

**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. Taylor Norvell

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

Official School Name Panhandle Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 106 West 9th Street P.O. Box 1030

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

City Panhandle State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79068-1030

County CARSON COUNTY

Telephone (806) 537-3579 Fax (806) 537-5553

Web site/URL http://www.panhandleisd.net/ E-mail taylor.norvell@region16.net

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/panhandleindependentscho

Twitter Handle oldistrict/

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\*Mr Steven Brown M.Ed. E-mail blair.brown@region16.net

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

District Name John Strother Tel. (806) 537-3568

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 John Smith

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

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

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	9	15	24
K	27	20	47
1	22	27	49
2	27	22	49
3	19	23	42
4	18	19	37
5	24	23	47
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>	146	149	295

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 0 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 89 % White
  - 8 % 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: 0%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	1
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	1
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	309
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.003
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	0

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
2 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %  
Total number students who qualify: 80

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %  
19 Total number of students served

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

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

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	25
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals	7
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 12:1

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%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<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 X

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

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

Panhandle Elementary School will provide a safe learning environment to develop life-long learners, and provide effective curriculum and instruction in all content areas to ensure all students experience success beyond high school.

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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“Panhandle was singularly fortunate in having a higher type of settler in the early day than many other frontier towns which have been publicized for their “bad men” and reckless living,” Mrs. F.H. Hill – 1888

From the beginning, education has been a key component of our community. As you enter Panhandle, you will notice our town motto: People of Pride and Purpose. Frequently we see 4th generation children attending our school, just as their great grandparents did. Pride in our school and community is a generational tradition which instills high academic expectations along with parent and community involvement.

Our mission statement is a representation of the emphasis we place on high academic standards and excellence in our community. Education was important in the beginning, and its importance continues today. Our staff works to provide a learning environment that meets the needs of all students. We encourage the students to become life-long learners, which is apparent when you look at the number of our graduating students who pursue higher education. Approximately 90% of students enroll in college or some sort of post-secondary school which includes trade schools.

Mrs. F. H. Hill was the first teacher in the community. She taught at the first school, which was a subscription school. Classes were held in a single room of a real estate office with 20 students in 1887. When the county was organized, the first public school was established in a two story building in the year 1888. One hundred twenty-nine years later our district’s student enrollment is approximately 650 with 116 personnel employees and three campuses. We offer a Pre-K through twelfth grade program along with dual credit college classes. The elementary, which is a Title I school, has 295 students enrolled as of Oct 1, 2015, and employs 19 classroom teachers, two special education teachers and certified teachers for art, music, physical education, and a licensed dyslexia therapist. We also have a speech teacher, guidance counselor, technology instructor, registered nurse, librarian, diagnostician, five instructional paraprofessionals, and one principal. All professional staff meets highly qualified criteria. Currently in our Pre-K through 5th grade program, the economically disadvantaged population is 91 students (29.64%). The student demographics represent 5 ethnicities: .34% Asian, 1.36% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 7.8% Hispanic, 1.69% African-American, and 97.29% Caucasian.

In our small town of 2,500 people, the community and the school positively influence and complement each other. Examples of our long standing traditions include the homecoming weekend celebration where alumni return home, attend the coronation, a school wide pep-rally for the current football team, a football game, class reunions and gatherings held in homes, an alumni dance, and community-wide barbeque hosted by our Carson County Museum. The Living Museum, a presentation by our 3rd grade students has been held for 18 years. This presentation teaches elementary students to honor the founders and traditions handed down by early settlers instilling pride in the community. A century old tradition occurs at graduation with an arch ceremony recognizing the current senior class passing the torch to the current junior class. Another way our seniors are recognized is for them to walk through the halls of each campus in their caps and gowns, beginning at PES so our students can cheer the seniors. Our younger students know that they too will be successful graduates one day. On Veteran’s Day, our students recognize our community members who have served in the military with a musical tribute honoring their service. Each campus has a part to play in this emotional program. Each Friday it is a tradition for students, faculty, and community to wear purple to support the Panther team. The community members attend a school hosted Thanksgiving meal, help with canned food drives, Coaches vs. Cancer, and cheer for the young athletes at our pee wee track meet.

As a Title I school, we serve a diverse student population. Students’ needs vary from low socio-economic, at-risk, gifted and talented, ELL (English Language Learner), dyslexic, 504, and special education. Teachers differentiate classroom instruction to meet the needs of all students, as well as utilize the various support programs for struggling students. Students also benefit from varied teaching styles and class designs. Teachers analyze assessment data to meet students’ needs and assess areas of concern. An extensive elementary library and Accelerated Reader program support aggressive reading training while computer labs and computers in the classrooms provide students with skill development in technology.

Smart Boards, Elmo's, projectors, and iPads also enhance the learning experiences for our students. Students also have 2 or 3 scheduled recess breaks throughout the day, depending on grade level. These opportunities to socialize and be active are essential to the emotional and physical growth of our students.

These strategies have led to Panhandle Elementary being recognized several times as a high performing school. We have received numerous Gold Star Awards for commended performance on state assessments. PES has earned the distinction of an Exemplary School five years out of the last fifteen. In the last three years, we have also had the distinction as a campus that Met Standard with Distinctions. We have earned 6 distinctions in those 3 years. In 2011, PES was also recognized as a Texas Business Coalition School.

For over one hundred years, Panhandle has had a school system dedicated to excellence and high standards. The early settlers began a tradition of setting education as a top priority, and to this day, we strive to continue this tradition. We are a strong community working together to make each student proud to be a part of Panhandle Elementary.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Panhandle Elementary School’s curriculum is aligned to the Texas Standards and provides the foundation for future learning throughout the students’ learning career. Teachers have designed a framework that includes the essential knowledge and skills needed for student success. Teachers set high expectations early in the year that set the stage to maximize learning. Students are expected to not only learn the facts of the curriculum, but to also analyze, comprehend, reason, and create. They are consistently pushed to the highest levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

At Panhandle Elementary, we use a balanced literacy approach for English/Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) with high expectations for growth for each student. The curriculum is built upon guided reading mini-lessons, phonics, writing, and word study. Connections in reading through student journal writing help the student focus on critical thinking and higher level. Children learn to write with a purpose and voice. PES implements a genre-based reading study. Mini-lessons include engagement pieces that establish purposes for learning and are tied to guided reading running records. Teachers scaffold and differentiate lessons to meet all learning needs, allowing students to encounter a variety of materials and learning applications. Anchor charts, student journals, individual book bags, along with word walls reinforce small group instruction and complement the mini-lessons. Computer based literacy programs are used which complement and reinforce skills taught in the classroom, and they also allow for the monitor of student growth. These programs serve to improve skills of students below grade level as well as enhance the skills of students above grade level by aligning with assessment data to meet students where they are and make academic gains. Modeling a variety of instructional strategies guides student responses. Our dyslexia program uses a multi-sensory approach to learning, assists the dyslexic students to be successful in the regular classroom and to learn in a safe environment.

Math instruction at PES has been transformed by the newly revised Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Conceptual understandings, computational skills and problem solving help students receive a full range of mathematical understanding and skills. Students begin in prekindergarten using concrete strategies to learn the basics of mathematics: counting, number relationships, and patterns. Manipulatives, models and numerous hands-on activities increase engagement and understanding of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reporting categories and process standards. Using numerous forms of digital instruction encourages concrete and abstract understanding of mathematical standards. Math journals are utilized in most classrooms to support learning. Re-teaching to close gaps is accomplished through small group instruction. Targeted digital instruction provides enriched learning opportunities for advanced students. We feel our smaller class size has been instrumental to our student success.

The science classrooms utilize TEKS based, state adopted materials. At PES, a very hands-on approach is used to teach science. The science lab and classrooms are equipped with both consumable and non-consumable materials to aid in the learning process. Students begin in kindergarten and first grade applying the scientific method and making observations in teacher-led experiments. Student learning is enriched with student-dictated investigations and activities. Some of these activities include erupting volcanoes, assembling electrical circuits, individual experiments, and life cycle observations. To further enhance learning, various field trips are planned throughout the year including The Discovery Center, Window on a Wider World Collaborative, The Botanical Gardens and Ag Day. Various text and digital programs are incorporated to support our instruction of the curriculum. These programs are also used to monitor student achievement, as well as a means of intervention for students performing below grade level. Instruction is differentiated to meet each student’s needs.

Students have tremendous opportunities to learn the Social Studies TEKS by being immersed in community service projects, field trips and through technology enhanced research. Among such projects include our award winning program, the Living Museum. PES works in conjunction with the local museum to showcase local historical figures, represented by students from PES. Other opportunities have included “Constitution Day” at the Panhandle Plains Museum, and the Veterans Day Program. Students also

participate in numerous field trips each year tailored to the Social Studies TEKS. Through the use of digital resources, students create products that are displayed throughout the hallways of PES. These products tie directly into the classroom lessons and serve as the proof of student concept mastery. Some products have included maps of The Alamo during the Mexican Invasion, research papers on local historical figures, and Venn diagrams comparing the types of community members in Panhandle. These resources also serve to aid in scaffolding the curriculum to meet students at their ability level and ensure academic growth.

The Panhandle Prekindergarten program follows the state developed prekindergarten guidelines. These guidelines allow students to develop strong language, reading, writing, and math skills through individual, guided, and modeled reading, writing, and mathematics. In addition, the curriculum has been specifically chosen as a theme-based program of delivery for the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.

PES has participated in the Texas School Ready Project (TSR Project). This project provides the teachers high quality professional development in how to plan effectively and implement research-based curriculum. As former TSR participants, our teachers now use Texas School Ready's online tools and resources. The Pre-K guidelines are vertically aligned to the TEKS which ensures alignment of early childhood and kindergarten-3rd grade academic standards. Students that attend the prekindergarten classroom have historically scored higher on the beginning year benchmark from Northwest Evaluation Association.

The learning experiences of the preschool years provide a foundation that guides children academically, socially, and emotionally. These experiences can influence the rest of a child's life.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Panhandle Elementary School offers many different programs to enhance students' experiences in the classroom. Students spend time each day in Music, Physical Education, and Art classes along with time spent in our well-equipped computer lab. These daily experiences help to solidify the curriculum taught in the classroom and to develop well-rounded students ready and capable to succeed.

Panhandle Elementary students attend PE class daily. During this time, K thru 5 students receive instruction from the curriculum as well as guided instruction from the TEKS. K thru 2 participates in a motor lab twice a week to enhance the student's ability to maneuver and function in his environment, so that he can control himself to accomplish tasks. Grades 3 thru 5 are tested to summarize the student's performance on each component of health-related fitness. From this instruction the students acquire the knowledge and skills for movement that provide the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to a physically active lifestyle. By being active and exercising every day, the students are creating new brain cells and improving brain power. Physically active students have learned that exercising helps relieve stress and releases endorphins into your body. Both these things can contribute to your general feeling of self-confidence, which can have a positive effect on all parts of your life. A strong physical education class has an impact on cognitive skills, attitudes and academic behavior, all of which are important components of improved academic performance, well-being, and success in different settings.

Music education benefits and grows social development, emotional development, critical thinking skills, and language and reasoning skills of young students. At Panhandle Elementary, students in each grade level meet the expectations established by the TEKS. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade come to music class every day for twenty five minutes to engage in activities based on the teachings of Carl Orff. Students explore rhythms, instruments, movement, and singing during music. Students are able to relate rhythms to various math concepts and gain knowledge of American and world history through song studies. Starting in the first grade, students are involved in various performances throughout the year including, fourth and fifth grade Veteran's Day program and recorder performance, second and third grade Christmas performance, and a first grade Mother's Day celebration. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade also participate in Music in Our Schools Months Show and Tell celebration at the end of March. These performances give our students opportunities to develop stage presence and gain confidence. The music program at Panhandle has a commitment to help each student achieve their best.

Panhandle Elementary students in each grade level attend a 55 minute Art class one time each week. This curriculum area provides students a well-rounded education, enabling them to be creative, enhance learning, and strengthen right-brain skills. Using TEKS guided instruction; students express themselves with a variety of media, while connecting their work to historical periods and famous artists. Students gain confidence in their ability to produce visually appealing artwork with specific teacher directed activities. Strategies for producing compositions and designs are influenced by the elements of art and principles of design. Cross-curricular instruction occurs by incorporating math, science, literature, and history. Learning capacity improves; strategies are reinforced through art, and a combination of techniques transfer to other academic environments. Art allows students different avenues to problem solve, persevere, and focus. Students are able to collaborate and communicate effectively in a non-verbal way.

Panhandle Elementary School provides an 80 station computer lab for students and teachers to utilize. Every classroom teacher schedules at least 20 minutes each day to exploit the benefits of that lab. Students work on numerous programs based on grade level. These programs allow the teachers to differentiate, enrich, extend, and remediate classroom lessons based on the individual needs of each child. Teachers also use the lab to ensure the Technology TEKS are taught in each grade level. Students research topics from the classroom, create content like presentations and brochures, and share that information with other classmates and classes through the use of blogs and apps. These skills further help to prepare our students for the many varied problems they will face in future school and the 21st Century workplace.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Panhandle Elementary School uses a variety of instructional intervention methods to help each individual student find success throughout their learning day. We believe that intervening before a student falls completely behind is imperative for both their educational success, as well as social and emotional needs. While we use the three tiered intervention approach to monitor and intervene with students, we have also implemented excellent digital learning platforms, intensive small group instruction, and Reading Recovery for struggling readers. We believe in using methods that are fun, timely, and most effective. Flexible and small grouping is done to help focus on key areas identified to the teacher through class work and testing.

Reading Recovery has been used in Panhandle for a number of years with the lowest 20% of readers in first grade. It is a daily intensive 30 minute lesson focusing on reading skills and building a foundation for struggling readers. The duration for each student is 20 weeks. Each student selected is worked with in a one- on-one setting working on letter identification, breaking words, making words, building fluency, and reading both new and familiar books. A sentence is written each lesson by the child, and is taken home, put in order and glued into a notebook for homework. We have had fantastic results with the implementation of Reading Recovery. We have had over 90% graduates from Reading Recovery in the last 2 years, and they have been able to transition back into the classroom able to work on grade level assignments and readings.

Technology based approaches such as using the computer or tablets are always available to all students, however, we use digital learning as a way to closely monitor and work with students falling into problem areas. Technology based support programs are used in every grade level to enrich and extend the curriculum being taught in the classroom. Students are able to create content with these programs that show skill mastery and deep knowledge of the TEKS. For example, student groups have created videos showcasing certain types of energy and posted them online for the community and other students to study.

All students at Panhandle Elementary School are pushed to their limits of knowledge. The interventions and strategies used by our teachers are expertly used to take those students beyond those limits.

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

Panhandle Elementary School is a Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) campus. We use the nationally normed referenced test as the basis of our assessment. This assessment is given in the fall and winter across the entire campus, and in the spring for grades K through 2. This assessment is used to guide instruction and intervention to ensure that each student at PES shows a year's growth in mathematics and reading. Teachers use the assessment data to differentiate instruction, provide remediation to students, and plan enrichment activities as needed.

NWEA testing information feeds directly into several computer intervention programs. Teachers utilize these programs to supplement instruction when achievement gaps are noticed. Teachers use Compass Learning to create individual learning paths in mathematics class to reteach and extend mathematics concepts introduced in class. This has been instrumental in our students being successful on the state assessment after the revisions made to the TEKS. Teachers also utilize Imagine Learning to boost and enhance literacy and comprehension based on the students' individual assessment results.

Teachers also utilize computer program assessments to further measure and track student progress in math and science. Students take benchmark assessments each six weeks that teachers use to prepare for the next six weeks as well as plan interventions. PES also tracks unit exams through an online database. This database allows teachers to utilize their own formative and summative assessments to track student performance by each of the TEKS that have been taught in that particular unit. These assessments are used on a weekly basis.

Panhandle Elementary believes in the blended learning model of instruction. Students use a variety of online and print materials to access curricular content. This model allows the teacher to differentiate the content based on student ability levels. It also ensures that even the high performing students gain a year's growth as measured by NWEA assessment. This model pushes not only the high performing students, but it also brings the average and low performing students to new levels of achievement.

After each assessment or benchmark, teachers compile the data and look for any weak areas that might present. Teachers work within the grade level to plan interventions for those areas, adjusting rotation schedules for students as well as implementing any computer-based interventions during the school day. It also allows the teachers to further differentiate instruction by offering extension activities to students that have shown mastery. Students receive their scores and teachers share strategies for the student to improve performance in class. These results are also shared with the parents by sending the information home with the students. Teachers also meet with each parent to share the Fall NWEA assessment data and explain the purpose of the assessment and how to read the information. Our district and campus website showcases assessment data and student achievement information for the community to access.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Panhandle Elementary School, we strive to create a positive atmosphere for students, teachers and parents. We have a highly qualified staff that not only educates our students from an academic standpoint, but also works hard to involve and inspire students. Each year, we have a “meet the teacher night” to kick off the school year. Parents are introduced to their child’s teacher and are informed of classroom procedures and what to expect in the year ahead. Our counselor facilitates the KC (kindness and compassion) Club, which encourages kind behavior. Students report to the counselor kind acts they have witnessed and those students are recognized each week for their kindnesses. Each October, we celebrate Red Ribbon Week, where we discuss the dangers of drugs and how to live a healthy life. Incorporated into the Red Ribbon Week activities are contests and dress up days. Our music teacher organizes programs for Veteran’s Day as well as Christmas. Our PE program encourages a healthy lifestyle by allowing students to participate in half-time programs at our home basketball games. Other programs organized by our PE teacher include Jump Rope for Heart, Punt/Pass and Kick, and Hoop Shoot. The first Friday of the month, our PE teacher hosts “Fitness Friday,” where parents are encouraged to come and walk with their child. Our local bank facilitates “The Panther Bank,” where fifth grade students are the bankers and students can make weekly deposits. The elementary school is very involved with events at our high school, such as pep rallies, homecoming coronation and send-offs. These activities foster an environment where students want to be successful. Students are motivated to grow academically by experiencing the excitement of extracurricular activities early in school. This motivation is what drives our success as a campus.

Every few years, our students participate in the “Rachel’s Challenge” program, which teaches kindness and tolerance. On a smaller scale, our counselor also meets with students individually or in small groups when the need arises. Our teachers take advantage of continuing education opportunities and do their utmost to learn about new programs and best practices. Teachers are encouraged to attend professional development training in areas they feel the need to grow. Teachers work very closely with each other, administration and parents to ensure students are receiving all they can from an educational standpoint. We have a certified dyslexia therapist on campus to help with those students identified.

All staff at the elementary is comfortable with sharing ideas and concerns with our campus principal. Teachers are encouraging and supportive of one another and step in to help when needed. Just this school year, all teachers were given a substantial bonus check in appreciation for a job well done. We have parent and community volunteers that are a support to our staff as well as high school students that read with our students on a weekly basis. We also have strong support from our local PTA, which facilitates our yearly book fair and also donates various items to our school. A group of student moms cooks a monthly meal for the teachers in appreciation for all they do. Teachers are also strongly supported by our dyslexia program as well as our special education teachers, diagnostician, speech pathologist, school nurse and teacher’s aides.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent and community interaction is an important part of Panhandle Elementary School. It begins with “meet the teacher night” at the start of the school year. In addition, our PE teacher also hosts “Fitness Friday” on the first Friday of each month. Parents are invited to their child’s PE time to walk with their child. The class that walks the most laps gets to keep the trophy for the next month. Our PE teacher also works with Pre-K through 5th grades on what is called “half-time programs.” They work on the program during their PE time and present it to an audience during half-time of the varsity basketball games. In addition, every spring, our PE teacher organizes and facilitates our Pee Wee Track Meet, which is an annual competition for our students.

Our music teacher works with our students on a Veteran’s Day program as well as a Christmas music program. The Veteran’s program is very significant in our community as our county veterans are recognized and honored. Happy State Bank, our local bank, sponsors the “Panther Bank,” which is open

one day per week. Our fifth grade students are the bank officers and all students are permitted to make deposits into an actual bank account. This helps to foster responsibility among those students. It also allows the students to apply mathematical skills learned in the classroom in a very concrete way.

We welcome opportunities for parents to volunteer. There are some that assist with our dyslexia class, some that help with clerical tasks, and some volunteer to read with students. This allows the teachers more time to plan for instruction, as well as offers correct modeling to students. Additionally, we have a high school class that comes to read with our students daily. The PTA is an active part of our school as well. They host a book fair every year and make donations that are of use to our school. The donations have consisted of new books for the library and playground equipment.

During the fall, one of our third grade teachers organizes an event called “The Living Museum.” Each child is assigned a historical figure from the early days of our county and town. The child is responsible for writing and memorizing a monologue about the person they chose. Parents and teachers then assist the child in putting together a costume that represents their character. When the program is ready to present, everyone in the community is invited to our local museum to “meet” the historical figures. Each child wears a button on their costume. When someone pushes their button, they come alive as their character and present their monologue. This year, the third grade teacher that organizes this event won “The Golden Nail Award,” which recognizes excellence in programs such as the living museum.

PES has an open door policy. With many opportunities for parents and the community to be involved, students are supported academically anywhere they go throughout the town.

### 3. Professional Development:

Panhandle Elementary School has eight required staff development days at the beginning of each school year. Three of those days are allotted for teachers to attend trainings and workshops of their choice over the summer. This allows for the teachers to choose areas of growth to best maximize the impact on student achievement. These days tie directly to the Professional Development Appraisal System. Each May, the principal meets with the teachers to reflect on the year and where teacher growth would be beneficial.

The remaining days of professional development are set by the district administration team. Using the campus and district improvement plans along with the Comprehensive Needs Assessments, the administrators provide training that is structured to meet the needs set forth in those documents. Trainings have included data disaggregation, trainings on the new TEKS for math, and new classroom instructional technology. School visits were also useful in implementing new instructional programs in the classroom effectively.

Throughout the school year, teachers are encouraged to participate in workshops, seminars and conferences that boost their professional growth. The principal shares relevant information from the Education Service Center with the teachers on upcoming workshops. Should a teacher find one beneficial to students, plans are made for that teacher to attend. The teachers are very quick to share what was learned with their colleagues to better all of PES. Staff capacity never dwindles using this method, even as new teachers are hired each year.

The principal serves as the instructional leader of PES. He works with the staff to review assessment data and plan professional development to help fill gaps that are observed. These decisions revolve around research-based best practices in the targeted needs of the students.

Professional development is also geared towards the positive growth of campus morale at PES. Recently, the principal has facilitated a year long, campus wide book study geared to boosting campus morale and comradery. From this, the staff learned better strategies for communication and sharing ideas across content and grade levels.

The teachers and staff of PES help to instill in the students the idea of being life-long learners. They lead by example in this endeavor by being life-long learners in their profession.

#### 4. School Leadership:

Leadership in Panhandle Elementary is a shared endeavor. The philosophy of PES is that everyone is a leader. All staff members share ownership in the success of all students. Decisions made at PES are always made with student success in mind. One campus principal is responsible for leading and guiding PES each day. However, that leadership responsibility is shared across the entire staff.

Collaboration is one of the most important aspects to leadership at Panhandle Elementary School. The principal works with the teachers and other staff to solve any issue or problem that comes up. Because of this, the staff of PES remains flexible and can rise to any challenge that arises.

The principal operates as the lead learner on the campus. He shares his knowledge of current educational and technological trends with teachers and staff members. He is highly visible in classrooms and hallways which provide many opportunities for students to share their learning.

Teachers are highly valued members of the leadership team. They support the goals Panhandle Elementary and the growth of students by modeling great leadership skills. Teachers are asked to serve on various committees, including the Site Based Decision Making Committee. This committee consists of a teacher from each grade level along with parents, community representatives, and administration members. These members collaborate to make decisions about curriculum, budget, and the Campus Improvement Plan. The Principal's Advisory Committee consists of master teachers on campus along with the principal. This team facilitates communication between the administration and the classroom teachers.

The counselor contributes to growing future leaders through her Guidance and Counseling program. She travels to each classroom every six weeks to deliver lessons themed around character building. She discusses subjects such as bullying, refusal skills, stranger danger, abuse awareness, and career awareness. She utilizes several resources in these lessons, including Rachel's Challenge. She also uses student groups and clubs to facilitate student character growth. Her kindness club meets during lunch and shares different acts of kindness that has been witnessed throughout the school. Students also share various responsibilities, including aiding teachers and flag duty. These different leadership roles help to encourage students to reach their potential as future leaders.

Every staff member of Panhandle Elementary School has a leadership responsibility. Leading this school is a collaborative effort of those many people where student growth and achievement is the ultimate goal.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The one thing Panhandle Elementary uses to make it so successful is promoting the “Tradition of Excellence”. Being a Panhandle Elementary Panther is not just about participating on a high school athletic team someday. In our school district, students enter Pre-K or kindergarten knowing that excellence for each child will be and is encouraged and expected in academics and character. All students anticipate wearing purple, the color of royalty, and gold, the color of champions, knowing that they are a part of something bigger, Panther Nation. The tradition of excellence is present in all core subjects, art, music, and PE, not only striving for students’ best efforts and good grades, but persevering to be quality human beings ready to contribute something to his or her school and community. Students from our Jr. High and High School are directly involved with elementary classes modeling academic priority, strong work ethic, and kindness toward others at all times.

Reading is our foundation of excellence and it builds a powerful basis for success in all subjects. Students at Panhandle Elementary read and successfully completed comprehension tests on 20,483 books from school, city, and personal libraries in the 2014-2015 school year, and that number is steadily increasing this year. Students are motivated to increase their reading and reading levels through the Renaissance Reading program. A large majority of our students read well above their grade level.

Our students are excellent in community service. Our students know the value of giving to others. They collected over 2500 cans for the city canned food drive. They have also participated in Jump Rope for Heart, Pennies for Patients, Walk for MS, Rachel’s Challenge, and Relay for Life.

Our students participate with excellence in many extra-curricular activities including football, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, basketball, tennis, 4-H, dance, Punt, Pass, and Kick, cheerleading, baseball, martial arts, gymnastics, piano, Hoop Shoot, and many more. Administrators, teachers, families, churches, and our community members are committed to providing opportunities for our students to become well-rounded, excellent individuals learning sportsmanship, teamwork, morals, and the value of hard work.

Finally, the tradition of excellence is evident in the fact that many families in our community have generations of members that have attended Panhandle Elementary. They want their children and grandchildren to experience this superior school system, so after completing their educations after high school and starting careers, they move back to give their children the same opportunities for excellence they received in this school.

It’s not just a catch phrase; it’s a matter of the heart and mind. Panhandle Elementary students BELIEVE they can be excellent. It happens because of dedicated teachers and administration. It happens in the school traditions in which they participate and serve. It happens because this community is dedicated to covering our EXCELLENCE in prayer. There will always be a tradition of excellence at Panhandle Elementary School and in Panther Nation.