

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)
 - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 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
PreK	31	28	59
K	29	24	53
1	27	30	57
2	29	26	55
3	37	23	60
4	41	33	74
5	0	0	0
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	194	164	358

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: 12%

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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	22
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	22
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	44
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	364
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.12
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	12

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 89 %
317 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: 358

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
22 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>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>2</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</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: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	9
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 15:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	95%	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.

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

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 a quality education to ensure academic success for all students and prepare them to be the finest leaders of tomorrow.

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 South Elementary (VVSE) is situated about a mile from the Rio Grande River in the city of Hidalgo, in the southernmost area of Texas. The school has been serving students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth since it opened in 2006. The proximity to the US-Mexico border has an impact on the population the school serves. Students bring their distinctive prior knowledge base and cultural heritages making VVSE a unique place to learn. As the data show, 89.84% of the student population is identified as English language learners (ELL) and 91.06% is classified as economically disadvantaged. Despite the challenges they encounter in this low socioeconomic area, teachers and students strive for excellence in every educational aspect. The vibrant Mexican and Mexican-American cultures of the community provide VVSE with ample learning opportunities in the classroom to help students expand their academic and social development.

VVSE has a history of high achievement in every academic area, as evidenced by the many recognitions and awards the school has received since it opened its doors. It has been recognized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as an Exemplary School and has received the state's highest recognition possible of Met Standard with Distinctions. VVSE has received distinctions in Academic Achievement in English Language Arts, Reading and Mathematics, Top 25 percent on Student Progress, Closing the Gap, and in Postsecondary Readiness. The campus was named a Texas Honor Roll school for two consecutive years. It has won the "Best Elementary School" in the Reader's Choice Award, a competitive award selected by readers of a local newspaper that recognizes a school's achievements. Individual student awards include the "Being Bilingual Writing Essay Contest" given by the Texas Association of Bilingual Education Association and the Healthy Habits Watermill Express/H-E-B essay contest winners. As part of a project to promote student collaboration, enhance self-esteem and incorporate educational standards, students have also become published authors.

The culture of success has been instilled in students, and they strive for excellence. The campus offers a variety of programs to ensure academic achievement for all students. Programs include tutorials, Tiger Star Reader program, and Reading, Math and Writing Camps. Students attend tutorial sessions after school Monday through Thursday and are provided enrichment instruction as an extension to the school day. The Tiger Star Reader program motivates students to read more, which helps build fluency and comprehension. Students are encouraged to meet their goals of becoming Tiger Star Readers or Tiger Super Star Readers. This program also helps to enhance the students' love of reading. Camps are offered at the end of the school day on Fridays as a fun and innovative way to extend learning. Activities provide for different learning styles in preparation for the state-mandated exams in reading, math, and writing. The school's commitment to providing a rigorous, student-centered learning environment has helped each child prepare for society's evolving challenges. Teachers are equipped with the necessary tools to provide all students an equal opportunity to reach academic success. They actively participate in research-based professional development and in creating the district's curriculum. In addition, systems are in place to progress monitor and identify struggling students. Teachers work with targeted students on a one-on-one basis to provide assistance, reinforce academic skills, and ensure students perform well on standardized assessments. Teachers also hold parent-teacher meetings before, during, and after school to discuss individualized student action plans.

Strategies that support students' emotional development include counseling classes each week, individual counseling sessions, and daily words of wisdom during morning announcements. Students' physical development is supported by daily physical activity and with the provision of well-balanced nutritional meals.

Communication among all stakeholders is critical to VVSE's student achievement. Constant and consistent contact with parents is crucial to the campus's success. This robust communication has encouraged parents to feel welcome in school at all times and to voice their concerns when necessary. VVSE continually holds activities that promote parent involvement such as festivals, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, literacy nights, Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, Breakfast with Grandparents and other events that bring the school and community together.

An array of school activities and functions contribute to the school's social and cultural attributes. Students participate in every PTO Meeting with artistic displays and performances dealing with academic and cultural themes, such as national holidays, patriotic events, and special events. The PTO provides students with gifts for Halloween, Christmas and El Día Del Niño (Children's Day), a Mexican holiday recognized by many in our community. Both VVSE and its PTO work together to acknowledge student successes.

VVSE's educational philosophy of creating the best leaders of tomorrow has made a significant impact on the community, especially in the hearts of the students. The school's success is a result of the dedication of all stakeholders who have the best interest of students as their priority.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Valley View South Elementary curriculum incorporates the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in all subject areas. The teacher-created lesson plans and study guides are key elements in preparing students for state assessments and advanced learning. Flexible learning environments and a variety of resources allow students to work on various tasks to meet goals and readiness levels. Students are exposed to different teaching styles, activities, and technology programs to support learning. It is the goal of VVSE that all students attain mastery and achieve college readiness on state assessments. Curriculum implementation is overseen directly by campus administrators to monitor the effectiveness of instructional delivery as it relates to student mastery of state standards.

The Language Arts curriculum is aligned to the TEKS and customized to meet the needs of the student population served. Since reading is fundamental to a student's academic success, it has been embedded in all content areas across grade levels. The foundation skills start in pre-kindergarten with letter recognition, phonics, phonemic awareness, and comprehension. In first grade, reading skills are taught through a spiraling approach to improve student performance in all areas. VVSE targets instruction that includes strategies such as student read alouds, daily reading, and vocabulary development. Teachers incorporate reading activities, such as the use of interactive journals, rigorous questioning techniques, novels, and computer-assisted instructional programs. Teacher-created lesson plans utilize online materials as resources to increase student literacy. Focusing on the population served, VVSE teaches literacy skills in Spanish to many students before transferring those skills into English. The emphasis on native language mastery facilitates the transfer of skills in the acquisition and development of English, and its effectiveness is demonstrated by high achievement scores in English.

The math curriculum is aligned to TEKS and connects mathematical skills and real-world situations to which all VVSE learners can relate. The program is reinforced and enhanced through sustained, targeted staff development and researched-based supplemental materials, including computer-assisted programs. VVSE ensures that students develop basic math facts, concept attainment, and problem-solving skills, which extend to more complex meaningful applications. Learners build their knowledge through concrete activities, which is the basis for a strong foundation in abstract concepts. Working in learning centers, students apply skills that target different learning styles. Students collaborate with peers to create and solve problems, which helps them solidify concepts at high levels and gain deeper levels of learning. The immediate feedback from ongoing assessments provides students with positive comments on progress and allows teachers to identify areas that need to be readdressed.

With a focus on scientific investigation and reasoning, the staff-created VVSE science curriculum is TEKS based and provides access to digital media and innovative resources that are useful for teachers in the classroom and student-friendly for practice at home.

All students attend science laboratory weekly. There, students conduct hands-on experiments and produce artifacts that reinforce the skills acquired during the week in the classroom. Students practice critical thinking skills by gathering their own data and by making their own decisions in their science experiments. Student projects are showcased weekly in the lab and in the annual science fairs. Students incorporate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) activities and implement deep inquiry and research as they offer solutions to team challenges in classroom, campus, and district competitions.

VVSE's social studies curriculum provides TEKS-based lessons targeting history, geography, economics, government, citizenship, and culture across all grade levels. These standards foster students' understanding and working knowledge of foundation skills that include the study of self, home, family, and classroom to establish responsible citizenship. Students receive a weekly classroom newspaper that includes colorful and engaging features. It contains support resources such as images, read-along audio, and videos related to all student expectations in social studies. Students learn about the history of Texas and our nation as they engage in discussions of past and current events and civic duties. Students at each grade level are exposed

to a designated virtue. During morning announcements, the principal reminds students of moral principles such as respect, diligence, self-control, honesty, integrity and how to conduct themselves properly.

VVSE offers a three- and four-year-old pre-kindergarten (PK) program comprised of Spanish and English language arts, math, science, social studies, English as a second language, physical education and computer lab classes. Social and emotional well-being is addressed throughout all academic areas. The PK program prepares students for the rigors of primary school by positively impacting their academic performance. The PK curriculum is vertically aligned to the subsequent grade levels kindergarten through four. Students who have participated in the VVSE PK program are exposed to the basic prerequisite knowledge and skills to be better prepared for the next grade level and have demonstrated high levels of success, which is evident in ongoing assessment data.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Fine Arts program has the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) embedded into core-subject areas in the PK through fourth-grade curricula. Music is taught through rhythm, movement, and vocal intonation in the lower grade levels, while upper grade-level students continue those practices and move into creating rhythmic phrases through improvisation and composition. Students at all grade levels dramatize poems and curriculum-based stories while integrating music, creative movement, and visual components into their dramatic play. Art lessons include the identification of elements, such as line, shape, color, texture, and form, and integrate ideas drawn from the students' life experiences to create original works of art. PK through fourth-grade student displays at monthly parent meetings and daily activities demonstrate mastery of their arts, music, and fine arts learning. Moreover, campus and district challenges require demonstrations of students' visual arts models, drawings, paintings, and projects that express their artistic knowledge and strengths.

In Physical Education (PE), students from PK through fourth grade are actively engaged in daily exercises targeting TEKS objectives that help improve their level of physical fitness and health development. Students participate daily in structured and organized recess time that includes cooperative play centers. PE faculty present weekly health topics that include personal health, hygiene, and nutrition. Reading knowledge and skills are reinforced in PE class as students recite the alphabet and vowels during exercises. Math skills are incorporated into PE classes by using counting, skip counting, and reciting multiplication facts during daily warm-up drills. VVSE offers a series of programs that address physical and health development, such as health, nutrition presentations and sports camps and leagues that include gymnastics, basketball, flag football, track, and volleyball to engage student interest in sports and to improve their fine and gross physical-motor skills.

Technology is utilized in core content curriculum as a teaching and learning tool. Technology TEKS require the use of higher-order-thinking skills through the implementation and integration of technology applications. Students are actively involved in creating technology projects that are displayed at community events and school technology fairs. Students access a multitude of curriculum-aligned applications that supplement daily instruction. The campus is equipped with computer labs used by students from PK to fourth grade weekly as extensions to the classrooms. Teachers utilize interactive boards, digital projectors, document readers, computers, and various types of mobile devices to enhance the delivery of instruction daily. The use of interactive technology has been essential to spark student interest in classroom activities and extended summer programs, such as Kids in College, which promotes technology and career awareness.

The library is an additional resource that promotes literacy and is utilized as a crucial hub where students, staff, and parents gather to read literature and conduct research that addresses English Language Arts and Reading TEKS. The Tiger Star Reading program, which awards points for books read and motivates students to read regularly, is managed by the library. This program promotes literacy by motivating students to meet individual and school-wide goals. Students are excited about the program and work diligently to achieve and surpass designated reading goals every six weeks. Administrators work closely with library staff to make reading material readily available to students all day, every day. As students begin their day at VVSE and wait for their daily routines to begin, they have the opportunity to read in the library

accompanied by parents/guardians or to read as they wait by their classrooms. Staff on duty provide carts with reading materials and monitor that all students read. Students may also report to two labs made available to them for accessing online reading programs or for testing on material already read. Additionally, students are scheduled to attend the library once a week and reading lab during recess time. Campus-wide read-a-thons and after-school literacy nights are held regularly. Read Across America is celebrated every year with students participating in activities such as dressing up as a book character or reading their favorite books throughout the week. Reading for pleasure is encouraged and supported by having students and parents participate in programs offered by local businesses.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

VVSE uses a variety of instructional methods to enhance student learning. One instructional method used schoolwide at VVSE to strengthen student learning is the consistent display and discussion of content and language objectives. These clearly written, student-friendly objectives provide students with the understanding of skills and content to be covered. Teachers and staff make content and language objectives visible and available for all students. Objectives begin with clear, measurable goals and state the weekly skill for each subject. Teachers orally review their content and language objectives throughout all lessons, and students participate in the reading and explanation of the objectives as well. The content objective tells what students will learn, and the language objective explains how the students will learn and or demonstrate their mastery of the lesson through listening, speaking, reading, and/or writing. Comprehension of content and language objectives is crucial for all students in the understanding and mastery of daily instruction. This practice has shown to be effective in that exceptional and struggling students alike are able to maintain their focus and achieve lesson expectations.

Learning centers are utilized in classrooms across all grade levels. This approach relies heavily on student-centered instruction and makes use of hands-on, interactive, cooperative learning groups that target all learning styles. VVSE data have shown that use of learning centers leads to high achievement for all students. The centers are beneficial for diverse learners, since students have increased opportunities that allow for learning utilizing all cognitive styles. This approach permits teachers to responsively instruct individuals and assist small groups of students according to their needs.

The process of prescribing interventions begins with an extensive data item analysis conducted by campus staff. An action plan is devised to target specific concepts and to provide additional assistance to low-performing students. This plan is shared with parents to make them aware of promotion requirements, to set individual goals, and to prepare written agreements to help students improve their academic results. These student contracts have demonstrated to be a forceful approach in improving student achievement. Interventions are used to closely monitor students' academic progress and to set incremental goals to ensure high levels of student learning and achievement. Strategies include individually prescribed computer lessons, student mentoring, teacher mentoring, and administrator assistance in classrooms. The mentoring practice requires that a small group of third- and fourth-grade students be assigned to faculty in PK through second grades and auxiliary staff. This helps to ensure that everyone is held accountable for state assessment scores. Mentors meet with their students at least weekly to discuss progress and what needs to be done in order to achieve their goals. Mentoring students directly in this way has helped with improved test scores, as evidenced by the growth in each subsequent assessment. VVSE uses many tools and approaches to close the achievement gap. Teachers are assigned to team teach, whereby they work with individuals or small groups of children to focus on weak student performance areas. Team-teaching classes are held daily when necessary, and parent meetings are held periodically to discuss their children's progress. Parents attend reading, math and writing camps and participate along with their children in the learning centers. VVSE has experienced success, in no small measure, because all stakeholders do their part to help struggling students.

Experienced teachers in content areas assist with the tiered instruction during the Reading Intervention program and math team-teaching periods. Parents and teachers are members of committees who monitor progress and make educational decisions for students in RTI, 504, LPAC, and Special Education. Members meet periodically to determine the needs of at-risk students and recommend applicable programs, such as

tutoring, intervention and enrichment classes. Committees conference with classroom teachers regularly and together they use local and state assessment data to determine research-based services and assign lessons to improve students' skills.

The school uses a variety of assessment data to analyze the students' overall performance. These data include diagnostic exams, teacher-created progress tests, weekly and six-week assessments, released state assessments, benchmarks and various checklists. Moreover, the following are reviewed to gain more insight into student progress and needs: progress reports, report cards, daily attendance, student participation in tutorials and teacher observations. Administrators and teachers conduct thorough item-analysis of all assessment data to assure they are administering the appropriate instructional methods and interventions for student success.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Valley View South Elementary, promoting a positive climate and a nurturing culture is important to the success of its students, and students are empowered to make their own choices for personal and academic growth. The staff understands that celebrating students' successes will lead to increased student achievement. By providing incentives such as classroom participation points, "Tiger Bucks" reward tickets, or positive notes to parents and caregivers, students take on a competitive, but collegial, spirit. In addition to redeeming their reward tickets and points for a variety of items at the "Tiger Mall Store", academic success is also acknowledged and celebrated every six weeks during awards assemblies. Rewarding students for their hard work has proven to be an effective way to motivate students and increase academic engagement.

Communication with parents and the community is an integral element for the success of the students at VVSE. The administration, teachers, and staff use a communication application to connect with parents and students by sharing classroom performance photos, delivering messages, dispersing school announcements about upcoming events, and giving parents a glimpse into the day-to-day activities in their children's classrooms. Parents are also able to share their concerns and comments with staff using this application. Parents, teachers, and administrators take part in school celebrations such as the annual Fall Festival Costume Parade, Veteran's Day, Christmas Program, Día del Niño, Mother's Day, and Literacy Events as a way to unite the school and community.

The sense of belonging is an important part of the success that VVSE has achieved. The school provides a safe zone for students. They know that they may approach any school staff member for assistance. Administration provides a vehicle for students to reach out when they feel unwelcome, bullied, or threatened. Programs such as the Peer Assisted Leader Students (PALS) and the online anti-bullying initiative focus on students' social-emotional and academic growth.

Valley View South Elementary believes that meeting the needs of the faculty and supporting them throughout the school year will increase student achievement. Weekly meetings with administrators offer teachers opportunities to voice concerns, discuss student progress, curriculum needs and to be active participants in the decision-making process. These conversations create a positive environment in which teachers feel valued and appreciated. Activities such as hosting staff luncheons, issuing "Golden Tickets", treating the staff to "Spa Days", highlighting staff members in the "Weekly Tiger Spotlight", all serve to acknowledge their hard work.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

At Valley View South Elementary (VVSE), family and community engagement is crucial to student success and ongoing school improvement. The school year kicks off with "Round-Up," an event at which new students are invited into the VVSE family. As classes begin, parents have already visited their children's classrooms and connected with teachers, administrators and support staff at the "Meet the Teacher Night" held before the first day of school. At this event, parents and students take time to ask the questions they may have regarding classroom expectations and procedures, grading policies, teacher contact information, or they may voice any other concern. Establishing an open-door culture helps VVSE build relationships with parents and maintain student engagement.

Teachers also understand the importance of fostering a positive relationship with parents and the community. Throughout the year, they work alongside parents to build support systems for students. Teachers and administrators are always available for parent conferences or phone calls to address student concerns directly. Staff members have implemented various ways in which they have made communication with parents more accessible. Teachers also use an online communication application to connect with parents and students by sharing photos, videos, and messages throughout the instructional

day. It also allows parents and teachers to provide feedback and answer questions, even after school hours. Assessment results and daily grades, along with positive notes of students' progress and academic needs, are sent home weekly. Parents also have access to a parent portal that helps them monitor their children's grades and attendance.

VVSE promotes activities that help increase family and community involvement. As such, teachers and school administration take part in a "Walk for Success" event, which brings school personnel into the community by walking to students' homes and speaking with parents to establish a positive school-home relationship; these visits improve the school-community connection and lead to maximized students academic achievement. The campus also encourages students to read daily, so parents are invited to regularly visit the school library to read and check out books for their children. Additionally, parents are invited to participate in events such as the 16 de Septiembre Cultural Celebration, Red Ribbon Week, Fall Festival, Thanksgiving Feast of Sharing, Annual Christmas Posada, Texas Public School Week, Open House, Family and Community Engagement Meetings, PTO Nights, Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom and Grandparents Day.

The impact of family and community engagement activities on the academic success of VVSE students is evident through increased daily attendance, a more positive attitude toward learning, and improved communication among all stakeholders.

3. Professional Development:

Valley View South Elementary plans for ongoing and sustained professional development by reviewing the campus needs assessment, analyzing the previous year's student data, and updating the curricula to ensure alignment to the TEKS. The campus goal is to provide targeted professional development that builds strong and effective instructional leaders, both at the campus and classroom levels.

The main focus of professional development for administration is placed on effective school leadership and instruction, with the ultimate outcome of students continuing to achieve academic success. Administration trainings and mentoring include topics such as campus goals and expectations, review of data that focuses on improvement of instruction, empowering school leaders, school law and updated policies. Through the professional development administration receives, campus leaders are able to provide training that focuses on building staff capacity and improving student performance.

Campus administrators, experienced teachers, district specialists, local service centers and outside professional sources provide training on varied instructional techniques and content specifics related topics that teachers may use immediately in any classroom. Teachers are also afforded online training opportunities.

Due to the large population of English Language Learners (ELLs), VVSE devotes much professional development to integrate research-based activities in all content areas that engage ELL students. These strategies enable students to increase reading fluency, comprehension, and grammar and writing skills across the curriculum. Faculty attend trainings to target specific areas that focus on instructional strategies to help increase student scores. Also included in the campus-level professional development plans are several strategy camps and institutes designed to assist teachers to improve student performance. VVSE ensures that not only new teachers get the support and training they need, but that more experienced teachers continue to make improvements to their teaching methods. Professional development at VVSE focuses on teacher knowledge and skills to improve classroom instruction, which leads to higher student achievement.

Teachers engage and collaborate in horizontal alignment meetings to ensure they are targeting the educational needs at their particular grade levels. Specific content area trainings are held to create hands-on activities that differentiate instruction and target all learning styles. Integrating research-based activities that engage students through technology applications is essential in preparing these 21st-century learners. At VVSE, professional development activities result in improved instruction, increased student

achievement, and continuous school improvement.

4. School Leadership:

At Valley View South Elementary, the leadership philosophy is to challenge and support students to become productive citizens in their communities and the leaders of tomorrow. The school leadership team, which includes the Principal, Assistant Principal, the school Counselor and the Lead Teacher provide faculty with resources, materials, and appropriate professional development. The leadership team at VVSE works in unison to give all teachers, students, and staff a safe, well-structured environment that is conducive to learning by supporting their efforts to run the everyday classroom operations as smoothly as possible. This effort works because the team is dedicated to affording teachers the opportunity to deliver the high-quality instruction their students need to succeed.

The team also encourages input from teachers by directly involving them in the creation and implementation of curriculum and assessments and the desegregation of data through the use of action plans, monitoring sheets, and TEKS checklists. These actions, in turn, help teachers enhance their instructional approach to better differentiate for the academic needs of all students. Careful consideration for the special population students is taken when forming committees such as LPAC, RTI, 504, and Special Education to ensure that all necessary services and accommodations are provided to enhance student achievement. Careful and diligent planning by the VVSE leadership team ensures that the academic and emotional needs of all students will be addressed.

The administrative team sets the tone and creates an atmosphere where the students at VVSE are considered the most valuable stakeholders. Every morning the administration team welcomes the students, parents, teachers, and staff into the school with a friendly greeting. The team encourages parents to be part of their children's learning by actively participating in PTO assemblies, parent-teacher conferences, and various parent-student projects. The administration sends a clear message to parents that they are part of the VVSE team and vital to the overall success of their children's education. With parental support, teachers have a better understanding of students' backgrounds, experiences and prior knowledge, which, in turn, helps teachers develop appropriate lesson plans to make connections. The administration models teamwork by not only sharing responsibilities, but also by sharing the daily successes that impact students, teachers, and parents.

All supports provided by the leadership team have the explicit goal of helping students to become productive leaders of tomorrow.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Among the many best practices occurring at VVSE, the practice that has been most instrumental in the academic success of Valley View South Elementary is the open communication among all stakeholders.

The administrative team articulates campus goals on a regular basis. Administrators meet with all teachers weekly to review goals, student progress, best practices and suggested remedies for difficulties in student learning. During these meetings, teachers discuss their concerns with administrators, and they mutually agree upon how to move forward.

Horizontal- and vertical-alignment meetings are regularly conducted at VVSE. These meetings ensure that all teachers at each grade level are on the same page regarding the implementation of learning strategies. Furthermore, these meetings have proven to be a useful tool for teachers to share their own best practices to help students who are struggling with particular concepts. Teachers work with each other across grade levels as well, so they are familiar with expectations of student knowledge and skills from year to year, and no gaps arise in student learning. This communication among the teachers and staff has proven to be an essential practice to ensure consistency for all children as they pass from one grade level to the next.

Teachers have ongoing communication with parents by holding parent conferences and reaching out via available media. Individualized parent meetings held to discuss each student's assessment data appear to have the most significant impact on academics. When appropriate, interventions are considered and agreed upon during these meetings. When parents are unable to attend a scheduled meeting, teachers and administrators conduct home visits. The school notification system, campus website, and various student reports are used to inform parents of relevant information and campus events. Parents have opportunities to share concerns during the many school functions throughout the year and are empowered to express ideas; their recommendations are taken into account and implemented to improve campus procedures.

Students also have a role in the communication practice at VVSE. Staff members greet students as they walk in the hallways, and students have learned, in turn, to greet others respectfully. During class, teachers take the time to listen to students' needs and allow them to voice their opinions on content being covered. Students feel empowered to make learning their responsibility.

Established communication patterns with all key stakeholders give students the motivation and support needed to strive for success.