

U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Rita Stracener

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

Official School Name Banquete Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5436 Bulldog Lane PO Box 369

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

City Banquete State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78339-0369

County Nueces County

Telephone (361) 387-4329 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.banqueteisd.esc2.net E-mail kthompson@banqueteisd.esc2.net

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Max Thompson E-mail mthompson@banqueteisd.esc2.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Banquete Independent School District Tel. (361) 387-2551

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. Tracy Wright
(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

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. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.
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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) 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, 2016 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	18	19	37
K	19	31	50
1	32	36	68
2	36	31	67
3	34	38	72
4	44	37	81
5	34	34	68
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
Total Students	217	226	443

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 81 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 18 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 18%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	36
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	44
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	80
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	439
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.182
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	18

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

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 74 %
Total number students who qualify: 330
8. Students receiving special education services: 8 %
37 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
- 3 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 4 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 7 Other Health Impaired
- 10 Specific Learning Disability
- 18 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: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
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 19:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	95%	95%	96%
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 2016.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes No X
If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.
15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.
Team Banquete creates the highest educational experiences through engaging lessons at an advanced rigor in a passionate, nurturing culture and climate for each student.
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

“Believe!” is the catalyst for all things possible at Banquete Elementary School. (BES). “Believing Every Student Can Learn,” students, parents, community, staff, and administrators view each day as an opportunity to maximize intellectual, social, and emotional potential of the students. Embraced in a positive environment with a rich cultural history, stakeholders partner to make the community, home, and school filled with limitless opportunities to grow, live, and learn.

Roots to a growing Banquete community date back to Irish colonists who settled along a road linking the Nueces River with the Rio Grande and Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Commemorating the completion of the Matamoros Road that connected lands and cultures, in 1832, Mexican officials hosted a four-day fiesta called “Banquete” with the Texas colonists serving as the guests of honor. The relationship strengthened, and Banquete became a popular stop on the Texas Mexican Railway. Community growth expanded with the establishment of a post office in 1859 and a one-room school in the 1870s. Decades later in 1950, stock raising, horse trading businesses, houses, churches and a newer school comprised the rural community, which remains true to its congenial, inclusive roots. Located twenty-three miles west of Corpus Christi and the Texas Gulf, the close-knit community currently hosts seven hundred residents.

Uniting family, faith, and school, Banquete is a generational community of modest means. Heritage-rich with a 75% Hispanic population, the median age is forty-four with 8% of the community’s citizens sixty-five years or older. Related to education and youth, 71% of citizens have attained a high school diploma or higher and 25% of households have children under the age of eighteen. The median income is \$36,790 with an average home value of \$37,500.

With economic challenges and limited industries, education remains the heart of the community. As a Title I pre-kindergarten through grade five campus, BES serves 457 “individual” students. The BES student body is 85% Hispanic, 14% white, 1% black, and 74% economically disadvantaged. Exhibiting a shared work ethic, stakeholders, including fifth generation BES families, take pride in BES success, with enrollment increasing 30% in the past five years. Ensuring a college-ready culture, best-practice strategies include individualized learning plans for remediation/enrichment and targeted small group intervention. As a result, BES has experienced an upward performance trend for the past five years with 50% more students performing at ‘Level III Advanced’ on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. During the past three years, BES students have earned a 90% or higher student performance level on the STAAR. Additionally, BES was named a Texas High Progress Award campus in 2014 and a Texas High Performing campus in 2016, earning all allowable state distinctions: Academic Achievement, Student Progress, Closing Performance Gaps, and Postsecondary Readiness.

BES success is due to a comprehensive program that stimulates emotional, physical, social, and cultural development. A unique program that organizes the campus into four “families” fosters a sense of belonging which contributes to each student’s desire to “want” to participate in a learning environment. BES considers each student a valuable, contributing member of one-of-four families. Each campus family member participates in activities that support the six pillars of BES education: responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

The school’s success is founded on the campus’s unique instructional design in which each student receives an individual academic plan. Each student participates in an intervention/enrichment small group for 30 minutes a day in reading and math. Importantly, teachers in grades 2-5 are departmentalized in core areas resulting in specialized instruction.

Additionally, school traditions that support well-rounded, affective development are emphasized. A tradition for multiple generations, the annual Fall Festival is attended by over a thousand people. Community cooks revered for generations prepare an authentic Mexican enchilada dinner. Continuing respect for multiple generations, students participate in the community-wide full-day Veterans Day program, the largest attended in the Coastal Bend region. Furthermore, BES traditions including district/community-wide pep rallies, Fun Field Day, and Read Across Texas seamlessly unite stakeholders with an opportunity to develop well-rounded students.

To positively impact school readiness and success with the youngest learners, BES offers pre-kindergarten. Aligned to the Texas Essential of Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), Texas Pre-Kindergarten guidelines correspond to subsequent grade-level standards. Reading skills, phonemic awareness, letter fluency, numbers, vocabulary, social/emotional, and physical components are emphasized through core area application. Compared to students who do not attend pre-kindergarten, qualitative/quantitative evaluations show BES attendees are six months more advanced in letter fluency, vocabulary, and emotional/social skills. Believing quality TEK-based field experiences enhance curriculum acquisition, visits to a bakery and post office occur as well as a student-led districtwide hunt for the missing “Gingerbread” boy that introduces students to staff members.

In summary, BES students are motivated, active, well-rounded individual learners. Importantly, to BES stakeholders, “Believe” is more than a word on an entry hall banner; it is the mantra for limitless potential!

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

BES upholds the state-adopted curriculum, the TEKS, which designates learning objectives for each grade level/subject area and an adopted scope and sequence in all core subjects. BES reading/English language arts (ELA) curriculum fosters independent, high-functioning lifetime readers and writers. The balanced literacy reading curriculum is incorporated at BES because it develops fluent readers who analyze, make connections, and understand a wide variety of literary texts. This approach contributes to successful sight word/phrases recognition, read-aloud/choral opportunities as well as independent reading evidenced by obtained reading goals every six weeks. Importantly, specific critical thinking reading skills, such as inferencing, are integrated in all subject areas including writing. Through Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) activities, including daily Exit Tickets, which require the student to evaluate, question and/or extend a lesson highlight or concern, writing experiences throughout the day reinforce ELA curriculum and model the expectations of purposeful daily writing. To assist in WAC and help mold master writers, a BES writing teacher is available to conference with teachers and students concerning writing in all grades and subjects. Understanding, too, that speaking is spiraled throughout the TEKS, students orally justify responses rather than stating simplistic answers. Additionally, when justifying answers, students and teachers speak in complete sentences, which targets an ELA TEK identified as a campus concern.

At BES, the math curriculum, as other subject areas, centers upon a three-tiered model: multi-step, real-world application, and active-learning. Practiced daily and incorporated through creative songs, chants, and games, the three-tiered math curriculum model addresses varied learning styles supporting the BES goal to maximize each student's potential. Delivered in whole group, small group (interactive stations), and individual settings, BES math curriculum identifies/breaks down math steps and actively applies concepts to real world experiences. Emphasizing multi-step, real world application, BES students are highly engaged, which enhances math skill acquisition. Moreover, because BES prescribes to active learning, student participation and mental alertness are maximized by limiting direct teaching to ten minutes or less at any one time. To assist with active learning design, teachers obtain high yield strategies for math and all areas through on going professional development.

BES science curriculum utilizes the 5E model (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate). The addressed science strands include Systems, Physical Properties, Change/Past Events, Likeness/Adaptation, Form/Function, and Matter/Energy. Special education, on level, and gifted learners actively participate in weekly labs and differentiated real-world science projects. Addressing varied learning styles, BES science teachers include 3D experiment opportunities allowing students to analyze, predict, and apply what is learned in a station and/or lab application. Utilizing the 5E science curriculum model improves a student's critical thinking skills in all subject areas.

At BES, the social studies curriculum is integrated into reading, writing, music activities and shared community events. Curriculum strands include History, Geography, Economics, Government, Citizenship, Culture, Science, Technology and Society, and Skill Attainment, such as understanding varied sources from multiple perspectives. Addressing varied learning styles, student resources emphasize high-interest non-fiction texts and are combined with face-to-face guests and interactive community/field experiences. For example, following in-class reading and discussion of a historical text, students tour a historical ship, interview field experts, and return to a re-created ship-themed classroom where BES staff, dressed in historic attire, answer inquiry-based questions culminating in a WAC exercise incorporating ELA skills.

Modeling a real-world curriculum application that encourages student community awareness, BES extends the social studies curriculum to civics-based engagement. At a half-day community Veterans Day appreciation program attended by a stadium full of spectators, BES students sing patriotic songs, serve lunch to guest veterans as well as escort them in a community parade. Organizing "Pennies for Veterans," BES students coordinate the purchase of appreciation bags for area veterans. Additionally, each homeroom collects items to make over twenty holiday food baskets for community families in need. Importantly, BES recognizes that civic responsibility should occur not only on national holidays but routinely in everyday life,

as seen with “Paperless Tuesday” in which no worksheets can be used in curriculum presentation. Not only does this successful weekly campus initiative encourage teachers to creatively present lessons, incorporate technology, music and high-yield strategies, but it also models to each BES student that environment awareness through paper reduction is an example of active civic responsibility.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Committed to developing a well-rounded student, BES values fine arts education. Specifically, music classes at BES introduce students to technical and expressive skills while promoting a lifetime appreciation of music. Utilizing the TEKS, students in pre-kindergarten through grade five participate in music class forty-five minutes a week. Students read and write music, identify and reproduce rhythms, experience a variety of instruments, and identify and use music-based vocabulary. In collaboration, music and social studies staff foster a celebration of national, state, and local history through student performances. Incorporating expressive movement with musical abilities, each grade level presents to peers, parents, and community members throughout the year. Recognizing that fine arts stimulates mental capacity and embraces individual learning styles, engaging music and art activities are incorporated daily in BES classrooms. Also, students who desire to showcase their knowledge of music and art history compete with peers from area schools in music and art contests each fall semester.

BES students in pre-kindergarten through grade five participate in physical education (PE) three times a week for forty-five minutes. As outlined in the TEKS, curriculum strands include movement (development of motor skills), physical activity and health (lifetime benefits and safety), and social development (positive self-management and social skills). As an inclusion campus, adaptive needs students participate in an energetic, celebratory districtwide pep rally held in their honor prior to competing in Special Olympics. To support cross-curricular learning, students warm up in PE class to math and vocabulary songs while ending with an “exit ticket” that incorporates the academic word of the day, a math fact or sight word that corresponds to that day’s PE, health and/or nutrition lesson. Additionally, each year BES students in grades three through five participate in a nationally recognized physical fitness assessment to determine the relationship between student academic achievement, attendance, obesity, disciplinary problems, and school meal programs. Modeling community-school partnership, a local grocery store provides healthy snacks which promote class discussion about nutritional food choices.

Recognizing the positive value technology plays in lifelong learning, BES embraces opportunities to present, model, and expand technology curriculum. During a forty-five-minute weekly computer lab class, BES students in pre-kindergarten through grade five are engaged and assessed in technology competencies. Per the TEKS, students participate in interactive lessons and project-based units in the areas of Technology Foundations, Information Acquisition, Solving Problems, and Communication.

In addition to lab time, technology is integrated and differentiated daily in all core classes during station rotation. Also, students in grades kindergarten through five receive an additional hour a week of technology integration through reading classes while students in grades three through five receive thirty additional minutes a week through math classes.

Supporting comprehensive growth of all students, BES incorporates Guidance and Career Readiness curriculum in pre-kindergarten through grade five. Following the Texas Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Program Model, all students participate with the counselor in a guidance class twice a six weeks for thirty minutes. Areas of career readiness, self-confidence, motivation, decision-making, communication skills, cross-cultural effectiveness, and responsible behavior are integrated. Activities, including role play, problem solving and discussion, center upon the six pillars of character education: responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Sound moral character and values are modeled and recognized at BES. Students receive campus-wide intercom “U Rule” recognition for positively displaying one of the six pillars of character education.

Also, on an on-going basis, BES students in pre-kindergarten through grade five participate in anti-bullying education. Defined as a form of abuse, harassment, and violence, bullying is not permitted at BES. Students are taught to recognize and report personal and cyberbullying. Recognizing that bullying is a learned

behavior that can be reversed, BES staff and students model kindness and caring with consistent actions and everyday vocabulary including “please; thank you; yes, Sir; and yes, Ma’am.” To model a culture of mutual respect and inclusion, BES staff incorporate best practices conducive to a nurturing, engaged environment in which students receive opportunities to apply non-bullying strategies. The district recognizes a tiered-career development model. Contributing to career exploration and career concentration at subsequent levels, BES focuses on career awareness in pre-kindergarten through grade five. Each semester BES students develop career awareness via visits from community role models, career-based literature, and projects.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Assessment data allows BES stakeholders to study individual, teacher and classroom performance to maximize student potential. A universal screener indicating grade equivalence levels as well as social and emotional concerns for all BES students is used at the beginning, middle, and end of the academic year. Core area assessments targeting state standards (TEKS) are given at the end of each six weeks and bi-annually. Each spring BES students in grades three through five complete the STAAR, which provides individual, regional, and state TEKS-based data analysis by grade, content area, and sub-groups. BES parents participate in the assessment process by conducting reading/math fluency home practices in which they record their child’s fluency in one-minute cold reads and “mad minute” math fact sessions.

Campus administrators, content specialists and teachers collaboratively examine assessment results to identify strengths and adjust instruction to address areas of concern. Following this, BES teachers are provided a full instructional day every six weeks to meet with peers, content specialists, and administrators to develop differentiated instructional plans for the upcoming six weeks. Throughout each six weeks, teachers participate in bi-weekly grade level meetings to develop a prescriptive plan called a Response to Intervention (RtI) designed to help individual students maximize potential.

As designated in the RtI, intervention strategies are incorporated and documented daily and reviewed every three weeks for effectiveness. With an emphasis on small group intervention, reading, math, and dyslexia specialists, along with trained instructional aides, teach phonics awareness, blends, reading and math fluency, and sight word/phrases recognition. Additional intervention strategies occur in interactive stations, differentiated math/reading computer-based instruction three times a week in thirty-minute sessions, after school tutorials and during the Optional Flexible Year Program (OFYP) in which the instructional calendar is modified to provide ten additional instructional school days for identified RtI students.

Assessment and intervention feedback is confidentially and professionally shared with BES stakeholders. Parents receive updates through weekly class folder communication, three-week progress reports, six-week report cards, and an individualized annual STAAR test report. Additionally, parents may electronically access their child’s grade portal twenty-four hours a day. Along with phone and email-based communication, BES staff members advocate face-to-face conferences at hours convenient to parents’ work schedules. Promoting a proactive approach to success, joint parent/intervention team meetings occur every three weeks. Encouraging ownership in one’s learning, teachers conduct student-led conferences where each student discusses and tracks progress, goals, and learning strategies. In order to provide appropriate, effective interventions as a student progresses to the next grade level, an RtI spread sheet with intervention documentation is available in each student’s cumulative folder.

Recognizing that assessments and interventions occur for students of all academic levels, BES utilizes nationally normed qualitative assessment and quantitative portfolio/observation instruments to identify gifted students. Working individually and in small group settings, gifted students plan, design, and participate in differentiated real-world project activities for peers, family, and professional audiences. Formal and informal assessments/observations which address the intellectual, social and emotional needs of each child are included in on-going teacher/parent/student communication.

Because effective assessment and data analysis strengthen BES, trends are identified, and vertical alignment is adjusted. Identified as a campus concern, the rate of academic vocabulary lessons has increased in all core subjects 40% compared to the previous year. Rigorous differentiated vocabulary lessons and pre/post vocabulary assessments emphasize inferencing/context skills. At BES, instruction accommodates individual

learning styles with a vocabulary/reading readiness emphasis in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Data analysis indicates that targeted vocabulary immersion at increased rigor effectively contributed to closing academic gaps. The special education gap has closed from 35% to 14% in a three-year time span. Special education teachers are using differentiated instruction, focusing on writing skills, in addition to continual vocabulary comprehension. While all subpopulations score well above regional and state averages in math, reading, science, and writing, BES remains dedicated to continual improvement.

At BES, effective data analysis and best practice interventions enable each child to experience maximum potential. Importantly, addressing the needs of each struggling, on-level, or advanced learner at BES results in a campus that maintains high levels of achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

BELIEVE! From the first steps into BES, students are engaged as they view a colorful “BELIEVE” banner and student photos displayed among the brightly painted walls. As students enter thematically designed hallways and classrooms, they are enveloped in endearing literary classics representing positive life traits including leadership and tenacity. From a yellow brick road to a challenging rain forest to a cat in a hat, an attractive environment transports the BES family to magical lands where creativity and critical thinking skills foster a culture of exemplary expectation and support.

The BES student is motivated to achieve as a member of one of four campus houses that compete in reading goals, homework, attendance, and academic performance. As supportive housemates, students are provided academic, social, and emotional stability, which validates the BES view that students must feel intrinsically valued to realize educational goals. When goals are met via healthy competition, winning family members participate in multi-sensory educational field experiences where they become planetarium scientists or historical ranch naturalists or CSI forensic detectives. Students, including the 74% socio-economic disadvantaged population, experience academic, social and emotional growth because students must cohesively work in their houses to meet personal and group goals. Importantly, too, each housemate displaying “Banquete Scholar” traits – respect, responsibility, fairness, and kindness – earns daily “U Rule” recognition via the intercom.

Along with supporting students, teachers are valued and supported in a family culture. Teachers comment they do not feel “alone on an island.” Per teacher survey, open communication between BES staff and leadership contributes to productivity. Teachers note they feel valued and appreciated in a collaborative environment where best practices for student achievement are openly shared. Teachers note creative autonomy in lesson development/delivery and verbalize that leadership is in the “trenches” with them, exemplifying the BES mantra of teamwork. Teachers work in unity to make data-driven decisions for each student in weekly grade level and content area meetings. Also, every six weeks, teachers are provided full day grade-level curriculum planning meetings in which lessons of rigor are developed. Additionally, staff who exhibit “extra” effort and positive attitudes earn “Free Jean Coupons” and “Bulldog Bucks” which are redeemed for prizes. Vital to the goal-oriented and emotionally supportive BES family network, teamwork is the foundation of campus culture and concretely supports the whole child as well as the staff.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

As an essential part of the community heartbeat, BES family and community engagement is paramount to student success and school improvement. The bottom line: attendance improves, and exemplary achievement is obtainable when students are motivated to attend school. Importantly, BES recognizes positively engaged family and community members are catalysts to school attendance.

Students must fall in love with learning at an early age, and the first day of school must set the tone for a year of rigorous, fun learning. As the campus transformed into a Hollywood theme on the first day of school, students became BES “celebrities” as they walked the red carpet. Students were enthusiastically greeted to a new learning year with handshakes, high-fives, and smiles from their state representative, a local judge, firefighters, police officers, and other key community leaders. Adorned in Hollywood glamour, BES faculty cheered as students and families stopped by the “paparazzi” booth for a photo souvenir with a nationally known literary mascot and enjoyed refreshments from the local parent organization. Treated to a campus limousine ride, donated by local businesses, students were escorted to classrooms by community role models who shared personal words of encouragement and success about the value of learning and school attendance. Experiencing support from their school, families, and communities, as well as local television and print media, students entered classrooms ready to embark on a year of rigor and engagement. Moreover, family and community involvement continues throughout the school year at events including a Thanksgiving luncheon attended by more than 400 parents, anonymously given homeroom food care baskets, a holiday gift drive, community-led shared reading, and an expansive Veterans Day program

attended by over a thousand spectators. These activities promote an open-door partnered relationship that is the foundation required to effectively address academic improvement.

Through an ongoing tone of teamwork set from day one and the use of various communication formats, such as the BES webpage, newsletter, phone callouts, and weekly folder reminders, increased event participation is recorded. Subsequently, attendance at group events encourages parental involvement at individual conferences when parents and teachers collaborate and personalize learning goals designed to close academic achievement gaps in upwards of 18 months. At BES, team commitment between the parents, community, and staff is ongoing in a culture conducive to family and community support.

3. Professional Development:

BES incorporates best practices through targeted professional development for teachers and administrators with a specific purpose: help each child reach maximum potential. Using data analysis within a shared-communication model, the site-based decision making (SBDM) members develop a horizontally and vertically aligned Campus Needs Assessment (CNA) that targets three standards of the TEKS per core subject such as inferencing and core subject vocabulary as well as multi-step math problem solving. Drawing from various sources, BES then incorporates research-based professional development that is enveloped in best practices that teachers can readily and effectively utilize with students. In the BES multi-tiered professional development design, teachers and administrators “learn, observe, model and evaluate” best instructional practices that directly contribute to reduced academic gaps.

Recognizing the value of teamwork, collaboration is a key component to BES professional development, as demonstrated by math/reading specialists who model and co-teach weekly 30-minute master lessons based on presented professional development. Data supports the collaborative “learn, observe, model and evaluate” professional development model at BES. Specifically, in a five-year TEK trend analysis, student mastery in inferencing increased by 20% while student mastery in vocabulary increased by 40% in all core subjects.

Additionally, multi-step math problem solving increased by 30% in grades three through five. In summary, BES student success is maximized with targeted professional development as determined through the CNA. Furthermore, regional, state, and national educational partners provide effective professional development face-to-face, including annual summer conference administrative state training, as well as digitally-formatted training for all staff members. Responding to requests to broaden professional development to an “on-demand” format, reduce instructional time away from students and provide a “reteach” opportunity and/or a review of trainings, an online professional development format housing thousands of videos (guest lectures from respected state, national and international educators and model lessons) is available 24/7. Importantly, while the format of the staff development varies, each training links directly to an identified area(s) of need. Implementation support is provided by the BES Leadership Team, and campus “ownership” development occurs.

Feedback is vital to securing effective professional development. Consequently, staff members provide formal/informal professional development evaluations to the campus BES Leadership Team and district Curriculum Director. Feedback facilitates future quality trainings and presents opportunities for BES teachers and administrators to recommend themselves/peers to lead subsequent trainings. As BES student success exemplifies, the “learn, observe, model and evaluate” professional development model contributes to growth and ultimately student success.

4. School Leadership:

The BES Leadership Team embodies a philosophy of collaborative teamwork where staff members concretely and positively contribute to each student’s success. To foster academic, social, and affective success, collaboration rather than singular leadership style is BES reality. The role of the principal is to provide and foster a learning environment that maximizes each child’s potential through data disaggregation, staff management/training, parent communication, and motivating students and staff to be the best they can be. The BES Leadership Team is composed of the principal, assistant principal, counselor,

reading/math specialists, teachers of special needs, on level, and advanced students.

Driven by the goal that each student reach academic, social and emotional potential while loving to learn, the BES Leadership Team nurtures creative, purposeful, calculated risk-taking while respecting the value of each teacher. Guided by the principal, teachers disaggregate student data to close gaps, reteach as necessary, or enrich as skills become mastered. Recognizing that preparing exemplary student experiences requires concentrated planning time, clerical duties for teachers are minimized. The reading and math specialists assimilate resources for the teachers, as well as assist them weekly in the classroom and PLC settings. Additionally, leading by example and earning the respect of staff members, specialists model and teach weekly lessons while the principal and assistant principal can be found teaching as well. The principal respects the valuable time of teachers, thus daily information disseminated through email, call-out, and text messaging applications is purposeful, professional, and brief.

The principal inspires “out of the box” thinking due to there being many forms of learning styles. The BES Leadership Team shares knowledge from exceptional educators outside the campus walls. Modeling that “learning” is an ongoing action verb, the administration embraces professional growth for all BES staff members. From book studies of nationally renowned educators, to professional trainings, to traveling to a nationally recognized school that meets the needs of a high-risk population in a creative, nurturing, high expectation environment, the BES Leadership Team partners with staff members who incorporate best practices in their classrooms. Because a culture of teamwork is deeply woven in the BES campus fabric as well as the mission to maximize student potential, the administration and teachers collaborate, bringing in parental input as well. With this shared viewpoint, challenges are opportunities to grow. Modeling a “problem-solve,” not a “problem-accept” perspective, administration and teachers join with all stakeholders to meet a paramount school goal: each child will achieve maximum potential.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Because each child is of singular and equal importance, data driven instruction that targets individual needs is the most important practice contributing to BES success. Recognizing that each child is unique and requires differentiation in order to reach maximum potential, BES rejects an instructional “one size fits all” viewpoint. Instead, with campus-wide on-going data analysis, a road map of academic success for each student is constructed. Moreover, by serving the needs of each student, BES is an exemplary performing campus.

Invested in the belief that data analysis is an effective tool to determine individual student needs, each BES staff member is trained in formal and informal data analysis. With an emphasis on math/reading comprehension and fluency, data based decisions drive differentiated instruction and professional development. At local and regional levels, staff members receive data analysis training and are provided classroom technology to run reports independent of making an appointment with a content specialist. This “on-demand” data analysis availability allows teachers to quickly determine and address academic concerns, which promotes an expedited reduction in a student’s learning gap.

In addition to singular data analysis, a collegial in-house trainer-of-trainer format is utilized. Campus administrators conduct data analysis findings with staff. Subsequently, specialists and teachers disaggregate individual questions in collaborative, small group settings in order to reteach weak performing standards by grade level content as well as individual student effective resources developed and/or obtained. Additionally, teachers who are new to data analysis work during shared planning periods with their professional learning community (PLC) who assists them with data interpretation and differentiated lesson plans targeting individual student needs.

Vital to the BES mission that each student maximize academic potential, data analysis expands beyond the PLC to the campus. Twice a six weeks, the PLC joins administrators and content specialists to examine assessment trends that identify campus level concerns. As a result of the data analysis, professional development targeting campus-wide academic concerns is provided. The team learns and incorporates collaboratively-designed high-yield intervention strategies addressing specific weaknesses. With an instructional turnaround time of less than a week from data analysis planning meetings, individual students quickly receive targeted intervention addressing weak areas. Notified of interventions through student folders, calls, and/or conferences, BES parents welcome and share the staff belief that targeted assistance, based on identified needs through informal and formal data analysis, helps each child maximize potential, and is a valuable BES practice.