics instruction provided by teachers at Petronila Elementary School is monitored by several individuals to ensure the foundational skills and learning standards are being met for continued student growth. Student growth, for struggling students and for high achieving students is enhanced by facilitated planning for student individual needs. The instructional focus document the teachers utilize helps the teacher to be prepared for individual student instructional levels. Additionally, teachers use a blueprint for instruction designed around 10 instructional tests that are aligned with the student learning standards and are monitored with a tracking sheet for interventions. Once students have data on their instructional test, their progress is addressed through a program that provides remediation on specific content TEKS. Students can seek clarification of the TEKS through their textbooks, examples of problems, and the study of vocabulary related to the units. The campus understands the difficulty of math for some students and provides ongoing support of instruction with the use of manipulatives on a daily basis.

Instruction in the science content area begins with the state learning standards and campus curriculum alignment to provide students with opportunities for hands-on experiences. Students have access to various lab experiences through the curriculum and each grade level has access to a science lab where they can conduct TEKS based experiments. The science department has access to virtual experiments through their textbook resources which give students a wide range of instructional opportunities they may otherwise not have the chance to experience. As with all content areas, student progress in science is monitored with formal and informal assessments and those results are used to drive targeted instruction.

The social studies curriculum at Petronila Elementary School is also aligned with the state learning standards and the teachers utilized the curriculum components provided to them, such as the scope and sequence and the basal text for the course. One effective component of the classroom textbook is the use of a weekly publication that aligns with the curriculum standards and grade level TEKS. The social studies passages correlate with informational text from the reading and have an online tool that houses updated current events used for instruction, and assessment tools. The online component provides students with videos to bring the instructional content to life. Teachers then use the assessment tool to ensure the students are mastering the content area curriculum and provide further small group remediation for those who need it.

Petronila Elementary School provides a hands-on Pre-Kindergarten program to build a strong foundation for students. Staff strictly follows the Texas Pre-Kindergarten guidelines covering topics including social and emotional development, language and communication development, emergent literacy in reading and writing, and the four core areas. Each of the state Pre-K guidelines aligns with state learning standards for grades K-3. The campus curriculum program aligns the standard through the scope and sequence and the TEKS verification document. Pre-K students are exposed to curriculum areas such as numbers, letters, and colors which prepares them for the Kindergarten curriculum they will experience.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to the core content TEKS provided to the students at Petronila Elementary School, the teachers ensure that other curriculum areas are addressed to meet the needs of the whole child. Teachers believe students should be engaged and active learning not only in the core curriculum, but also in other important areas including physical education, fine arts and technology integrations.

Petronila Elementary School's fine arts program addresses the TEKS in music and art for students Pre-K through fifth grade. Students participate for 70 minutes per week in art and music with additional time embedded in cross-curriculum instruction. The advisor collaborates with classroom teacher to cross reference content TEKS with art and music TEKS to enhance the fine arts learning program for all students. Students may work on art projects which incorporate art and history TEKS such as the Texas Public Schools art project. This project joined Texas history TEKS, English Language Arts TEKS and art TEKS to produce a historical informational cookbook and quilt.

Nutrition, physical fitness, and the overall health of a child are viewed as key factors in a strong education. 100 percent of the students are provided with a nutritious breakfast daily at no cost to the parent and they are given healthy lunch options. Through the physical fitness program the students cover TEKS which address healthy eating habits and ways to develop a healthy lifestyle. The students even have access to a hands-on school vegetable garden. Each student participates in physical fitness TEKS for a minimum of 45 minutes per day by an all-level Physical Education teacher who provides TEKS based activities aligned to the appropriate grade level of Pre-K through fifth grade. Petronila Elementary School students take pride in learning the foundations of various sports and building physical strengths they will need to participate in the annual Petronila Field Day, Fitness Gram and district and community organized sport leagues.

Petronila Elementary School ensures each student grade Pre-K through fifth grade covers the TEKS and standards aligned for their grade level. In Pre-K, students are given the opportunity to cover grade level standards through regular access and exposure to computer and related technology. They are able to open and navigate software programs which will enhance their content area knowledge. They are able to identify parts of the computer and operate sound recorders. In the grades K-5, students use computers to communicate and collaborate on projects in the classroom, they research various topics from their instruction where they can create projects from their core areas of instruction. Each of the technology standards is embedded in the regular instructional day. The use of a one-to-one mobile device initiative allows Petronila Elementary School to provide students with technology on a routine basis.

Students access technology through a variety of means at Petronila Elementary School. Through grant funding, students in grades first through fifth are each issued a mobile tablet, and for those who need it, a wireless device to work from home. This allows teachers to provide students with work on grade level TEKS through web based materials without having to worry about who has home internet access. The students can master the TEKS expectations, such as recording and producing products, from their mobile devices. Even in the classrooms, each room is equipped with four desktop computers where students can access learning opportunities such as web based field trips and web based learning programs.

Petronila Elementary School is fortunate to maintain its size; with a small number of students they have more opportunities to embed fine arts, physical education and technology into their core areas of instruction. While there is time specifically allotted for fine arts and physical education, this does not mean it is the only time the students get to experience these subject area TEKS. The advisors and the teacher work closely together to provide cross curriculum learning opportunities to the students. They look for ways to make learning fun for the child while incorporating state standards and specific grade level TEKS.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Teachers ensure that instruction is differentiated based on student learning needs. The balanced literacy process is implemented for reading and the small-group instructional component of guided reading allows the teacher to meet daily with groups of students with similar reading levels. Special population needs are identified and addressed through targeted guided reading strategies. This approach has been instrumental in developing a well-rounded and stronger reading environment in classrooms so students are able to utilize reading strategies during independent reading. Most of the texts for guided reading are generated from a computer-based program, and students are able to access the program at school or at home.

The use of running records is another technique used as a part of the balanced literacy process. Teachers assess struggling students every one to two weeks and all students once every six weeks, so that growth can continuously be measured. Using data provided in a running record, teachers can identify areas of weakness to provide interventions for students and close academic gaps for individual students. Teachers seek and use research-based activities where targeted interventions can be prescribed for struggling readers.

Additionally, teachers meet the needs of students that are on level or above (including students identified as Gifted and Talented) by challenging them at higher levels of comprehension with research-based strategies from experts in literacy text that address deep comprehension strategies. Students are given opportunities to respond to literature in writing and orally share their interests in the books they read fostering a stronger love for reading.

Using small group differentiated instruction, implemented similarly to the guided reading process, campus teachers are able to address the diverse needs of students performing at varying levels in mathematics. Through data-driven practices, teachers form groups of students based on similar instructional needs. Research-based activities and workstations aligned with the TEKS are facilitated daily in the classroom as a whole, while the teacher works intensely with a small group of 3-6 students.

Math manipulatives are used for all concepts so that different ways of solving problems are explored. Teachers progress-monitor students frequently to check for growth. If growth is not occurring, activities are adjusted and a new instructional approach is executed.

To better target the learning environment for Response to Intervention (RtI), students experience accelerated instruction daily. Students are divided so that while one group is rotated through the library and fine arts instruction for 45 minutes, the remaining group stays with their classroom teacher for explicit, small-group instruction in either reading or math, or both. Peer tutoring also proves to be beneficial during this time due to the bonding that the student have with each other.

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

To maintain high levels of achievement, Petronila Elementary School systematically reviews data from various sources to drive instructional methods and meet the diverse needs of students. Fourth and fifth grade teachers analyze state assessment data to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses. First through third grade teachers use data from local assessments – Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and running records for reading, and the district end-of-year math assessment—to identify areas needing interventions. Students are given unit assessments in core areas throughout the year that are analyzed to determine which students need one-to-one intervention. In reading, teachers complete a running record to assess comprehension and fluency skill development to address weaknesses with targeted instruction. In March, third through fifth grade students are administered a local benchmark assessment. Students who do not meet the state performance standard and those who score less than 10 percent above the state standard are provided interventions including tutoring and targeted in-class instruction.

Teachers meet every six weeks with content area specialists to review student performance data, set goals, develop an instructional plan and timeline, and designate interventions. To bolster grade level instructional planning, teachers also meet with teachers from other grade levels and at other campuses within the district every six weeks to review data to ensure horizontal planning occurs.

At the end of the school year, a customized data report for each assessment is created to determine each student's year-to-year growth to provide interventions. Data is reviewed and assessments are evaluated, and professional development is scheduled, instructional methods and curriculum for low-performing students are reviewed, and instructional plan timelines are adjusted.

The staff seeks to ensure parents have a means to share questions/concerns and remain informed through continuous communication via email, text message, parent conferences, progress reports, electronic grade book, one-way callouts, phone conversations, and a daily assignment sheet requiring a signature. Final report cards, which include the child's end-of-year assessments or State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment results, are mailed to parents, and campus shares grade level assessment results with parents at parent-attended school assemblies. Parents are not only informed of the student's current performance, but also past performance on local and state assessments, as well as plans for future interventions.

The campus shares assessment results with community stakeholders at an annual public meeting, and discusses student progress at monthly board meetings. The meaning of grade level data and results for subgroups is explained to stakeholders and possible reasons for low-performing students and plans to improve student performance are discussed to provide the community with a true picture of the campus's learning environment. The campus also reports student assessment information in their newsletter.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Petronila Elementary School, the bell rings at 7:20 a.m. signaling the start of a new instructional day. Voices echoing down the halls become louder and more excited as the students draw nearer to their classrooms eager to see what the teacher has in store for them. Teachers welcome students to class by greeting them by name and immediately getting them started on learning activities to maximize instructional time. Studies show that students retain more when they experience real-world lessons taught through hands-on activities. Campus teachers advocate hands-on learning activities in many ways. For example, after a class discussion pertaining to bullying, fifth-grade students used what they learned to create a motivational “bully prevention skit” which they presented to the campus. Creating a safe school atmosphere has always been a priority for both staff and students and has built a culture of trust and security.

Petronila Elementary School has seven teachers, one per grade level. The close-knit “family” environment supports each other professionally and personally, and the principal is one of their biggest advocates. His open door policy provides a comfortable working environment where he is approachable to discuss issues that may arise. The “little things” that the principal does make a difference: Sending staff messages of gratitude for helping with school events and surprising them with luncheons demonstrate his appreciation for staff and inspire them to perform their best. Additionally, the outpour of support from the community is immeasurable and makes the staff feel needed and valued.

For students at Petronila Elementary School, failure is not an option and expectations are high. Students are encouraged to succeed in all aspects of their lives and are motivated to high achievement through incentives such as awards for honor-roll, attendance, science fair, and other academic events. Students take pride in their performance when they see their work displayed throughout the school and it motivates them to do their best work. The campus principal also recognizes students’ social achievements and leadership qualities, and they are acknowledged during morning announcements. The campus objective is to have students teach each other how to be leaders. Student achievements are shared with parents and the community through assemblies, newsletters, and the school’s website. Combined with a staff that respects and genuinely cares for children, these campus characteristics surround our students with the type of school climate that provides socio-emotional support and academic encouragement needed to make learning an enjoyable experience.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

For Petronila, the school is a representation of the generations of families that reside in the surrounding community. The infrastructure of the small town affords a close-knit relationship between home and school. In Pre-kindergarten, students are welcomed into a second-home type of atmosphere and become “family” to each other. The staff contributes to this feeling through communication and relationship building. As students advance grade levels, it is common for previous grade teachers to check up on former students. Parents are assured that their child’s teacher is a strong education advocate, and entrust teachers to make appropriate decisions for the child. The principal reaches out to families through phone calls and home visits to foster communication. Additionally, most, if not all, of the families know their child’s teacher on a deeper level as a result of the small, close-knit community. Parents feel their child is educated in a school where they are valued as family members and cared about as individuals. At this campus, the village is truly raising the child.

The staff at Petronila Elementary School understands the importance of parental involvement in academic success and maintain an open-door policy allowing parents to feel welcome at school. Families are provided opportunities to learn about their child’s education and become engaged through teacher conferences and “Sweetbread and Coffee” STAAR meetings, Meet the Teacher Night, parent workshops, PTO meetings, the fall festival, Back to School Night, Texas Public School’s Week, and open-house nights. Parents are kept abreast of information through student planners, teacher websites, newsletters, electronic

mail and technology applications. Petronila Elementary School parents sometimes serve as campus volunteers, then move on to being substitute teachers with some going as far as pursuing an undergraduate degree in education.

Petronila Elementary School staff is sensitive to and realistic about the uniqueness of their small, rural campus and seek opportunities to engage the business community. Business opportunities in a town the size of Petronila are limited; however, the few businesses in town truly care about the success of students—students who may one day be a part of their businesses—and support the school to the fullest extent possible through active engagement in school activities and looking after the needs of the school providing supplies and materials. Recognizing the interest in their future workforce, Petronila Elementary School involves local businesses by keeping them abreast of campus and student performance through newsletters, web postings, and local school board meetings.

### 3. Professional Development:

Professional Development at Petronila Elementary School is strongly supported and encouraged by district administration. The principal, teachers, and support staff are empowered to pursue the refinement of their craft and train in areas that will bring them professional growth and knowledge to use in the classroom and school environment. Petronila Elementary School has a comprehensive approach to professional development as opportunities range from core content trainings, to instructional practices, to meeting the diverse needs of students in the classroom.

During the summer, staff members attend professional development to enhance their TEKS knowledge and will enable them to strengthen instructional delivery. The staff has attended summer conferences for deeper understanding of the school adopted curriculum. Campus staff enhances these professional development opportunities by garnering the knowledge they can in the breakout sessions, then disseminating that information to other staff and sharing ideas for implementation in the classroom. By taking their own professional development and enriching other staff with new knowledge, teachers and administrators maximize the resources and time available for honing their areas of expertise. Petronila Elementary staff feels the importance of professional development related to instructional content areas develops strong instructional leaders in the classrooms and yields better student outcomes.

Professional development for special populations is also important to Petronila Elementary School staff. Due to the large numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs), the principal and staff focus many professional development sessions on best practices for reaching these students through reading and writing strategy trainings. Bishop CISD is committed to providing top-notch professional development and also provides mini-sessions to the staff after school in the areas of English as a Second Language (ESL), reading and English language arts.

Each six weeks, all core content campus teachers meet with two curriculum specialists for subject-rich professional development through the study the TEKS and student progress. Teachers have time to collaborate on the instructional strategies they gain from this time with knowledgeable specialists. The results of this professional development are extremely valuable to the teachers in driving instruction for maximum student achievement. This ongoing professional development has a proven track record with district and is highly valued by Petronila Elementary School staff.

In addition to these trainings, the school conducts a needs assessment each year to include the types of professional development that may be needed. It has been a long standing policy of the campus to allow teachers to attend professional development sessions which will enhance their performance in the classroom.

#### 4. School Leadership:

The Petronila Elementary School community brings various resources together that contribute to the intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of each of its students through strong campus leadership that supports enrichment programs for fine arts, physical education, group and individual counseling, and programs for at-risk populations help to solidify a balanced education. The principal is the primary campus leader and strives to lead by example modeling a positive attitude and enthusiasm for the school's success. The principal greets students daily throughout the campus with a positive and sincere demeanor, and has been known to personally walk each student to the bus with an umbrella on a rainy day to show students they are valued and cared for. Campus leaders celebrate student successes through daily student recognition, awards assemblies, website articles, monthly newsletters, and during school board meetings. Students come from a variety of backgrounds, but their common thread is that they are nurtured by educators who have their best interest at heart and want them to reach their fullest potential.

Emotional and social strength is modeled by campus leaders to help students manage the stresses of daily life more effectively and recover more quickly from challenges and crises when they arise. One of the leadership programs on campus helps motivate students to understand the importance of making sound choices and be strong role models. Campus leaders strive to teach students to live in harmony with their families, peers, teachers, and community.

The leadership team works hard to support academics. Under the guidance of the superintendent and school board, instructional objectives and policies are established that address the needs of the district and are carried out by the campus leadership. Instructional policies and guidelines are designed so that each student reaches a level of mastery in the designated state, district, and campus objectives. The Petronila Elementary School leadership works hard to ensure that campus goals are met and student needs are addressed to ensure success.

Petronila Elementary School staff feels that the best type of leadership is one that can be emulated by students and staff is fortunate to have these types of leaders on campus. The leadership provided by the school principal and teachers serves as an example for students as they develop into productive, respectful, and well-balanced adolescents.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Identifying the one practice that makes Petronila Elementary School successful is easy: Building relationships. Dr. James Comer, professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale University said, “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” For over 100 years, the school has been nestled in a small community where generations of families have lived and thrived. These families are the foundation for Petronila Elementary School and they are the reason the school can develop meaningful relationships. To have the type of relationships that allow learning to take place, a significant level of trust must first be established. Students, parents, and teachers of this community trust each other to put children first and to make the best choices for each child.

Many fourth and fifth generation families choose to reside in the Petronila community to raise their children in a wholesome environment that revolves around the school. The deep-rooted relationships have allowed parents, teachers, and administrators to work toward providing an excellent education for students. The community finds avenues to make learning possible through resourceful and innovative approaches to education. For example, Petronila was the first school district in the state to provide housing facilities for their teachers. This housing, made possible by the community, helped to entice talented and effective teachers to move to rural Petronila to teach. This resourceful approach to teacher recruitment resulted in very low turn-over. Once the teacher became part of the school, they usually stayed and became part of the community. The value placed on teachers and their impact on students’ lives has been the cornerstone of Petronila Elementary School and the relationships built among parents, teachers, and students is a key to the campus’s success.

Relationships at Petronila Elementary School are highly valued. The school staff and parents work together to develop open lines of communication and honest conversations based on trust. The conversations typically range from how to help students with academics to how to ensure the small town has resources necessary to maintain up-to-date facilities. These conversations and forward movement would not be possible were it not for strong relationships. Staff also strongly believes in fostering strong relationships among students with students serving as role models for others and building character. Staff believes in supporting each other and knows they can count on each other which provide a strong foundation for a learning environment that makes Petronila Elementary School unique and successful.