



## **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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 2 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 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
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	44	41	85
<b>K</b>	37	37	74
<b>1</b>	34	34	68
<b>2</b>	35	29	64
<b>3</b>	43	38	81
<b>4</b>	50	35	85
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	243	214	457

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 2016 – 2017 school year: 13%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	30
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	33
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	63
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	470
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 84 %  
386 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: 100 %  
Total number students who qualify: 457

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.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>11</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>7</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>30</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>6</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	15
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

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

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

Provide quality education to produce responsible, contributing citizens capable of thinking critically to solve problems in an ever-changing world.

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**

---

Valley View Elementary (VVE) was established as the District's first and only school in 1927 in Pharr, Texas. When the VVE campus was rebuilt in 2008, the location changed to Hidalgo, Texas, about two miles from the US-Mexico border. This school year, VVE's population consists of 457 students, of which 99.34% are Hispanic/Latino, and the other 0.66% are white. Due to the proximity to the Mexican border, 84.46% of the students are English Language Learners (ELLs), and 88.84% are economically disadvantaged.

VVE serves students from pre-kindergarten (PK) to fourth grade and houses the District's self-contained special education program for students from Early Education through first grade. It has a reputation for obtaining high levels of achievement, earning numerous recognitions and awards over the years and receiving many accolades for its high academic performance. Since 2004, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has awarded VVE with the highest possible rating, including exemplary status and met standard with numerous distinctions. The campus has been recognized as a Title I Distinguished School, a TBEC Honor Roll School, and an NCEA High Performing School. Texas Monthly magazine has identified VVE as a Top 100 Elementary School in Texas. In 2017, the school earned Distinction Designations for Academic Achievement in English Language Arts, Reading and Mathematics, Top 25 percent on Student Progress, Closing the Gap, and Postsecondary Readiness.

VVE has an extensive curriculum that is aligned with the core areas to meet the needs of all student populations, including ELLs and special education students. It follows the guidelines and essential knowledge and skills required by TEA. Technology is implemented as part of the curriculum from PK to fourth grade. Consequently, all students and teachers enjoy access to computers and other emerging technology. VVE prides itself on offering a challenging curriculum which promotes student success. It is a place where opportunities for improvement are observed, acknowledged and strengthened. The principal encourages teamwork, cares about students and staff, and continuously provides incentives to promote student achievement. He gives teachers the liberty to implement different teaching strategies and techniques to address students' needs and enhance student learning. Teachers consistently stay after hours to prepare and develop exciting lessons to engage students. They share successful strategies and implement them across grade levels and disciplines.

The teachers serve as role models to the children and community. Students, parents, and visitors are greeted with smiles and handshakes when they enter the campus and classrooms. Teachers and students treat each other as family and have created a culture of caring and giving. The VVE community stands committed to helping anyone, whatever the need. The staff generously donate to those in financial need, various organizations and the children. This year, for instance, after seeing children without sweaters, the school raised money and purchased a sweatshirt for every student.

The VVE staff has created a culture where children are encouraged to read. The love for reading is instilled through various activities and rewarded with many different incentives. Whether for an award or a friendly competition, students at VVE are always reading and steadily developing a broader vocabulary. The school encourages parents to read with children and opens its library to parents every morning. Parents join their children at the library to read a book. VVE encourages students to start their own home libraries, and for the past few years, the school has given each child a book. Educational field trips, afternoons of fun, field days, movie and ice cream days, motivational banners, goodie bags, and parades are used to encourage and reward children.

Traditions are alive and well at VVE. By using the traditions deeply rooted in the community and its culture, the campus is able to instill and promote virtues and values of importance to the parents and community. The teachers and students, for instance, dress up in traditional Mexican attire as they study Mexico's history and culture during 16 de Septiembre. Every year the school celebrates important events like 16 de Septiembre, Cinco de Mayo, Fall festivals, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring festivals, Read Across America, Presidents Day, and Easter. Parents play a vital role in the students' education, and the campus uses the community's traditions to engage parents in their children's education. It is not uncommon to have a student's parent come to school to talk with the children about a given topic. In addition, VVE has

monthly meetings to keep them informed and involved in their children's schooling. Teachers and administrators work together with parents to help with each student's needs.

Valley View Elementary's motto is "It's a Gr-r-reat Place to Learn!" The school is committed to being a great place to learn by teaching all students the skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

### **1. Core Curriculum:**

The Valley View Elementary (VVE) curriculum follows the ethos of our district, students, and community. The guiding force behind it is the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), structured through our scope and sequence to incorporate grade level alignment. The curriculum encourages different teaching methodologies that recognize and accentuate each student's unique abilities to become a responsible citizen. The curriculum complies with state expectations, built on the idea that student interactions are essential and ensure student learning. The implementation of the curriculum is designed to develop children's character and morality, and it emphasizes cultural experiences to enhance learning and achievement. The dominant feature of the curriculum is the framework of accommodation and integration of diversity that emphasizes differentiated instruction. Although the curriculum is standardized, it embodies the freedom of differentiation of instruction, emphasizing a hands-on approach to learning through relevant activities of real-world scenarios and experiences.

VVE utilizes ELA and Reading curricula that are research-based and meet every student's specific needs. They set the foundation for a lifetime of learning through a well-rounded literacy education. The curricula address different learning abilities so that students are able to meet their academic goals. The Reading curriculum focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through diversified daily instruction. To establish a proficient level in student oral language development and comprehension, the campus provides activities in daily journal writing, novel readings, genre comparison, and utilization of interactive notebooks across subject areas in which open-ended questions are targeted to enhance critical thinking skills. To supplement the ELA curriculum, teachers have locally developed and implemented the Model and Monitor Writing Program from pre-kindergarten through second grade. This approach integrates reading and writing skills that encourage lower-grade students to optimize learning opportunities by providing supplemental writing support that helps build a strong writing foundation. The utilization of computer-assisted instruction is an additional assurance to help meet the needs of every student in reading.

The math curricula are focused on transitioning learning from concrete to abstract. Math activities implement a hands-on approach using manipulatives that emphasize student engagement in order to develop visual knowledge that moves to the conceptual development of mathematical skills as required by the state assessments. Four components are covered daily: basic facts, skills, problem solving, and concept development. The curricula are vertically aligned from kindergarten through fourth grade. The curriculum used in the lower grade levels complements the one used in the upper-grade levels; therefore, students have a set foundation as they are promoted. The continuous use of the same problem-solving strategies from one year to the next allows teachers to provide the rigor in math. Spiraled math skills are a part of the classroom routine in which students become exposed to rigorous question stems at the early grades.

The science curriculum is designed for building inquiry and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skills. Learners directly interact with the natural world through hands-on investigations provided within the classroom and the science lab. Students in PK through fourth grade attend science lab weekly for 45 minutes, where they conduct investigations that introduce them to scientific inquiry. Children have opportunities to ask questions, manipulate equipment, record data, discuss and debate findings through inquiry-based activities. They learn about composting, healthy eating, and garden maintenance while participating in The Garden Club. Working in the garden fosters a love of nature and an understanding about the need for conservation. Ultimately, students showcase their scientific knowledge at the science fair.

The social studies curriculum gives students an opportunity to learn grade-appropriate vocabulary and content through newspaper articles. Students work independently and cooperatively, which leads to discussions and debates. These activities prompt them to think and write critically. Using multimedia components, students engage, learn at their own pace and reinforce reading comprehension. Students study the state of Texas and national historical events and produce projects. This process helps students become

intelligent problem solvers. Civic learning is embedded throughout school activities and programs, such as student council. All teachers encourage students to practice good citizenship skills while exhibiting democratic practices during school-run elections for grade-level office. Furthermore, student council provides an opportunity for students to get involved and help the community. The entire school participates in the canned food drive. Every major cultural event relevant to our population is celebrated and integrated with lessons and activities to enhance knowledge of their heritage.

Valley View Elementary offers a pre-kindergarten program for three- and four-year-old children. VVE targets the learning domains identified by the Child Learning Institute and the Texas Education Agency as essential in child development to ensure school readiness. The teachers have created a curriculum which targets children's social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy, reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical development, and technology. By targeting those domains, children mature and develop academically and emotionally. Students who participate in VVE's pre-kindergarten program are well prepared for the rigors of following grades.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

VVE believes it must educate students to be well-rounded, outstanding individuals. Throughout the year, the school provides art, music, and theater arts instruction integrated into the core curriculum at grades PK through four. The music TEKS are incorporated into reading and ESL programs, while theater arts TEKS are woven into and throughout social studies and ESL curricula. Students demonstrate mastery of the arts TEKS by displaying their core curriculum-based projects throughout the hallways of the school. Students also showcase their visual and performing arts skills during PTO meetings, district-wide drama challenges, and local art competitions. Children at all grade levels sing and dance at each PTO meeting. Students exhibit their creative drama skills when challenged to create and perform when supplied with only a scenario and minimal props. Students compile collections of their artwork for exhibition during the Pumpkin Book Character, Reading Hallway, and Homecoming decorating contests. The success of the visual/performing arts program is evidenced by VVE students excelling in art, music, and fine arts in subsequent grades.

Physical Education (PE) is a vital component of the school's educational system. Core academic learning concepts are embedded in PE lessons and linked to daily physical activities. For instance, math skills are addressed during basketball shooting drills by calculating the percentage of shots taken versus the shots made or by reinforcing their ABCs and multiplication facts during exercises. Every student is provided with PE at least three times a week for 45 minutes. PE lesson plans are aligned and in compliance to the TEKS. Additionally, students are provided with 15 minutes of physical activity with a structured recess that encourages them to play in small and large groups to improve social skills and resolve conflicts. VVE students in third and fourth grades take part in a state-mandated yearly physical assessment. In addition, children participate in health fairs, Jump Rope for Heart, and various after-school programs that keep them actively engaged and health conscious.

VVE provides technological opportunities for all students and teachers. The online curriculum is aligned with TEKS standards for computer applications. Classrooms are equipped with four to five computers for student use as well as projectors and document readers for teacher use to deliver meaningful lessons. Grade levels are assigned various mobile devices to use on a rotating schedule. Students use these mobile devices to work on lessons, conduct research, read digital books, engage in interactive learning through teacher-developed lessons, and target the TEKS standards for computer applications. The school houses two computer labs, one for lower grades (PK through first grade) and another for upper grades (second through fourth grades). Students visit the computer lab twice a week for 45 minutes, once during the teacher conference rotation and the other at a different assigned time where homeroom teachers address computer applications. These computer classes are designated for students to work on programs that reinforce weekly TEKS and objectives in core areas.

The library is the heart of VVE's literacy program. It actively promotes reading, information literacy, and parental involvement. In addition to the rotations of a regular school day, students, parents, and staff access the library from 7:15 to 7:45 a.m. daily. The library yields an average of 3,200 monthly student and parent

attendees. With assistance from the librarian, students wrote and submitted poems to the 2017 National Schools Project, Young American Poetry Digest, and 87% of their submissions were published.

Due to the high number of ELLs (84.46%) at VVE, English as a Second Language (ESL) is crucial for the academic success of the students. The ESL curriculum is implemented daily from grades PK through 4, includes the state's English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), and targets the areas needed for their acquisition and development of academic English. Students receive appropriate time and treatment according to their language needs and proficiency levels. As part of the ESL curriculum, teachers display the language objectives and discuss them in the classroom, thereby strengthening students' content knowledge and academic English. The success of the program is demonstrated by the fact that almost all PK students arrive as bilingual beginners receiving the majority of their instruction in Spanish, and transitioning to a predominantly English curriculum by the time they leave the campus due to their acquired higher level of English proficiency.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

There are various instructional approaches employed at Valley View Elementary (VVE) to meet individual student needs. One such approach is the looping of second- and third-grade teachers. In the looping process, the second-grade teachers follow their students to third grade. Utilizing this technique allows the teacher to understand the students' abilities and learning styles better, maximizing instructional time the first six weeks of third grade. Teachers know their students and their students' parents well by the time they reach third grade. No time is lost teaching new classroom procedures and expectations, problem-solving strategies, and homework requirements. Having the same teacher from one grade to the next enables children to reduce stress levels as they prepare to take their first state assessment. It has been shown to be effective to have a friendly, familiar face guiding the children. All are equally excited to see each other and simply continue where they left off the previous year.

VVE believes all children can learn, and staff members work together to create a conducive learning environment. Consistency is the key at VVE. Teachers start instilling the love of reading as early as pre-kindergarten. Teachers model good reading and encourage children to do the same. Reading becomes infectious quickly when one student sees another reading. By the time children get to second grade, students consistently have at least three books on top of their desks and are challenged to go above and beyond their potential. Children are encouraged to read different genres. In addition to classroom reading, children set personal goals for reading on their own. To promote college readiness, every grade level is assigned a college and a virtue to study, which motivates all students to learn about as many universities as possible and enhance their character. Teachers from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade consistently share teaching strategies. All teachers use interactive journals for all subject areas and assign daily homework to reinforce weekly skills taught. Teachers are consistent in the use of learning strategies for core subjects throughout all grade levels.

Teachers identify and target weaknesses in their classrooms from concrete data in a variety of reports using data desegregation tools. Additionally, the campus has an interdependent culture where teachers meet monthly to transmit and share data acquired from testing, curriculum checks, and supplemental materials. Teachers do this in order to develop action plans that will enhance teaching and improve academic achievement. Educational deficiencies and different cognitive abilities are tackled through intervention initiatives, such as reading intervention, after-school tutorials, and special education resource groups. Intervention approaches rely heavily on the appropriate use of manipulatives, technology in the classroom, instructional strategies and proper use of cooperative learning groups.

The campus recognizes the role that assessments play in monitoring the mastery of TEKS and gauging performance on state assessments. Student progress and academic data include weekly and six-week assessment results, progress reports, report cards, daily attendance, and student participation in tutorials. Students are given a teacher-created diagnostic test using the targeted reading curriculum. Students who do not pass are placed in reading intervention classes for 50 minutes Monday through Friday. Students are also given a fluency test every six weeks to monitor growth. Recent immigrants are given a teacher-created placement test. This test includes reading fluency, basic math skills, and writing.

The use and interpretation of data are a means to identify student progress and successes, as well as any academic hurdles to target instruction to meet student needs. An extensive item analysis of weekly tests, six-week assessments, and benchmarks is reviewed with campus staff to ensure students are progressing and their needs are being met. Teachers pinpoint areas of weakness, identify low-performing students, and detect which learning objectives are not being met, thereby helping them to consider areas of improvement to be addressed and corrected. Identified problems require a plan of action to modify content and target appropriate instruction to meet individual student needs. Progress monitoring takes place every six weeks and at the end of each semester to review students' progress reports, six-week report cards, and semester grades. The campus conducts periodic needs assessments, data-driven decision-making meetings, and data analysis that compares efforts and expected results.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

---

### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At Valley View Elementary (VVE), students, staff, guests, and visitors immediately feel the welcoming, positive atmosphere when they enter the campus. The school provides a safe, comfortable and positive environment for everyone, not only to ensure academic achievement, but also to promote students' social and emotional growth. There is a sense of pride students feel as they enter their school. Staff members greet them at the door and welcome them by name. Students come in motivated to begin their day of learning as high expectations for all students are embedded into their daily lessons.

One of the many ways VVE strives to address students' social and emotional growth is by teaching them the importance and value of possessing high moral standards. Virtues such as cooperation, kindness, self-control, respect, loyalty, diligence, confidence and honesty are assigned to each grade level throughout the year. These virtues are not only incorporated into their lessons, but students are expected to practice them daily.

Reading is a skill that is built into the culture of VVE. The expectation for students to develop strong reading habits begins in pre-kindergarten. The school principal starts the day with morning announcements encouraging and motivating students to read. He reviews the school's progress towards reading goals and stresses the importance of "aiming for 100%" in all they do. He reminds them to continue to work hard and improve their good habits, such as attending school daily and being lifelong readers. Parents are also encouraged to read with their children every morning in the school library. This culture, which promotes the love of reading, has provided our students with a strong foundation that transfers into all academic areas ensuring that students are successful.

Teachers, of course, play a crucial role in the success students experience at VVE. Whether dealing with curriculum, staff development opportunities or community involvement, teachers are active participants in the decision-making process at VVE. They know that their opinions and input are important and will be taken into consideration when dealing with the different needs of their students. They are essential stakeholders and have a voice in the educational experiences provided to students.

Motivating students to do their best by providing them with a high-quality education, a positive environment that promotes social and emotional growth, and teachers who are highly qualified and want to share in student success sets an expectation of excellence in the VVE community.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Valley View Elementary prides itself on building a strong, healthy, and prosperous relationship with its community. The staff at VVE believes that parental involvement is a reliable indicator of student success. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) works in unison with the campus to bring the community together. The PTO meets periodically and functions as a means to maintain an open line of communication with parents and community. Topics such as student needs, school activities, academic expectations, state testing information, updates on safety procedures, health information, and other relevant information are discussed, and pertinent literature is disbursed during these meetings. Additionally, at every PTO meeting, students participate in performances for the parents as a way to promote their talents outside the classroom. The school's PTO maintains student engagement by offering incentives. Each year, the PTO has teamed up with the school to purchase books and other incentives for the children. In past years, the PTO has rewarded children with excellent grades and/or perfect attendance by taking them on various field trips to places they usually would not be able to go. The school has also teamed up with local businesses to provide incentives. Local businesses have donated fruits and vegetables to students to enjoy during afternoons of fun. VVE students look forward to these incentives and are encouraged to maintain active study habits to ensure continued success.

Another way VVE communicates with parents is through the District's parent portal system. This

application allows parents to access their student's academic and attendance information. It is designed to alert parents when a student is marked absent or scores lower than a determined value set by them on any given assignment. This is a great way to involve parents and provide immediate feedback on their children's progress. Teachers also maintain a web page through the district's website. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through updated student information, homework schedule, and important notices. A classroom and school-wide communication application is another tool used to connect with parents and students by sharing photos, videos, and messages throughout the instructional day.

The VVE administration makes a conscious daily effort to provide an inviting environment to its community. VVE continues to be a community gathering place, from Meet the Teacher Night to the Fall Festival, from PTO Meetings to Open House, from the Annual Science Fair to the Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony at the end of the year.

### **3. Professional Development:**

At Valley View Elementary (VVE), the staff always seeks ways to improve student learning. Whether it be staff development for administrators, teachers or support staff, student achievement is at the forefront. With the support of district personnel, professional development, both at the district and campus levels, focuses on improving student achievement by improving instruction.

Staff new to the campus attend orientation on implementing the successful instructional strategies used at VVE. It is designed to immerse them with practical tools that can be put to immediate use. Veteran teachers use the opportunity to share their research-based techniques and successful experiences. The focus is on learner-centered instruction and overall school success. Other topics covered include: analyzing student results, leadership and vision, decision-making, risk-taking, research-based instruction, creating state assessment-aligned curricula, accountability, and collaboration.

Professional development starts by evaluating student data, the curriculum, and TEKS alignment. It continues throughout the school year, usually conducted by campus administration or by one of the school's master teachers. Staff development opportunities are delineated as a part of the campus improvement plan and customized to meet the student's group and individual needs. Teachers attend "strategy camps" and institutes designed to assist them in improving student performance. Teachers and administrators consistently analyze student data and together seek ways to improve student learning based on the campus needs assessment. Together, the team will look for effective practices to address the students' needs. After some of these sessions, it is encouraged and often happens that an experienced teacher teams up with a less experienced teacher to work side by side in the same classroom with the same students utilizing the new strategies. One-to-one training has given the campus excellent results, primarily when working with English Language Learners and other at-risk children. Teachers at VVE meet with other teachers within their grade level from around the district and collaborate to produce the most effective curriculum and lessons that correlate with the state academic standards.

The school's targeted, sustained professional development approach has a positive impact on teachers, as well as administrators. VVE continuously supports not only the new teachers, but also the veteran instructors who must remain current in the latest developments in education. There is a belief at VVE that when staff members feel empowered with the knowledge and skills they need, they will be even more effective educators who will assist in the success of the students.

### **4. School Leadership:**

Valley View Elementary's philosophy is all children can learn, and the administrative staff sets the example for the children to follow. The school leadership team at VVE is comprised of the school principal, the assistant principal, a counselor and a lead teacher. They set the tone for the school. It starts with the morning announcements when the principal encourages the children to set goals, develop good habits, and strive for a 100%. The principal encourages teachers to treat students as if they were their own. Campus administration expects staff to be good role models, work together and provide the best possible

education to all VVE students.

The principal and assistant principal work to ensure the school runs smoothly in every aspect of the daily operations. Because safety and student success are priorities, they expect staff to follow the policies and procedures. They update curriculum, make supplemental materials available to teachers in a timely manner, see to it that auxiliary programs be accessible and used appropriately and that all required services be provided to students at a high academic level. The support they provide to staff helps them be better prepared to deliver quality instruction.

The counselor promotes a comfortable and safe environment that ensures students have the emotional support they need to achieve academic success. In addition to assisting children with their social and emotional needs, the counselor is available to assist teachers with students who are at risk of failing due to academic struggles or attendance problems. In addition, the counselor enlists the input from teachers to initiate a Response to Intervention (RTI) to discuss possible classroom interventions that need to be implemented to safeguard student success. The counselor and teacher meet at every tier of the RTI process to update student progress and to make necessary adjustments where appropriate. Parents are included in the decision-making process and are kept abreast of student progress.

The lead teacher works closely with classroom teachers to meet the needs of special population students. Students who are English Language Learners or receive Special Education or 504 services are continuously monitored to ensure that they have all the resources, services, and accommodations needed to achieve success. The lead teacher is instrumental in the appropriate placement of students, being a key member of the LPAC team.

In addition to providing students with an extensive selection of instructional materials, the Leadership Team ensures that all staff is equipped and trained in all subject areas.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

Valley View Elementary has a long-standing tradition of excellence when it comes to student performance. Although many factors contribute to the school's success, one of the most effective practices is vertical alignment. The continuous use of vertical alignment has contributed to the academic success of students year after year. Vertical alignment has helped students adapt to the rigor and expectations set forth by the teachers progressively from grade level to grade level. It creates a balance and standard of excellence to which students get accustomed and helps facilitate a smooth transition among the students from one grade level to the next.

At vertical alignment meetings, teachers thoroughly examine and discuss the curriculum taught at their respective grade levels. As a result, ideas are shared and put into practice. Teachers consider and agree upon which strategies they will utilize in given core subjects. All teachers collaborate on strategies being used to prepare students better. No matter the grade level, children are taught to use the same strategies. In reading, students are taught to use acronyms to better comprehend and analyze the reading material. In math, students are taught strategies that help them better understand and evaluate the problem and key vocabulary. The students become familiar with the strategies being used and continue using them in the following grade levels. Students will often comment that they remember a certain strategy was taught by the previous teacher and it helped make the transition to a new grade level a lot easier by building students' confidence. The teachers will then build on that strategy and focus on increasing rigor to ensure student success.

Throughout the year, staff development meetings are held where teachers continue to refine strategies. Teachers share their vision of quality instruction and hold themselves accountable for their students' success. Teachers are open to constructive criticism from their peers and use it to build a stronger foundation. There is a strong sense of responsibility at each grade level when such practices are implemented. Teachers have a better understanding of what is expected and what measures need to be taken to ensure students are well prepared and successful. The cross communication among teachers has strengthened and built a tradition of high comradery among teachers. Valley View Elementary has built a team of teachers who take pride in their work and students' success.