

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 Mr. Homero Cano

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

Official School Name Austin Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1023 E. Kuhn Street

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

City Edinburg State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78541-3747

County Hidalgo

Telephone (956) 289-2331 Fax (956) 316-7560

Web site/URL http://aes.edinburg.schooldesk.net/ E-mail h.cano@ecisd.us

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. Rene Gutierrez E-mail rene.gutierrez@ecisd.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District Tel. (956) 289-2300

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. Oscar Salinas
(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):
- 31 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 6 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 4 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 41 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	14	16	30
K	23	29	52
1	22	21	43
2	31	23	54
3	28	19	47
4	26	32	58
5	25	30	55
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	169	170	339

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 99 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 1 % 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: 37%

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	57
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	69
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	126
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	339
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.372
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	37

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 34 %
123 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: 94 %
Total number students who qualify: 315
8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
23 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.

- 4 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 3 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 2 Orthopedic Impairment
- 6 Other Health Impaired
- 5 Specific Learning Disability
- 17 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: 9
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 16:1
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	98%	97%	97%	97%	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.
The mission of S.F. Austin is to provide all students the opportunity to learn and quality educational opportunities to become lifelong learners.
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

Stephen F. Austin Elementary is located 19 miles north of the Mexican border and was established in 1926 as the “Mexican” school. At this time in history, segregation was very much alive and visible, wooden beams were labeled “Mexican School Keep Dry” throughout the four room campus. The school was built on the east side of town which many referred to as the “barrio.” Spanish mission style architecture inspired the design of the school. The two-story building was constructed of stucco stone walls and a red tile roof. Austin Elementary stood as a symbol of hope for so many because Mexican students were finally afforded a chance to attend school and earn an education. Austin Elementary school was where it all started for many of today’s successful community leaders. The school’s rich history and pride run deep in the community, and is quite evident in the present. As a Title I school, Austin Elementary faces many challenges. It currently serves 358 students in pre-kindergarten thru fifth grade in addition to a Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities “PPCD”. The PPCD serves eligible children with disabilities, ages 3-4, which provides special education and related services.

Strategies in place to ensure student academic success include morning and after-school tutorials, small group instruction, vertical planning, fidelity checks and constant parent communication. Austin staff understands the importance of a strong bond between school and home. Monthly community meetings are held at the local housing community center to assist Austin parents with programs such as nutrition, health and wellness, as well as teaching tips on how to assist their children with their learning. The school accommodates the community through these meetings to encourage parental involvement: if parents cannot come to the school, the school goes to them. Many of the students are raised by single parents or grandparents. Student success is the common goal within the Austin school community. Students at Austin are not at the top of the social ladder, or even the emotional ladder for that matter. Students participate in weekly character education lessons focused on social and emotional development, and are challenged to do their best through a diverse curriculum. Test scores prove that academic needs are being met. Student learning is enriched by participating in academic activities such as, music, spelling bee, science fair, technology club, Student Council, Choir, Chess, Book Club, and Robotics Club. Physical health is encouraged through physical fitness activity such as participation in The Walking Club, which encourages parents to walk at school with their child to promote healthy living. Austin celebrates important historical and diverse holidays such as “diez y seis de septiembre” and “cinco de mayo” in which students study and appreciate their Hispanic heritage. Austin teachers’ use of technology provides students with real experiences taking virtual field trips to places they could only dream of visiting. Distance learning experiences are used to connect students with other schools to provide enhanced lessons and insights into the world outside of school.

The school has extremely dedicated teachers who throughout the years have helped Austin earn numerous accolades. Some awards earned include Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC), Texas Honor Roll School, Texas Agency Education (T.E.A.) Title I Distinguished Schools, and T.E.A. High Performance School awards. In the past, Austin has earned Exemplary and Recognized honors for Texas Academic Knowledge Skills (TAKS) and State Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). In the TEA accountability comparison group, Austin Elementary consecutively ranked among the top schools. In 2016, Austin Elementary topped all others schools in comparison group by double digits earning Distinction Designation in the areas of Reading/ELA, Math, top 25% Student Progress, top 25% Closing Performance Gaps and Post-secondary Readiness.

The most important tradition on campus happens every morning. Students recite The Learner’s Creed in both English and Spanish:

“I am an Austin student. I have great expectations for myself. I accept the challenge to be the best that I can be. I accept responsibility for my choices. I will prepare myself for college, for the education I receive today will make me a leader of tomorrow.”

Austin Elementary does not strive for stars, distinctions, or awards; Austin Elementary strives for the success of all students. Austin Elementary wants all students to be able to compete alongside students who have far more advantages than they have. The philosophy of Austin Elementary is to set high expectations

so every child can be successful. The staff at Austin believes that the only thing that can pull a child out of poverty is an education and a will to succeed. This belief is the foundation of driving the goal at Austin to provide each child an equal opportunity to succeed. Students are reminded that they are the leaders of tomorrow and that their future is full of endless possibilities.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

S. F. Austin Elementary core curriculum incorporates the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills TEKS along with the ECISD scope and sequence. District and campus assessments mirror equivalent skills that are tested on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) which are used to drive instruction. All students are expected to exceed mastery performance on the STAAR. A customized prescription for intervention is derived from the data provided, and is analyzed by the teachers who use student tracking sheets, quintiles, and documented action plans. Teachers meet to discuss reports and to develop a spiraling scope and sequence aligned to the TEKS. Results from this data determine grouping of students for intentional intervention instruction targeting educational deficiencies during school, after school, and during morning tutorials. Curricular support is obtained through implementation of the 5E Model which outlines the components of learning. The curriculum embraces differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students, with special focus on special populations.

S. F. Austin students acquire fundamental literacy skills and develop phonemic awareness through daily instruction in the district's TEKS-based Reading / English Language Arts curriculum. This approach was chosen to establish a foundation to build proficiency in oral language, vocabulary and comprehension. Vocabulary skills are practiced daily, and emphasized in the curriculum to assist with language acquisition of English language learners. Reading Comprehension strategies are taught to assist and develop independent reading skills of students at Austin, while assessments are used to determine the level of cognitive ability required to be academically successful. Data from each assessment is used to evaluate progress and to make instructional decisions for each student. Some of the data tools utilized to monitor this progress are student tracking sheets, graphs and charts. Students identified as needing intervention are provided with classroom tutorials addressing the knowledge and skills that are still in development. Additional initiatives are used to develop and reinforce the acquisition of language and comprehension such as the Pre-K Summer Reading program, novel studies, anchor charts, and journal writing.

The mathematics curriculum is driven by state standards and focuses on instructing students from the concrete to the abstract, and more conceptual based learning as specified in the TEKS. This approach was chosen to build students foundational skills. These skills are built with the use of manipulatives in everyday lessons developing an understanding of abstract representations in students' foundation. This approach develops an understanding of mathematical ideas and concepts. Students apply their learning of the mathematical ideas, and make connections to the real world. This approach enables students to use critical thinking and higher order reasoning to help them learn math at the abstract level. Academic content is vertically aligned to identify gaps in the curriculum. Teachers use assessment data to design lesson plans that deliberately target areas of concern. Scaffolding documents are used to create a lesson bank which teachers can use for intervention and enrichment.

Science curriculum is centered on the TEKS and is supplemented by the district's curriculum allowing students to acquire foundational skills. To ensure the success of ELLs, vertically aligned vocabulary instruction is implemented in daily lessons in all grade levels. This approach was chosen to encourage the highest achievement of every student, by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level. Hands on opportunities to experience science are offered through participation in the district's annual science fair, school wide STEM day, and environmental based field trips such as the Sea Turtle Sanctuary and the World Birding Center. Austin students enjoy taking part in many Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities, a few of which include designing towers out of straws and marshmallows. This STEM activity incorporates many elements of engineering and is a popular one with the students.

Civic learning is addressed in compliance to the TEKS and district's Social Studies curriculum. This approach was chosen to engage students in activities that describe how individuals, events, and ideas, have changed communities past and present. Students acquire social studies foundational skills by identifying ways in which people in the community meet their needs for government, education and communication,

and together with their teachers recognize characteristics of good citizenship including truthfulness, justice and equality as specified by the TEKS. Austin Student Council serves as a concept of democracy in a smaller scale. Student elections held in November, give students the opportunity to learn about the election process. Students engage in the observation of Constitution Day, Veterans Day, and other nationally observed holidays of whose meaning, foundation, and importance to American history is part of the learning and discussed in-depth within the classroom.

Early childhood education provides the foundation for learning and is a transition to a more structured educational environment in the later years. Through centered activities, students learn basic phonemic awareness, introduction to basic mathematical skills as well as development of gross and fine motor skills. The federally funded half-day Pre-kindergarten program as well as the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) Unit, follow the district curriculum which aligns to the K-Grade 3 TEKS in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and science. The impact of providing students a wide variety of academic, and social skills, is evident through results shown by CIRCLE-Phonological Awareness Language and Literacy System (C-PALLS), administered in the beginning, middle and end of the school year resulting in successful early readers at Austin Elementary.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The arts program at Austin Elementary utilizes outlets such as music, fine arts, and public speaking as a means to enhance every student with a well-rounded and unique approach to learning. Music appreciation lessons based on the TEKS are held once a week for Kindergarten through 5th grade. It is through this music program that students earn the opportunity to engage in events such as the annual Christmas Program, Mother's Day Serenade, the Christmas Caroling community outreach initiative, the Music Memory club, the Austin Choir, Austin Orf-estra, and the District Choir Competitions. Additionally, students are encouraged to showcase and build on their talents through healthy competition within University Interscholastic League, U.I.L program. Teachers serve as sponsors and mentor students as they practice and compete in events such as Oral Reading, Spanish poetry, ART Smart, and chess. Additionally, school events, such as the annual talent show, allow every student an opportunity to showcase their passion for the arts. School events like these create a sense of community within the students, providing many learning opportunities for students to work collaboratively, using teamwork as a means of learning not only in the classroom, but far past the classroom walls.

Austin Elementary is determined to develop lifelong health conscious citizens. Students in grades Kindergarten to 5th participate in 45 minute sessions three times a week where the curriculum addresses not only physical education, but health, nutrition, and through the Project Wisdom program an anti-bullying initiative as specified by the TEKS. Physical Education teachers integrate core content area curriculum by incorporating academic vocabulary from math, reading, social studies, and science into their lessons. Austin school is located in an area of statistically high health risks, therefore the importance of teaching a healthy lifestyle is imperative. Parents also receive nutrition classes offered by our parental involvement liaison. Students, parents, and non-school age siblings, participate in a weekly walking club where all participants chart their miles, and are rewarded throughout different milestones accomplished. Once a semester the entire Austin community is invited to a "Walk in the Park" where Austin students and staff participate in a session of walking in the company of many members of the community.

At Austin Elementary, one of our many goals is for every student to become technologically literate. The technology application TEKS are embedded into the daily lessons to promote active student learning, problem solving, and informed decision-making. In addition to the teaching tools which include electronic grade books, email, attendance software, and electronic lesson plans, the teachers have interactive whiteboards, electronic tablets, document cameras, and laptops to create age appropriate, interactive lessons. Austin Elementary prides itself with offering teachers a shared interactive whiteboard lesson bank and an online file storage drive making the process of collaboration more efficient. Students participate in technology oriented activities such as Technology Club and Robotics. Parents are an integral component of our campus and have access to online registration streamlining the process and access to students' grades as well as attendance allowing parents to take an active role in monitoring progress for their children. Austin Elementary believes in technology integration and implementation to address educational state standards.

Teachers along with students are encouraged to use technology responsibly and effectively, by providing knowledge and skills necessary and by providing internet safety lessons. Besides the technology in the classroom, teachers and students have access to computers and electronic tablets in the library. In addition, Austin Elementary has two computer labs for whole classroom, small group, and individual use that serve to engage, explore, extend, and enhance learning.

The library is the heart of the campus, and is the strongest support to all curriculum programs at Austin Elementary. This powerful learning space promotes the use of technology, and houses a collection of over 2,600 electronic books for the Austin community. The library supports the concept of equal access to learning with a collection of over 12,000 books, or best described as 33 books per student. Teachers have the option of fixed and flexible scheduling and access to both print and digital format. On a weekly basis, Austin students have the opportunity to receive their classroom instruction in the library. The library serves as the central hub for collaboration among the school, home, and community by promoting literacy and the integration of technology.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

S.F. Austin provides all children the opportunities to develop to their full capacity, intellectually, physically, socially and spiritually. Instructional approaches used at S.F. Austin consist of ensuring the utilization of research based strategies to meet the needs of all students and sub-populations. Delivery of Instruction incorporates the 5E model, District curriculum, small groups, Questioning at a Glance, Student Expectations Connections, Costa's Levels of Questioning, Depth Of Knowledge, walkthroughs/lessons, Academic Vocabulary, and question stems to name a few. Austin classrooms are equipped with 21st century technology based equipment such as interactive whiteboards, laptops, document cameras, and electronic tablets.

Formal and informal reliable assessments are used to evaluate and diagnose student learning. Aside from district benchmarks, Austin Elementary administers in-house benchmarks and assessments that are specifically targeted to the needs of students. Assessments include State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) state released tests, and district benchmarks. School data is meticulously disaggregated through data management systems. Areas of concern are determined by analyzing a data tool called heat maps, STAAR Student expectation performance by level of concern report, STAAR item analysis with responses by item, and Student Expectation (SE) performance by teacher. Teachers are provided with instructional tools and resources to meet individual student needs. In addition, teachers have vertical and horizontal meetings where they analyze data from current and previous years using quintile reports and student grids to identify patterns or gaps in the curriculum. Quintile reports, tracking grids, scaffolding instruction documents, as well as other research based resources, are utilized to assist in closing the performance gap among students. These documents are used to assist the teachers in tracking student learning, and monitoring their individual progress. The documents are meant to target all students, from at-risk to high performing. Students are placed into five groups with subgroups by SEs, to show if these students have achieved a growth, maintained, or declined status. Teachers also create plans of action for each subgroup targeting specific skills needed for mastery. Monitoring student progress and making adjustments in the curriculum to facilitate student learning is a major priority at Austin Elementary. These action plans are kept by the teacher in a data binder to ensure portability when planning for instruction. Curriculum adjustments and morning and after-school tutorials are designed with information provided by these plans. These documents serve as a resource and are analyzed for constant progress monitoring, and are a major tool that drives instruction. This data is analyzed and used to create a modified scope and sequence which is implemented into the curriculum.

Deliberate and systematic intervention is in place for students still developing. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tiered approach used at Austin Elementary to identify and support students with academic and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high quality instruction and universal screening of all children. Universal screening and progress monitoring provide teachers information about the student's learning. This data is then used when determining which students need closer monitoring or intervention. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the rate of learning and level of performance. Every six weeks, RTI meetings are held to review and discuss student progress. The RTI committee consists of the principal,

teacher, counselor, and curriculum assistant. The committee gathers data from a variety of sources such as benchmark scores, STAAR scores, TELPAS results, reading program results, attendance records, curriculum based monitoring, computer lab reports, teacher anecdotal records, and report cards. Instructional decisions are made based on these meetings. The student's learning plan is intensified, offering specific research based interventions matched to the specific needs. Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) are discussed more frequently to ensure that interventions are successful. Strategies help reinforce positive behavior such as conditional approval, reinforcing dependence, and modeling desirable behaviors. The RTI committee also reviews and discusses Section 504 student progress to ensure that student needs are addressed.

Academic enrichment is provided by rigorous meta-cognitive questioning techniques embedded in daily lessons. Teachers encourage students to think about their learning, and monitor their understanding while developing their products. Opportunities are given for students to generate questions that lead to further inquiry and promote complex, high order thinking, and problem solving for real world applications. These strategies improve student learning and maintain high levels of achievement.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Austin Elementary, a positive climate and culture continuously promotes student learning and motivates them to succeed. Students need to feel their accomplishments are validated, therefore to celebrate their successes, celebrations are held for meeting different goals and objectives. These celebrations provide an opportunity for the students to shine and demonstrate their abilities. The celebrations focus on student achievement, growth, and success, including character and attitudes towards learning and improvement on grades and perfect attendance. The administrative team develops a theme and hosts celebrations which motivate the students. Activities include teacher, student, parent, themed weeks throughout the year, such as red ribbon, Dr. Seuss Read Across America, College and Career readiness, vocabulary word parades, and literacy based field days. Community members as well as partner middle school and high school students are welcomed into the school to provide presentations to motivate and encourage ongoing positive character, behaviors, and high academics. These activities promote the student's' academic, social, and emotional growth. The school climate is crucial in promoting diversity and making every member a part of the entire entity. The entire campus shares the high expectations and commitment to excellence which is required in achieving academic high standards. In addition, the climate promotes shared accountability focused on learning and improving.

The teachers are appreciated and their input truly matters. Austin teachers' needs are supported and developed by using two-way communication between the teachers and the administration along with constant communication with the parents on student progress. The different tasks are accomplished through weekly meetings and planning workshops held every six weeks to meet the student's' academic needs. Teachers are flexible and modify plans in order to improve the effectiveness of their teaching methods. Austin Elementary is a place where all staff members are valued and heard. Through an open door policy teachers are encouraged to share ideas and concerns. Teachers feel comfortable asking for any assistance needed such as mentoring, supplies, and materials. They also play an active role in campus decision making through a collaborative approach. Austin teachers are esteemed throughout the year and honored during teacher appreciation week with a generous amount of attention and small tokens of appreciation. Teachers are intrinsically rewarded with the success of their students.

Austin Elementary recognizes the importance of sharing common values and beliefs about promoting students' abilities and inspiring them to become active participants in their learning process. Students feel safe, connected and engaged in their learning. The connection between teachers, students, and parents establishes a positive learning relationship which makes a successful school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Austin Elementary, the most successful strategy for student success and school improvement is to have open communication when working with families and community members. An example is the Parent Teacher Organization. This organization plays an active role in the education of the students. Other examples include parents participating in events such as, meet the teacher night, school programs, and science fair presentations. The parents and community are informed about the students' achievements through newsletters, report cards, and access to the electronic resource of grades and attendance. Another example is the Parent Link, which keeps parents informed using mass communication through text messages, emails, and phone calls. Parents receive notes from teachers on a weekly basis to explain the student needs and progress. Monthly school calendars are distributed which keep parents and the community informed of all upcoming school events, such as Ingles Sin Barreras, health awareness, student tutorials, and nutrition classes. Teachers are flexible and are willing to meet at the parent's' convenience. Other examples of events that focus on parent engagement include, parent teacher conferences, programs and assemblies such as Veteran's Day, Red Ribbon Week, Dr. Seuss Celebrations, reading picnics, book fairs, and field days. In addition to parent participation, the campus has great support from the contributions from the community and parents who volunteer to make the events a success. This open communication promotes collaboration and valued input from the parents on what works best for Austin students.

Teachers make contact with the parents early in the year and conferences are encouraged to create effective working relationships with the parents. Teachers use conferences to learn about the student's home environment as well as the student's strengths and areas of needed growth. In addition to the parental involvement, Austin Elementary values the support received from the community such as reading tutors from the local university through the America Reads program funded by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and technology interns funded by the school district. University students serve as tutors and role models to the students at Austin Elementary. The campus in turn holds canned food drives and toy drives and promotes community services through our student council to enhance the relationships. Austin Elementary assists with the Vannie E. Cook Cancer Clinic drive. Many of the students come from a humble environment, yet they are willing to give what they have to better someone else. The partnership between families and community ensures student success and school improvement.

3. Professional Development:

At Austin Elementary, the approach taken for professional development begins with a needs assessment. The needs assessment determines the areas of professional development and assists in developing a professional development plan which is aligned to the campus improvement plan. At the beginning of the year, the administrative team attends a week long district leadership academy which focuses on teacher and student success initiatives in addition to professional development throughout the year. Examples of administrator professional development include Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) annual conference, region one trainings, and district trainings.

Teachers participate in professional development meetings throughout the year such as curriculum and instructional strategies based on the TEKS, vertical and horizontal alignment, policies, procedures, classroom management, and creating parent partnerships. To improve teacher retention and growth, new teachers are paired with a mentor within the same grade level to make the planning process easier and collaboration more effective. To increase student growth, professional development is focused on student needs and campus challenges such as the ELL population and high mobility rate. All teaching and professional development is data driven and reflects the school's challenges.

Teachers meet per grading period to conduct data disaggregation based on student performance, data analysis to determine interventions, recognize data patterns, gain insight into instructional trends, and determine specific student needs. Teachers also participate in response to intervention training at the beginning of the school year to adequately provide tiered instruction and maximize student learning. Professional development sessions during the summer provide opportunities to collaborate with district specialists and colleagues to enhance understanding and interpret student expectations within the curriculum. The administrative team participates in district professional development through webinars and book studies with the data and new learning shared with the instructional staff focused on student improvement. The administrative team analyzes prior student performance to identify professional development needs. Based on teacher areas of growth and student needs, the principal meets and conferences with each individual teacher to recommend the best professional development available through the district.

Teachers are encouraged to participate in high yield instructional strategies, technology integration, higher order thinking skills, and effective questioning techniques such as levels of questioning. The district provides professional development to integrate technology into the classrooms through sessions about educational applications, green screens, software, hardware, current technology trends, and best practices. Austin Elementary promotes the use of online drives and surveys to promote the sharing of new learning. These initiatives contribute to the overall academic success of the S.F. Austin learning community.

4. School Leadership:

The philosophy of leadership at Austin Elementary is based on student success ensuring a personalized instruction plan with high expectations. The campus principal and the leadership team comprised of the curriculum assistant and the counselor ensure that all students are given the same educational opportunities

by addressing educational needs not based on socioeconomic background, ethnicity, gender, disability or other characteristics.

The primary role of the principal is to ensure that Austin Elementary students excel in academics and to ensure equal access, communicate and connect with all stakeholders, innovate through technology, secure a safe learning environment, and develop and retain highly qualified staff. Two way communication is established through an open door policy, where all staff, parents, and community members are encouraged to express and share ideas. The administrative team serves as a support system for the principal to execute his initiatives efficiently.

The Curriculum Assistant's (CA) role is to ensure that all federal and Title I programs are implemented in accordance to policy and students who receive assistance in these programs are served accordingly. In addition, the CA facilitates the curricular needs of the teachers and ensure that they have access to all the necessary materials for delivery of instruction.

The role of the counselor is to ensure the social and emotional stability of the students to foster academic success. The counselor also assists students with personal/social development, ensuring that students have post-secondary awareness to become college ready, productive citizens of tomorrow.

All decisions made by the administrative team are based on legal principles and research focused on student achievement. Decisions are clear and plausible so that everyone involved has an understanding of how that decision was made and on what basis. Constant revisiting of state laws, standards, and guidelines is done to make informed decisions. This is accomplished through staff development both from the district and the campus. Information is disseminated to staff through weekly administrative team, staff, and grade level meetings. In addition, every six weeks, teachers along with administrators engage in a half day vertical and horizontal alignment planning period where as a team, data is disaggregated and intentional instruction and intervention plans are created to focus on student achievement. An instructional blueprint is developed for each student to target specific needs. This initiative includes intervention plans or enrichment strategies based on student skill level. The administrative team ensures that all the programs are implemented with fidelity to ensure productivity and validity for student success.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The most effective practice Austin Elementary has is student teacher rapport to promote higher education. The bond between a teacher and a student is priceless and essential to academic success. S. F. Austin Elementary believes all students are capable of attending an institution of higher learning if their social and emotional needs are met. Austin will strive to provide opportunities for students to become responsible, respectful, knowledgeable, and productive citizens. Students will be treated as unique individuals with dignity and respect in a safe, caring, and supportive environment where they will see themselves as college bound scholars.

Teachers understand that the academic, emotional, and social development of each child matters and believes that, if you capture a child's heart, their mind will follow. Most students come to us lacking the basic social and emotional skills needed for proper development. The majority of these students do not own books and have not been exposed to any form of literature. For many, school is the first time they are exposed to a structured environment. Much of this vital work occurs early on in the primary grades. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers provide some of these basic essentials such as compassion, safety, and friendship. Once these needs are met, learning can take place. Maslow's hierarchy of needs teaches us the importance of meeting these basic requirements. The importance of an education is instilled throughout their educational journey at S. F. Austin Elementary. Austin teachers establish positive relationships with their students by accepting them for who they are. Teachers ensure and communicate the importance of each child. Austin staff wholeheartedly believes that all children can learn and will attend college for a successful future. Teachers instill a college readiness mindset into every student students are taught that, "It doesn't matter where you are from, all that matters is where you are going." The annual awards ceremony also reaffirms student commitment to attend a university. As students' accomplishments are read aloud, the teachers announce their future university and career aspirations. Students are reassured every day that they can and will attend a university.

Student teacher rapport is an important role in a positive school climate. This in turn decreases absenteeism, suspensions, and bullying, and increases students' academic achievement, motivation to learn, and psychological well-being because students want to be here. College will become a reality once students feel self-worth and validated. They see it, believe it, and they will achieve it!