

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):
- 25 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 7 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 40 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	34	28	62
K	34	26	60
1	36	34	70
2	38	30	68
3	29	34	63
4	32	34	66
5	32	34	66
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	235	220	455

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
 - 0 % White
 - 1 % 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: 21%

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

The mobility rate at Cesar Chavez Elementary is over 15% due to the close proximity to the Mexican-American border and the high amount of migrant students that attend the school.

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	38
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	58
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	96
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	459
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.21
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	21

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 77 %
349 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: 455

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %
45 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>7</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>5</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>14</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>10</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: 8
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.	22
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	6
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.	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 21:1

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	97%	97%	96%	96%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 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 students with the necessary knowledge and skills to prepare them to be academically and socially college and career ready.

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

Cesar Chavez Elementary (CCE) is located 7 miles north of the Mexican border. The school was established in 1999 as the only school in the rural community of “Las Milpas.” Translated from Spanish, “Las Milpas” means the cornfields. CCE opened its doors in 1999 to serve students from the local migrant community. The school was appropriately named to honor the Mexican-American labor leader Cesar E. Chavez who used non-violent methods to fight for the rights of migrant farm workers in the United States. Today, Cesar Chavez Elementary strives to provide a quality education to many of the descendants of those same migrant families. Now as a suburban Title I school with a large Hispanic population, CCE students and families face many economic challenges. Many in the community are economically disadvantaged, live below the poverty line, and reside in subsidized housing. Not all students are as fortunate, some CCE students return to a home without running water, electricity, or food on the table. With a familial atmosphere, it is the goal of CCE to make the students feel safe and protected. In addition, various food programs that provide free breakfast, lunch, and dinner, ensure that the Chavez students get the nutrients they need to learn and grow. CCE houses both general education and a self-contained special education classroom. The campus serves 455 students ranging from prekindergarten to 5th grade. Of these students, 76.7% have been identified limited English proficient, 100% qualify for free or reduced lunch, and the majority have been identified as economically disadvantaged. Also, 94.4% of the students have been identified at risk of not graduating from high school. The student population consist of 99% Hispanic and 1% reporting other ethnic background.

The CCE staff is a family of teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators that are dedicated and committed to inspire and support each child who walks through their doors. They strive to embrace the philosophies of their namesake, Cesar E. Chavez. The students are taught at an early age the values of integrity, humility, service, dedication, patriotism, and respect for humanity. These values and traditions are evident in the milestones that CCE has accomplished over the years. It is a tradition to produce 21st century learners that are ready for college and the real world. One recent milestone was the implementation of the Student Spaceflight Experiment Program. Chavez was the first school in South Texas to be a part of this prestigious STEM program where students were actively engaged in real world science, resulting in their experiment being flown aboard the International Space Station. CCE continues to achieve greatness with the Learning Landscape where students are creating a sustainable school yard native habitat as an outdoor STEM classroom. CCE's leadership and dedication to create 21st century learners have opened the eyes of the district leaders and has helped lead the way for other schools to follow suit. CCE's commitment to excellence has allowed them to pilot many programs in the district and in Texas.

Cesar Chavez Elementary is a Dual Language Campus. Students are provided content area instruction in English and Spanish by highly qualified and certified bilingual teachers. The goal of the program is for the students to become bilingual, bicultural, and to be able to achieve a high degree of biliteracy and academic achievement in both languages.

The school offers a wide range of extracurricular programs to ensure that all students develop their full potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially, and culturally. Leadership is learned and put into action through the South Texas College Junior Ambassador Program, where students are taught how to be responsible leaders of their school. Students assume responsibility for their school and environment through the recycling and gardening club. Students are academically challenged through University Interscholastic League (UIL), chess, and technology club. Through the chess club, students learn about strategy and discipline. In partnership with the Boys & Girls Club and the City of Pharr, the in-house representative motivates students to physically challenge themselves to reach their full potential by encouraging them to participate in volleyball, basketball, soccer, softball, golf, and swimming. The technology club promotes a 21st century learning environment and provides opportunities for students to share and learn with others. Ballet Folklorico encourages students to gain pride and a deeper understanding of their Hispanic culture. The school offers other extracurricular programs for students including cheerleading, choir, and the Bluebonnet Book Club.

Cesar Chavez Elementary strives for success in all areas. Student are followed through their school careers

and showcased in the front of the school as Chavez alumni. The expectations are high, but the reward is great. CCE endeavors to produce 21st century leaders who will carry their community into the future.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) provide the foundation for the core curriculum at CCE. Teachers also implement with fidelity a common instructional framework (CIF) throughout the core curriculum areas. CIF is composed of six common instructional strategies: collaborative group work, writing to learn, scaffolding, questioning, classroom talk, and literacy groups. These strategies drive instructional practices at CCE and have led to its success in closing the achievement gaps.

The English language arts and reading curriculum is vertically aligned to the TEKS by embodying the nature of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking through the development of foundational language skills. Students apply their reading skills through comprehension, multiple genres, author's purpose, composition, and research. Student's literacy skills are strengthened through small group and individual instruction, novel reading, the use of Accelerated Reader, and CIF strategies. These elements create a powerful literacy culture within the school. Students maintain a reading journal where they exercise the CIF strategy of writing to learn in which they develop their ideas, critical thinking abilities, and writing skills. The reading journal is also used as formative assessment to help teachers identify strengths, weaknesses, and target areas that need improvement. CCE chose this curricular approach because it provides a balanced, comprehensive, TEKS-aligned curriculum using researched-based instructional strategies to ensure student success.

CCE's mathematics curriculum addresses the TEKS and is supplemented by the district's resources to facilitate an environment where students thrive. As early as prekindergarten, students demonstrate their understanding by applying mathematics to problems that arise in everyday life. Students apply the problem-solving model by analyzing information, formulating a plan, determining a solution, justifying the solution, and evaluating the problem-solving process. Teachers develop lessons designed on the principle of maintaining unique recurring methods and pedagogical beliefs for implementing effective instruction for all students. Students have multiple opportunities to practice new skills with partners or small groups using the CIF strategies. Students also show their understanding with formative assessment in the form of journal writing. This curricular approach was chosen because it is engaging, relevant, consistent, and provides enough time and instructional strategies so that all students can achieve high levels of learning.

CCE's science curriculum is vertically aligned with the TEKS to encompass instruction in physical, earth, and life sciences from prekindergarten through fifth grade. The curriculum includes planning and implementing investigations to construct testable explanations and predictions of natural phenomena using scientific processes, analyzing information, and using tools to collect and record data. Not only is the curriculum based on hands-on activities, but it includes applied research and problem-solving skills that are integrated throughout. With the use of CIF strategies, CCE focuses on meticulous questioning to understand the concept on an applied level. The students are prompted to ask "why" which encourages debate and justification of thinking. Student's show their understanding through argumentative reasoning, STEM experiments, and science journaling. Research presentations and targeted instructional strategies ensure a deep understanding of each concept and have proven student success. This curricular approach was chosen because the TEKS-based content, educational videos, and instructional strategies included capture the interest and attention of the students.

The social studies curriculum is taught in Spanish through integrated thematic units. The curriculum is TEKS-aligned to survey the history of the United States including the colonial period, the American Revolution, the U.S. Constitution, westward expansion, the Civil War, immigration, and industrialization. Students apply their knowledge by describing the cultural impact of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the nation. The librarian and teachers incorporate biographies, websites, historical fiction, newspapers with current events, and other supplementary resources to make learning relevant. CCE promotes civic learning and engagement to help advance academic learning by allowing students to participate in community projects. Every year, students volunteer in the Rio Reforestation where they help restore the ocelot habitat in the Lower Rio Grande Valley by planting hundreds of native seedlings. This

curricular approach was chosen to engage students in activities that illustrate how individuals, events, and ideas have modified communities and how they too can make a difference.

The preschool four-year-old program provides the fundamentals for learning and the building blocks to a more structured school environment. Students are exposed to phonemic awareness, introduced to foundational math skills, and actively develop their fine motor skills through strategically planned student-centered activities. The full day four-year-old program is aligned to the district curriculum and the state prekindergarten guidelines for language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The impact of early education is evident through results shown by the CIRCLE progress monitoring system administered in the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. This data collection allows teachers to target the skills students need to succeed in the primary grades by building a strong educational foundation.

CCE is committed to academic growth and advancing the skills of all students. By implementing the TEKS and incorporating the CIF strategies, CCE has found success because students are engaged in learning and are required to take an active role in their education.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Cesar Chavez Elementary, performing and visual arts play an integral part in the total development of students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. The music program is TEKS-aligned to target music literacy, creative expression, historical and cultural relevance, and critical evaluation. Once a week, students apply their music literacy through creative expression by singing, playing, reading, writing, and moving. Students learn and perform various repertoire of music in both formal and informal settings. The visual and performing arts incorporates the study of dance, theater, and other fine arts that empower students to explore ideas and expose them to unique experiences. Participation in Folklorico, the University Interscholastic League, and Destination Imagination allows students to build cultural awareness, communication skills, and higher order thinking through performance and theater. Building these abilities reinforces creativity, critical thinking, and social skills needed for college readiness and everyday life.

Emphasizing physical fitness, health, and nutrition for students in prekindergarten through fifth grade is very important at CCE. Through various activities and sports, students perform smooth combinations of fundamental locomotor skills such as running, jumping rope, and performing selected folk dances. With a TEKS-aligned physical fitness curriculum, students learn basic components such as strategies and rules of structured physical activities including games, sports, dance, and gymnastics four times a week. The strategic physical education curriculum develops positive social skills needed to work with others in physical activity settings. In health education, students acquire the information necessary to become healthy adults and learn about salubrious behaviors. The TEKS-based curriculum focuses on personal and interpersonal skills that the students need to promote individual, family, and community health. CCE, in collaboration with community partners, has developed a farm to table health and nutrition curriculum that helps students learn how to enhance and maintain personal health throughout their lifetime. The students grow their own vegetables in the learning landscape, opening the opportunity to gain an appreciation for vegetation, learn where their food comes from, and apply information from the food pyramid to make healthy choices.

Technology is an essential element of the curriculum and gives students in prekindergarten through fifth grade access to the online skills needed to become 21st century ready. Through the study of the six strands in technology applications, students use creative thinking and innovative processes to construct knowledge and develop products on a weekly basis within the classroom. Through daily planned instruction in the computer lab, students develop critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills by collecting, analyzing, and reporting digital information. In addition, internet-based programs target and support English language learners and struggling readers. These programs empower students to practice digital citizenship while using technology tools and resources. Through the study of technology operations, students learn technology related terms, concepts, and data input strategies. A campus integration technologist is also available to provide support for the students and teachers.

The school library media program promotes reading as a foundational skill for learning, personal growth,

and enjoyment for all students. Weekly visits to the library media center (LMC) play a key role in supporting and developing lifelong readers. The LMC strives to provide a wide range of literature and resources for all reading levels in both English and Spanish. The LMC has over 13,000 books available and more than 6,000 eBooks that students can check out for assignments or pleasure. The weekly visits are vital to the students who otherwise may not have access to visit a library outside of the school. Furthermore, the LMC connects students with real world writers. The LMC has had numerous author visits in recent years who have discussed their passion and love of literature and writing with the students.

CCE offers the district's Two Way Dual Language Enrichment Program (DLEP) to the general student population. This curriculum program is implemented in a way that empowers students in prekindergarten through fifth grade to become biliterate in English and Spanish. This means English language learners and Spanish language learners work side by side to help each other with the acquisition of social and academic language. Promoting the bilingual/bicultural competencies aligned with the TEKS through a 50/50 instructional model, enhances the student's proficiency in both languages. All staff helps with this endeavor by implementing the language of the day and by encouraging the students to do the same in all settings throughout the school. The practice of the DLEP prepares students with the necessary skills to become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural members of society.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Cesar Chavez Elementary believes in achieving success through innovation and excellence. To ensure that students are mastering the TEKS, teachers continuously reflect upon their instructional methods and interventions by collaboratively interpreting assessment data during their weekly CLC (Collaborative Learning Community) meetings. This approach has impacted their ability to close achievement gaps among English Language Learners, which is evident in the growth of their students.

The overview of the instructional approaches used to meet the individual needs of each student consists of utilizing resources that provide both a structured scope and sequence of the TEKS, as well as research-based instructional strategies. Technology plays a major role of how instruction is differentiated for students performing below and above grade level. The computer-based programs allow students above grade level to dive into more rigorous instruction while providing those students below grade level with reviews and reteaching of the skills. To build critical thinking and reach gifted students, teachers are encouraged to provide rigorous lessons that embed academic questioning techniques in daily lessons, enrichment classes, afterschool clubs, and project-based learning. Teachers embolden students to think outside the box and monitor their understanding while developing their projects. Opportunities are provided for students to generate questions that lead to further inquiry and discovery. The goal is to promote complex, higher-order thinking skills that will inspire students to connect their lessons to real world applications. These instructional strategies have proven repeatedly to increase student learning and the retention of high levels of achievement.

Universal instructional methods do not meet the needs of every student. As a result, CCE has established a method to help with intervention strategies for English Language Learners. Finding the right research-based intervention at the appropriate time has been a major focus of the Response to Intervention (RtI) team. RtI is a multi-tiered approach used to recognize and support students with specific educational or behavioral needs. The intervention process commences after universally screening all students early in the year and identifying those students in need. The RtI committee meets every six weeks to review and discuss the academic progress of those students. RtI meetings are also held to discuss Behavior Intervention Plans where strategies are devised to help reinforce positive behavior. The homeroom teacher supplies data gathered from various sources including district benchmarks, attendance records, teacher observations, report cards, previous STAAR scores, TPRI/Tejas LEE, and TELPAS results. During these meetings, a specific instructional plan with accommodations is created to meet the student's specific learning needs. To improve the skills of students performing below grade level, 30-45 minutes of targeted intervention is provided during the school day. Teachers working with these students implement a very systematic delivery of instruction at a level appropriate for the individual student. Teachers monitor and record the progress of each student to determine the rate of learning and the level of performance in order to close any achievement gaps.

The use of daily formative assessments, such as observations, questioning, exit tickets, journal responses, and kinesthetic assessments allows teachers to informally check for understanding. Other types of summative assessments, such as district benchmarks, reports, and student projects, are used to evaluate student proficiency and mastery of skills. The staff comes together during weekly CLC meetings to support one another by sharing ideas on instructional methods and strategies. They develop plans with expected rates of improvement and progress monitoring of the specific skills to measure students' growth. Students' progress is reviewed every six weeks to determine if the intervention is producing results, and if it needs to be modified or intensified.

The State of Texas of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessments are administered every year to determine student achievement of state standards. The STAAR provides data that aids in identifying gaps in performance between student populations. The data is compared to schools of similar demographics within the district, region, and state. When an achievement gap of ten or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of any subgroup is identified, the campus improvement plan is reviewed and revised. The staff works to ensure that the curriculum, instructional methods, interventions, assessments, and professional development are fixated on closing the achievement gaps.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

At Cesar Chavez Elementary, a safe and positive climate is established before the school year even begins. Every August, students are welcomed with a personal phone call inviting them to meet their teacher and see their classroom. This helps to instill the value of education and set the expectations for the school year. Academic growth and mastery of subjects are an integral part of the culture at CCE. Chavez Elementary does not just celebrate the students who meet academic expectations, but recognizes those students showing growth and that close their own personal achievement gap. Teachers include in the monthly calendar the celebrations that will take place every Friday to reward students from prekindergarten through fifth grade for academic and behavioral achievements. Some of the rewards include pizza parties, mini lock-ins, "booknics" (picnic with books), movie with popcorn, bubble fun, kite day, and ice cream day.

Through a variety of community service projects, the social and emotional needs of Chavez students are also met. Each year, CCE partakes in a myriad of programs in which all students and staff participate. Students make a difference in their community through reforestation efforts, habitat restoration, and recycling projects. Humanitarian service projects give an opportunity for students to open their hearts and help those that are less fortunate. Students come together to support projects including, Jump Rope for Heart, Thanksgiving can drive, and Hurricane Harvey Relief donations which provide communities with much needed resources. Additionally, students' emotional and social development is fostered through a variety of other activities, including dance, athletics, clubs, celebrations, and recognitions. The staff at CCE also models this altruistic behavior and comes together during the holiday season to purchase gifts and groceries for students and their siblings whose families are in need.

The administration at Cesar Chavez Elementary has a vision of creating a welcoming school environment that is based on collaboration, harmony, and mutual respect for all staff, students, and parents. Teachers flourish from knowing that all classrooms are provided with the latest technology, necessary resources, and administrative support. Teacher input is valued and always actively sought by campus leadership. CCE strives for a family atmosphere, creating an environment where teachers feel valued and appreciated. Teachers at Chavez are acknowledged throughout the year with unexpected surprises, such as breakfast cooked and served by the administration. They are also showered with gratitude during teacher appreciation week with small tokens of appreciation. All this creates optimal conditions in which teaching, and learning take place. This positive culture leads to a low teacher turn-over, providing a stable learning environment for all students.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Cesar Chavez Elementary is constantly looking for innovative and exciting ways to engage families and the community. CCE has noted the positive correlation that exists between community involvement and student success. In recent years, the school has focused on communicating through social outlets such as their school website, Facebook page, e-newsletters, and ClassDojo platform. Informed parents tend to be involved parents, and CCE is updating communication methods to relate to 21st century parents. CCE uses these social avenues to promote the positive things students are doing, their achievements, and upcoming school functions. Parents receive instant messages from teachers through the ClassDojo platform on a daily basis informing them of any student needs or progress. Teachers also set up phone or face-to-face conferences to discuss student achievements and challenges. The school website also provides online access to student grades and assignments. A monthly calendar is made available to remind parents of upcoming events. Additionally, CCE employs a school messenger phone system that enables the school to send messages to all parents regarding pertinent school information.

CCE recognizes family involvement as essential in educating students and preparing them for lifelong learning. Parents have consistently gone above and beyond to be a part of the school and part of their children's educational experience. Parents, grandparents, and members of the community volunteer at CCE daily, providing countless hours of support to enhance student learning. To reinforce family involvement

and encourage communication, the school holds numerous events and programs, such as Meet the Teacher, Open House, Million Fathers March, Pan Dulce with Grandparents, Mother's Day Program, Kite Day, Family Literacy Night, and book fairs. Community involvement also plays a significant role in keeping parents engaged. CCE has partnered with a local grocery chain to promote a healthier lifestyle by encouraging families to grow sustainable gardens in their own back yard. Also, the City of Pharr has pledged to keep low socioeconomic areas connected to the world by donating free Wi-Fi to twenty-five of their lowest income families who otherwise would not have access to internet.

To strengthen parental support and extend the learning of students in the home and community, CCE offers workshops, meetings, and trainings for families on a variety of academic and social issues such as behavior management through the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC is dedicated to promoting the education and welfare of students at CCE and provides parents with resource information for mental health counseling, food pantries, as well as medical and dental clinics to ensure all needs are met.

3. Professional Development:

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) Independent School District has rapidly become a state and national leader in creating more academic opportunities for all students by adequately preparing educators and administrators with the necessary tools. PSJA has led the way by partnering with Region One to become one of the first MegaByte districts in the region. MegaByte stands for Motivating Educator's Growth and Advancement. It is a cooperative service of Region One that enables the district to provide cost-effective solutions for professional learning. As a MegaByte district, PSJA has opened the door to a plethora of professional development opportunities for both administrators and educators by providing conferences, workshops, coursework, and resources that are TEKS-aligned and support student achievement.

Chavez Elementary also offers different professional development opportunities at a campus level that are aligned with academic standards and support school improvement. CCE begins each school year with professional development days that focus on reviewing the campus improvement plan, setting new goals, and making curriculum changes. Along with professional development days, teachers and administrators participate in a Collaborative Learning Community (CLC) each week. Through CLCs, they discuss lessons, TEKS, assessments, and any concerns they have about students. This time is utilized to problem-solve together and learn from each other. During CLCs, staff members often share strategies through modeling. CLCs encourage collaboration between teachers and administrators to achieve better results for students. The major focus at CCE is to build teacher capacity with the resources that are available, to build knowledge and confidence in effective teaching strategies, and to understand classroom and individual student data. All professional development aligns with the TEKS to support student achievement and school improvement. The school's professional development approach impacts the capacity of administrators by allowing them to recommend the best professional development available to teachers after analyzing prior student performance and identifying areas of need.

CCE has a professional learning goal of enhancing superior instructional practices by building abilities, skills, and expertise of school leaders and teachers to deliver more effective instruction to meet the needs of a variety of learners. To reach their goal, teachers focus on high expectations by emphasizing on student strengths and weaknesses, deep knowledge of curriculum, and excellent classroom teaching techniques. CCE offers professional development on a weekly basis to develop a deeper understanding of the TEKS, apply the common instructional framework (CIF) protocols, and to reinforce positive classroom management strategies. The weekly meetings, led by staff who demonstrate leadership, are engaging, interactive presentations, where new instructional strategies can be put into practice prior to implementing them in the classroom.

The staff at Chavez Elementary are dedicated, lifelong learners. Just as the students are expected to continue their education, CCE believes that teachers and administrators should also strive for professional growth through consistent and meaningful pedagogical opportunities.

4. School Leadership:

The democratic school leadership philosophy at Chavez Elementary is one that focuses on teamwork and collaboration. The leadership at CCE does not rest upon the shoulders of one individual, but rather upon a team of educators with a common goal of ensuring that all district policies, Title I programs, and resources focus on student success. There is also a high level of respect amongst colleagues throughout the campus. The staff has often been referred to as a family who does not hesitate to help when the need arises. As a result, every member is responsible for the academic growth and well-being of all students. For instance, it would not be uncommon to see the music teacher working with a group of students during intervention. The egalitarian climate and positive collaboration between teachers, has resulted in a reduction of staff turnover at CCE. The high retention of educators contributes to the students' overall confidence and comfort of attending school every day.

The principal at CCE is the administrative leader but empowers staff members to lead as a team. Furthermore, the principal believes in leading by example. He arrives early every day and leaves after the close of the day. He recognizes when teachers feel overwhelmed and to the best of his ability tries to negate this. The principal believes in the abilities of his staff and encourages them to take risks. At CCE, the leadership team consists of the principal, the assistant principal, and the counselor. The role of the assistant principal is to ensure that Title I and federal programs are implemented accordingly and that students who qualify for these programs are serviced. The counselor assists students with their personal and social development. She is also a crucial component in leading the response to intervention team and classifying students for 504. The administrative team gives teacher representatives from all grade levels the ability to weigh in on decisions that directly impact student achievement. Career pathway opportunities are provided to educators to ensure that all students have access to highly effective teachers. CCE has teachers who pursue leadership opportunities such as leading professional development, writing district curriculum, mentoring new teachers, and attending national conferences to better serve all students. These teachers work with the administrative team as early adopters of innovative ideas and initiatives on how to implement solutions to enhance the learning environment for all learners.

Operating with a democratic leadership model for several years, the principal has observed outstanding growth in the tone and culture of the entire staff. The most remarkable growth has been seen in the academic attitude of the students. Delegating leadership has had a dramatic effect upon the general happiness and satisfaction of the staff. CCE educators build relationships with families and community members, fostering a sense of belonging that keeps them at Chavez until they retire. All these benefits have resulted in Chavez Elementary becoming one of the top elementary schools in the district.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The main practice that makes Cesar Chavez Elementary successful is not academic or assessment related, but a social-emotional focus on providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children. The staff strives to create happy and healthy students who are successful in life. The nurturing environment fostered at CCE is evident throughout the school. Walking in through the doors, you will see educators warmly greeting students and monitoring to see if they have had their breakfast. You will also notice caring adults at children's eye-level taking a genuine interest in connecting with them.

The staff at CCE takes an undeniable interest in each and every student. They recognize that children are not a reflection of their behavior, and they are accepted and received with love and empathy. Improving school climate by increasing trust between students and staff is a priority before students can flourish. The school implements safety measures such as locked doors and visible building entrance check-ins. All staff must wear identification badges and any visitors entering the building must provide a valid ID. Cameras are also located inside and outside the building grounds for added security. CCE also invites local police officers to visit the campus regularly to build a caring and trusting relationship with students.

All members of the Chavez community play an integral role in creating a safe and nurturing environment that leads to the school's success. The school principal is a father figure for many of the students at CCE. It is not unusual to see him during recess playing soccer, throwing a football with the students, or reviewing multiplication facts in a fun way. At CCE, every staff member wears many hats, including the school nurse. She takes time out of her day to lead the morning announcements, assist in staff charity events, and organize certification trainings for the staff. Currently eight staff members have been certified for Heart Saver Pediatric First Aid CPR by the American Heart Association providing a safer school environment.

Overall, CCE believes that academic success and closing the achievement gap would not be possible without first providing an environment that makes students feel safe and secure. This practice of promoting a nurturing environment has proven successful year after year.