

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):
- 20 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 30 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	46	62	108
K	49	42	91
1	37	41	78
2	33	45	78
3	36	35	71
4	34	43	77
5	38	36	74
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	273	304	577

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 98 % 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: 18%

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

The reason for a high mobility rate at J. A. Kawas Elementary is due to the high number of migrant workers, homeless children, and children from low-income families.

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	55
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	53
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	108
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	596
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.18
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	18

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 62 %
358 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: 98 %
Total number students who qualify: 566

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
38 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>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>7</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>8</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: 6
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.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	5
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.	7

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 18:1

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%	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.

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.

J. A. Kawas Elementary is committed to setting high expectations for all learners. Through teamwork and dedication, the school strives to excel academically with its instructional focus on rigor and relevance.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

not applicable

PART III – SUMMARY

J. A. Kawas Elementary School (KES) is one of twenty elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District and services 577 students from PK-3 through 5th grade. The public elementary school is located in Laredo, Texas, a border town with a strong Mexican cultural influence and home to approximately 258,000 residents. As per the most current United States census, 95.6% of the Laredo population is Hispanic, 31.3% lives below the federal poverty level, and only 17.9% of high school graduates obtain a college degree. KES's current demographic makeup is 98% Hispanic students, 62% English language learners (ELLs), 98% economically disadvantaged, and 63% at-risk.

Students at the elementary school take the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), a state-mandated standardized test that assesses grade-level student knowledge and skills. As cited in the 2012-13 Texas Academic Progress Report (TAPR), STAAR results led KES to be identified as an Improvement Required (IR) school for failing to meet the targeted score of a 30 in Index II (Student Progress). In Index II, students must meet a projected growth standard set by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Scoring a 24, the elementary school fell short, entering IR status.

The faculty and staff at KES knew that change needed to occur if the campus was to meet state standards in the 2013-14 school year. Over the next four years, KES stakeholders worked diligently to make the necessary instructional adjustments to bring their goal to fruition. KES is extremely proud to say that, according to the most current 2016-17 TAPR, the school has increased its Index II score by 45 points to 73. Also, KES has earned all of the possible six Distinction Designations assigned to elementary schools by TEA, which include Academic Achievement in English Language Arts/Reading, Academic Achievement in Science, Academic Achievement in Mathematics, Top 25% Closing Performance Gaps, Top 25% Student Progress and Post-Secondary Readiness. Additionally, the elementary school has maintained an attendance rate of over 98% for the past six years.

KES has a common mission at the epicenter of its core values and traditions: The school is committed to setting high expectations for all learners. Through teamwork and dedication, the school strives to excel academically. KES provides dynamic educational opportunities with an instructional focus on rigor and relevance. In addition, heavy emphasis is placed on second-language acquisition, helping ELLs master skills through project-based learning and English as a Second Language methodologies. The campus is dedicated to creating successful graduates, life-long learners, and future productive citizens in a global society through exemplary teamwork and determination.

Instruction at KES begins promptly at 7:45 AM and concludes at 3:30 PM. One unique feature of the school is the campus-based initiative, "Armadillo Time", which was developed to close performance gaps. This initiative offers embedded interventions/enrichment blocks throughout the instructional day. Time is allocated to provide prescriptive instructional assistance/enhancement for students based on individual academic needs. As a Title I school, KES also offers after-school and Saturday tutorials for reading, math, science, and English language arts. All students who attend tutorials throughout the week receive supper through the district's Child Nutrition Program (CNP).

In the state of Texas, ELLs take the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), a tool used to determine student English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In an effort to close achievement gaps, KES developed a campus-based initiative titled "TELPAS Tuesdays". This initiative consists of a calendar providing weekly prompts based on various writing categories. In addition to monitoring student writing samples weekly, teachers use two checkpoints to rate student progress in English language acquisition. In the 2016-17 school year, 50 of the 257 students participating in the Bilingual Program at KES met TEA criteria to exit the program. Because of its success, "TELPAS Tuesdays" became a district-wide initiative, and KES was invited to present at a national bilingual conference, during which the school received a Congressional Certificate of Recognition.

In addition to preparing students academically, the school focuses on the emotional, social, physical, and cultural needs of all learners. Emotional needs are addressed during school assemblies, presented by the

counselor, on critical emotional issues such as bullying, self-harm, and testing anxiety. The counselor also manages social issues such as friendship and self-esteem in individual and classroom settings through anti-bullying presentations.

Various physical student needs are handled through multiple avenues, including presentations on hygiene and personal care provided by the school nurse. Also, the district's CNP provides daily snacks through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). Furthermore, the dedicated Physical Education staff promotes a healthy lifestyle through proper diet and daily exercise. Student cultural needs are addressed through school-wide celebrations including Día de la Independencia (Mexican Independence Day) and St. Patrick's Day. The emotional, social, physical, and cultural needs of all learners are of utmost importance at KES.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

KES courses are aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the state standards for Texas public schools from kindergarten to 12th grade. Incorporated into daily instruction are the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS), as well as the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), guidelines for English language development. Because the ELPS are so closely aligned with the TELPAS assessment, KES teachers use the Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs), developed by TEA, as a rubric to monitor and promote English language acquisition.

KES utilizes the Learning Educational Alignment Document (LEAD), the district's guide to the scope and sequence of the curriculum. The LEAD provides resources and incorporates the PLDs, as well as the 5E model of instruction, enabling students to extend their learning in the Engaging, Exploring, Explaining, Elaborating, and Evaluating phases. The implementation of the 5E model allows teachers to act mainly as facilitators. With the use of open-ended questions, real-life experiences, guided investigations, hands-on projects, and research, students gain a deep understanding of the topics covered during instruction.

In addition to the 5E Instructional Model, KES has adopted the Fundamental Five Framework. It encompasses: Framing the Lesson, Working in the Power Zone, Frequent Group/Purposeful Talk, Recognizing and Reinforcing, and Writing Critically. Such practices increase effective instruction, and promote learning and critical thinking skills. The students interact with peers in more meaningful ways, allowing them to succeed academically.

The English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curricula at KES are aligned to the TEKS and CCRS. The ELAR program provides students in kindergarten through 2nd grade with 120 minutes of reading/writing daily instruction, while students in grades 3rd through 5th receive 90 minutes. Through flexible groups and centers, the lessons incorporate the five components of reading, which include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. KES implements this balanced literacy approach to provide students with various opportunities to engage in literacy and to close the achievement gap. Through modeled, guided, and independent reading, lessons are focused on comprehension strategies. For example, a 1st grade teacher works with a small group of students and focuses on comprehension, while other students use listening, speaking, reading and writing skills at different centers.

KES teachers render quality and rigorous instruction in mathematics by providing tools that create and support analytical thinkers and problem solvers. The math curriculum follows the TEKS and CCRS. Students in kindergarten through 5th grade receive 65 minutes of math instruction every day. Teachers utilize small-group instruction, classroom manipulatives, math vocabulary development activities, and a variety of technology programs to reinforce what is taught. This approach allows for scaffolding of prior grade-level TEKS through small group instruction and the use of manipulatives to go from the concrete to the abstract. For instance, a 4th grade math teacher provides explicit instruction covering angles and geometric shapes with a small group of students. Meanwhile, other groups create angles using geoboards with rubber bands, measure angles with protractors, and use computer-based math programs.

Aligned to the TEKS and CCRS, the KES science instructional program provides a solid foundation for all students by using exploratory techniques. Through a daily 60-minute instruction incorporating the 5E Model, students are taught to investigate, create, hypothesize, and formulate various solutions to scientific problems. This method helps students think critically, research, and innovate. The school's STAAR science score was 99% passing last year. KES students visit the science lab weekly to work on hands-on activities and laboratory experiments, often integrating the use of technology. For example, a 5th grade class studying plant adaptations walks through a mangrove forest with virtual reality gear, enriching students understanding of the concepts covered in their science class.

The KES social studies curriculum establishes the foundation for all students to become responsible citizens in our society and follows the TEKS and CCRS. The 5E model engages students through critical thinking

applications and multiple interactive learning opportunities. It is project-based and allows for students to demonstrate their learning through performance-based assessments. The 30-minute daily lessons' goal is to ensure that students learn about contemporary and historical events through visual literacy and critical thinking skills in order to build basic concepts such as civic responsibility and tolerance. For example, a 2nd grade class keeps up with current events such as local city elections. Students then debate critical issues and hold mock elections.

The full-day KES preschool program provides a strong foundation for social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Differentiated instructional practices are aligned to the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. Progress monitoring assessment data is utilized to meet student needs. Preschool teachers engage in collaborative and vertical planning with Kindergarten through 3rd grade teachers. The KES Early Childhood Center (ECC) inspires students through learning centers and a print-rich environment. Core curriculum areas in ECC learning centers include Pretend/Play, ABC, Math, Creativity, Library, Writing, Science, Construction, and Technology. The main goal of the KES ECC is to provide students with opportunities for school readiness and ease their transition across grade levels. Research and evidence shows that early literacy acquirement is linked to an increase in educational achievement, social and emotional wellbeing, reduced juvenile and adult delinquency, and fewer grade-level retentions later on in life.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The KES fine arts curriculum adheres to the TEKS. It incorporates the study of dance, music, theater, and visual arts to express their individual talents. The artistic journey begins at pre-K and continues through 5th grade. This approach is utilized because it develops cognitive functioning, increases student academic achievement, and expands students' career opportunities. Through the integration of project-based learning thirty minutes a day, all students express themselves. For example, during the fourth six weeks, all students participate in the annual, citywide art contest in celebration of George Washington's Birthday. Students create artworks ranging from paintings to sculptures which are proudly displayed throughout the campus. Teachers also integrate role-play and theater into weekly lessons to reinforce concepts taught. For instance, ECC students have an entire learning center dedicated to dramatic play with themes that change weekly. Students dress up in costumes to role-play the job responsibilities of community helpers. The music program offered at KES follows the state standards which challenge, engage, and provide positive hands-on learning experiences for the students. The KES music curriculum transcends the classroom into an environment where individuality is appreciated, talents are nurtured, and ideas are valued. Students in grades pre-K3 through 5th attend music class once a week for 45 minutes, during which they learn movement, coordination, rhythm, counts, beats, and music theory. Music strengthens the core curriculum, adding a physical component by clapping, tapping, and playing instruments. For instance, math can be taught through music when a kindergarten class learns to count beats and hear patterns as they tap on drums and keep rhythm with their feet.

KES is dedicated to providing a strong Physical Education (PE), Health and Nutrition program. The PE department at KES addresses the TEKS in grades pre-K3 through 5th for 45 minutes daily by participating in moderate to vigorous physical activities. Through the PE TEKS, the students are taught the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle by being physically active. All KES students are required to complete the Texas Fitness Gram twice a year, which assesses students' cardio, flexibility, strength, and endurance. Data collected allows PE staff to create necessary drills and activities to ensure student growth for post-assessment. Upon completion, the state compiles and evaluates individual student activity levels and Body Mass Index. The PE coaches provide students opportunities for personal goal-setting, motor-skill development to reduce stress and anxiety, and increased personal fitness for 45 minutes daily. In addition to physical well-being, the KES instructional program also focuses efforts on health and nutrition. While teachers deliver the lessons on health aligned to the TEKS in their classrooms weekly, the campus also has the FFVP where students learn about and try all types of fruits and vegetables, many of which are native to our area. KES places value and importance on staying fit and eating healthy.

Technology drives the instructional program at KES and supports student learning. The students from kindergarten through 5th grade visit the computer labs twice a week for one hour to address the Technology Application TEKS. During computer lab time, students learn online features, basic hardware and software

applications, and internet safety and compliance. For example, the students in all grade levels learn how to use search engines to conduct research on specific topics for the science fair. The students also learn how to create video games using programming language software. Integrating technology into planning with teachers in Pre-K through 5th grade allows for increased opportunities for lesson mastery. Recently, the campus initiated the use of Virtual Reality (VR) gear that has proven to increase student engagement and learning by allowing the students to explore virtual environments. Teachers use the VR equipment to plan lessons that allow students to travel to other regions of the world, adding depth and complexity to their cognitive experience. For instance, a 4th grade class visited the 2018 Winter Olympics using VR headsets. The students use the VR expedition to internalize the experience, and then write critically about what they have seen. This technology allows students to experience different scenarios or situations that they would not be able to do otherwise. Keeping lessons technology-driven has been very effective for the students at KES.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Every student at KES brings with them a set of unique individual strengths and needs. This diversity makes it necessary to utilize various instructional methods and interventions to achieve academic goals, closing any achievement gaps that may exist within the system. KES teachers deliver rigorous and effective instruction to minimize the amount of students who require prescriptive interventions and maximize the numbers of those enrolled in enrichment courses.

KES utilizes various forms of instructional methods including Problem-Based Learning, where students work for an extended period of time to find a resolution to a problem, question, or challenge. The elementary also uses the Three-Tier Reading model, which allows students to be identified based on their Response to Intervention (RTI). In addition, KES utilizes the aforementioned instructional methods along with Project-Based Learning, the 5E Instructional Model, and the Fundamental Five, as means to address the individual needs of all students.

One of the most effective instructional methods used at KES is the concept of guided reading groups. Initially, students are administered a reading assessment using a reading diagnostic instrument. Based on results, students are grouped according to their reading capacity. Using Vygotsky's concept, Zone of Proximal Development, teachers utilize leveled reading books to guide students to be successful and maintain consistent growth. By delivering differentiated instruction, teachers help students reach subsequent reading levels while addressing their academic needs. This method allows all students to reach their highest potential, including those who read above grade level.

Initially designed to close performance gaps, the success of KES students can be attributed to the campus-based initiative, "Armadillo Time". Data is desegregated and analyzed to tier students based on academic needs in reading and math. One hour is allocated daily to provide prescriptive interventions/enrichment opportunities in a small-group setting. During this time, all human resources are assigned a group to target specific skills. Some groups are designed to challenge high achievers and Gifted and Talented students, while others work one-to-one with students in order to strengthen their foundational needs. No achievement gaps larger than 10% exist at KES; however, all sub-populations are addressed during "Armadillo Time" including At-Risk, Special Education, Bilingual, and Economically Disadvantaged.

Moreover, targeted technology programs are used to provide customized learning paths. Students who continue to struggle are assigned additional after-school and Saturday tutorials based on their identified needs. Data is continuously revisited and groupings are organized to ensure optimal benefits of the intervention/enrichment blocks. All evidence of groupings, skills covered, and resources to be utilized during tutorials and intervention/enrichment blocks must be submitted and reviewed weekly. The process is monitored to ensure fidelity and optimize efficacy. These techniques are used throughout the year and are vast contributors to the ability of KES to close performance gaps.

The alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is crucial to prepare students to achieve academically. Various types of assessments are implemented and results are analyzed carefully to improve student performance. For example, the instructional leadership team looks at reading diagnostic and progress

monitoring scores to tier students. In addition, formative and summative assessments such as Curriculum Based Assessments, Benchmarks, TELPAS, and the STAAR are also used to drive groupings and decide which resources best benefit each student. For instance, a kindergarten teacher may look at different forms of data, including the Texas Primary Reading Inventory, as well as running records. The teacher then uses the information to provide prescriptive small-group instruction. Observation, anecdotal notes, and other informal assessments are used to monitor student progress and performance. The ultimate goal is to improve student learning and campus-wide success.

To ensure the effectiveness of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments, KES developed a unique strategy called “Failure Prevention Documentation”. In an effort to ensure all struggling learners are given due process, teachers are required to exhaust all resources and instructional strategies available for students to be academically successful. Every three weeks, all student progress is monitored and any student at-risk of failing any subject must have a failure prevention packet. Teachers must provide evidence of parent conferences, counselor referrals, re-teaching/retesting of difficult concepts, and monitoring of student attendance. After the documentation has been reviewed, the RTI process ensues if necessary. The alignment of instructional methods, interventions, and assessments are key at KES.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

KES promotes a love for learning in a safe and nurturing environment and addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of students and teachers. KES staff believes that through teamwork and dedication, teachers provide dynamic educational opportunities with an instructional focus on rigor and relevance. By setting high expectations, KES focuses on creating successful graduates, lifelong learners, and future productive citizens. KES teachers believe that challenging students academically is key to accomplishing their mission. Many student organizations that support academic excellence exist on campus including the National Elementary Honor Society, Chess Club, Technology/Robotics, Spelling Bee, Future Scientists Club, and the University Interscholastic League. These organizations and ideologies create a culture that supports academic growth.

Aside from perpetuating a strong academic culture, KES also emphasizes the importance of social and emotional growth through participation in extracurricular activities from pre-K through 5th grade. Many students engage in social activities including cheerleading, volleyball, basketball, cross country, and flag football. These students not only learn to socialize with their peers, but they learn the value of collaboration and teamwork through emotional avenues such as sportsmanship and school pride. In addition, other organizations available that create a social and emotional haven for students include the Bully Busters, Guitar Club, and the Drama/Poetry Club. All organizational achievements, albeit academic, emotional or social accolades, are displayed throughout the campus to encourage a sense of belonging and pride.

To promote teachers' professional growth, KES faculty attends out-of-district and in-district's monthly staff development training/workshops. Additionally, teachers participate in weekly meetings to be kept updated on campus data and pertinent information. KES expresses value for its faculty and staff with various celebrations such as Christmas Posadas and Thanksgiving luncheons. In addition, during "Teacher Appreciation Week," KES provides staff with daily gifts and meals. During this week, teachers can expect spa time during their off period or a parade around the school celebrating their accomplishments. Furthermore, KES creates an environment where teachers are valued and supported. Administration is always available to provide support for teachers in their times of need. Staff is always welcome to communicate both academic and personal concerns with administration at any time. Teachers also fill out yearly surveys on how to improve school climate and culture.

KES prides itself on ensuring that every student and staff member is self-empowered in the school community. Every student and teacher at KES is treated as an essential part of the campus. The success of KES can be attributed to the positive environment in the school community. For example, everyone participates in school pep-rallies to celebrate hard-work.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

An "open-door policy" has a completely different meaning at KES and family/community members are always welcome as it promotes student success. The constant influx of visitors is proof of the parental involvement and participation at campus events and activities. Simply put, there is always something fun and exciting happening at KES. Whether it is a Christmas Program, Spring/Fall Festival, or a school talent show, parents are a constant and essential part of the KES family. In fact, KES Parental Involvement Program has increased by 50% over the last 5 years. With over 90 volunteers, KES parents and community members hold a strong presence in the campus.

However, coming to see their child shine is not the only reason parents step foot on campus. They participate in personal development opportunities including English, arts and craft, technology, parenting, or GED classes. These courses allow caretakers to hone their parenting skills, partake in personal development, and help to teach them a trade or a skill that will enrich their talents and abilities. Perhaps the most influential strategy of parental involvement is creating opportunities for parents to learn alongside their children through sessions geared toward best practices in the home. In order for KES to have student

success and school improvement, the school holds report card nights, open houses, monthly parent meetings, and family reading nights, among others. These events provide varied opportunities to reinforce the importance and love of education.

KES enjoys a variety of partnerships with many members of the community and civic organizations. These entities are influential in shaping the future of students through activities including Career Day, mentoring, and Red Ribbon Week presentations. KES recognizes the importance of the social and emotional development of its students. Local counseling and mental health agencies play a crucial role in assisting students who suffer hardships and setbacks or who have specific individual needs.

Many students participate in activities that help benefit the less fortunate. KES students are seen caroling, reading to the elderly, organizing food drives for the local homeless/animal shelters, and donating their time/resources to other nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, students help to raise awareness and advocate for important causes such as Epilepsy/Autism Awareness, and Child Abuse Prevention. Parents and community members are aware of ongoing events and academic successes of students at the campus through various platforms including Twitter, Facebook, School Messenger, and the school marquee. One thing is for certain: parental and community involvement is in full force at KES, making a huge contribution to campus success.

3. Professional Development:

Year-round, KES teachers and administrators attend district and regional professional development opportunities that impact and strengthen the delivery of the lessons by focusing on a broad range of topics including best practices and data-driven decision-making. Teachers attend trainings and academies to target specific campus needs such as vertical alignment, content area expertise, and instructional strategies to effectively incorporate the TEKS. For example, the teachers attend make-and-take sessions to create supplemental aids for ELL and special education students. KES teachers provide rigorous and relevant instruction aligned to the TEKS and ELPS through the 5E Model, differentiated instruction, and the Fundamental 5. KES understands the importance of continuous improvement and closing the achievement gap.

KES has a Professional Development Committee (PDC) which is composed of key personnel including administration, a counselor, and an instructional specialist, as well as representatives from each grade level. This committee meets weekly to discuss strengths and school challenges based on data and student needs. Specific areas of focus are identified and PD opportunities are created to address strategies to be utilized during daily instruction. Strategies and initiatives are then implemented and monitored, and feedback is provided to all stakeholders. The PDC then revisits the effectiveness of program implementation and makes adjustments as needed; creating a systematic approach and a cohesive process that identifies school challenges and develops prescriptive strategies to address those needs.

Embedded at the core of PD is the usage of technology integration to enhance student learning opportunities and engagement. KES believes that in an evolving technology-driven world, it is imperative that educators remain current with the most updated technology resources to make learning relevant. One approach utilized is the use of the campus technology trainer who helps teachers learn to use various web-based platforms. In addition, teachers are required to complete a minimum of 12 hours of technology PD a year, through web-based PD or hands-on trainings. The use of technology allows students to remain engaged through online communication and interaction, as well as the integration of technology in the classroom.

It is evident that the cohesive PD program at KES directly influences school improvement and students' success. Moreover, PD activities guide staff to reach their full capacity and is geared towards continuous improvement. The PD program at KES impacts teachers by immersing them in the content they teach and provides research-based knowledge about how students learn. All stakeholders maintain PD as a priority aligned with the ultimate campus goal, which is student achievement.

4. School Leadership:

The KES leadership philosophy is the belief in the creation of a school community of leaders who assume a leadership role, making them accountable for student success. The principal acts as a facilitator, highly encouraging and allowing teachers and other professionals to develop leadership skills that are crucial to any successful campus. At the right hand of the principal sits the Campus Educational Improvement Council (CEIC) composed of vital members such as the assistant principal, instructional specialist, school counselor, librarian, head teachers, parents, and community leaders. The CEIC oversees the utilization of data to drive all decision-making and ensures that all stakeholders are represented.

At the forefront stands the KES principal, actively facilitating, monitoring, encouraging, and empowering the school community. Furthermore, the educational leader, along with their team, oversees all programs, policies, relationships, and resources. More specifically, the principal provides guidance and feedback to every employee. For example, at the beginning of each school year, the principal conferences with every employee to discuss expectations and set goals. Conferences are scheduled throughout the year to monitor goal attainment and make any necessary adjustments. These conferences allow employees to set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals (SMART goals). In addition, monitoring the progress towards these goals allows all employees to grow professionally. The principal is readily accessible and approachable, whether the task involves meeting with parents, conferencing with students, providing feedback to teachers, or cultivating future leaders with the ultimate goal of student achievement in mind. The principal promotes collaborative problem solving and open communication between teachers; collects, analyzes, and uses data to identify weaknesses; uses data to identify and plan for needed changes in the current instructional program; implements and monitors the school improvement plan; and uses systems thinking to establish a clear focus on attaining student achievement goals.

Along with the principal, the KES core-leadership team is composed of the assistant principal and the instructional specialist. The assistant principal provides ongoing support and feedback to stakeholders. Moreover, the assistant principal monitors the effectiveness of key programs such as school safety and discipline. The instructional specialist monitors educational programs and mentors teachers on research-based instructional strategies. Another responsibility of the instructional specialist is to monitor reports from diagnostics, running records, and computer-based programs. The Core Leadership team works collaboratively to oversee instruction and progress monitor all programs and initiatives on campus. The team meets daily to debrief on school operations and discuss any concerns. More structured meetings are held weekly, or as needed, to desegregate data and develop plans of action if necessary. The roles of the KES core-leadership team are dynamic and members are highly cross-trained to ensure that the school operations run effectively and efficiently. Ultimately, all KES key players share the responsibility of campus improvement and student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Educators, parents, and community members involved at KES understand the undeniable link between maintaining high attendance rates and student academic performance. Student reading skills and grades improve when students come to school daily. Increased attendance rates benefit student academics and affect accountability. In addition, students who attend school regularly feel more connected to a community, develop important social skills and friendships, and are significantly more likely to graduate from high school. Therefore, the most important practice in achieving student success at KES is instilling a culture of high attendance expectations.

KES has effective systems in place to assist with attendance rates. Student absences are reported to the attendance team, consisting of the principal, assistant principal, attendance clerk, truant officer, and available personnel. An attempt is made to contact the parent by phone; however, when this attempt fails, the attendance clerk and administration will conduct home visits to get the students to school. The truant officer follows up by visiting truant families and those with chronic absenteeism must conference with administration.

KES administration provides incentives in order to promote perfect attendance. At the end of every six weeks, students with perfect attendance receive a medal and enter a drawing for prizes including MP3 players and other small electronic devices. Classes with the highest attendance rates receive extra recess. Local establishments like The Children’s Museum provide perfect attendance coupons, and at the end of each year, students with perfect attendance are recognized with a trophy during the awards ceremony and entered in a drawing to win bigger prizes, such as game consoles or tablets.

KES teachers also understand the importance of attendance and its effects on closing performance gaps. A culture of high attendance expectations exists with the ultimate goal of a 99% daily attendance rate. At KES, a “Data Room” displays attendance rates and various other information linked to student performance. Teachers are able to analyze data based on six weeks percentages, grade level percentages, and comparisons between school years. Teachers take ownership and see how their attendance rates affect the big picture and understand the importance for all students to be in school. KES students also understand the importance of attendance. As they enter the school, the first thing they see is a banner that reads, “Don’t let your education slip away, Come to school every day.” As per the most current TAPR, KES has an attendance rate of 98.3%. This is an easy task when students love going to school.