

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	70	74	144
K	28	22	50
1	35	31	66
2	22	45	67
3	29	23	52
4	33	30	63
5	28	27	55
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	245	252	497

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: 38%

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

The school’s mobility rate is 38% because the school is on the boundary of two neighboring school districts and minutes from Mexico. The school also serves a significant migrant population.

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	51
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	92
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	143
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	372
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.38
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	38

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 72 %
356 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: 497

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
31 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>6</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>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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.	7
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
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 20:1

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.

We believe that all children should develop an understanding of the past and identification with the present to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Carmen Anaya Elementary School is located in one of the most disadvantaged areas of south Texas. The school is in the City of Pharr, five miles from the Texas-Mexican border of Hidalgo County in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). Carmen Anaya Elementary serves the area of Las Milpas (Spanish for cornfields) which was once considered a “colonia,” or informal housing community. The history of Carmen Anaya Elementary begins when migrants established Las Milpas during the first wave of migration in the 1960s. Conditions in the area were unsuitable for living. Residents had no access to utilities or street lighting. Unpaved roads made it difficult for students to get to school when it rained. In the 1980s, Carmen Anaya, a Las Milpas resident, began the statewide fight for the dignity of her community and other colonias. Through Valley Interfaith (a church-based organization), Carmen Anaya was instrumental in passing the Colonia Bill in 1989 which improved the standard of living in the area. The City of Pharr eventually annexed Las Milpas. In 2013, the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District (PSJA-ISD) renamed South Pharr Elementary School (est. 2007) to Carmen Anaya Elementary School in honor of her legacy. Since being renamed, the school has received many accolades and carries on the fight for dignity that Carmen Anaya started. It is the philosophy of Carmen Anaya Elementary staff that educating children to become competent, responsible and ethical members of society will continue to lead change in the Las Milpas community.

Many Carmen Anaya Elementary families still live in poverty, and the majority of students’ parents have a high school diploma or less. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), Pharr has higher-than-average unemployment, and Hidalgo County residents earn 30% less than average American workers. Currently the school serves 497 students, up 32% from last year. According to campus demographic reports, 99% of the students are Hispanic and 1% are White. The school services 100% Economically Disadvantaged students, 72% English Language Learners, 6% Special Education students, roughly 10% Migrant students, and roughly 90% At-Risk students. The school’s mobility rate is 38% because the school is on the boundary of two neighboring school districts and minutes from Mexico.

Despite the disadvantages that Carmen Anaya Elementary students face, the school has risen from “Focus” school to “achievement gap closing” school in four years. This continues to be the biggest milestone for the school. In 2017, Carmen Anaya Elementary scored passing percentages of 91 in Reading, 95 in Mathematics, 94 in Writing, and 95 in Science on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. Carmen Anaya Elementary met standard on the 2017 Texas Accountability Rating. The school achieved another milestone in 2017 when it was awarded all six possible State Distinction Designations. Both the school and the community celebrate these achievements.

Carmen Anaya Elementary has a strong tradition of involving the students in the community to model good citizenship. For example, every year students participate in community service and civic events at Jones Box Park, the new Research and Development Center, and the Vannie E. Cook Cancer Center. The school also has a tradition of beautifying community areas. In cooperation with the Las Milpas Garden Club, students and staff plant trees in the community and around the school every year. The most important tradition at the school is Carmen Anaya Day. Every October, the students along with the Anaya family, parents and community remember Carmen Anaya’s legacy in a celebration of her life. These traditions ground Carmen Anaya Elementary as an integral member of the community.

The school implements several key strategies that encourage academic growth, emotional development, social development, physical growth, and cultural awareness. The staff’s goal is to teach the “whole child” and challenge students to reach their full potential. The school motivates student academic growth extrinsically with an incentivized, leveled reading program and intrinsically by connecting all core curricula to real-world experiences. Carmen Anaya Elementary further challenges all students to become biliterate in English and Spanish by implementing a dual-language program. Teachers encourage socioemotional development by frequently rewarding positive student behaviors. Daily guidance lessons are supplemented with Good Choice Celebrations, the Drug Free Family Picnic, and the Power to Be You Rally. Fostering physical growth, the school challenges all students to engage in moderate-to-vigorous activities for 45-minutes daily on rotation and offers after-school sports. To address issues of diabetes and obesity, the school recently emphasized nutrition as part of its wellness program which introduces all students to snacks of fresh

fruit and vegetables through a 2016-17 Department of Agriculture grant. Carmen Anaya Elementary challenges students to develop a culturally-informed understanding of themselves and the world. The school library develops intercultural sensitivity by offering culturally diverse literature. In core subjects, the school selects material that represents all students' cultures.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Carmen Anaya Elementary School implements the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District (PSJA-ISD) curriculum to prepare students as competent civic leaders. The PSJA-ISD curriculum graduates students “College Ready, College Connected, and College Complete.” Curricular objectives align with learning standards like the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), and state-mandated tests like the STAAR. For each core subject, teachers follow PSJA-ISD’s curriculum which includes a scope and sequence that spirals tested standards and comprehensively assesses students. School teachers work together in Collaborative Learning Communities (CLCs) to plan interdisciplinary, aligned lessons that leverage data-driven practices with school resources to engage students and empower them to master content. Teachers’ curricular approaches have been closing the achievement gap in all core areas at Carmen Anaya Elementary.

The language arts curriculum contains comprehensive but challenging lessons in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Lessons were designed for English and Spanish language learners. Carmen Anaya Elementary staff chose a curricular approach in language arts that emphasizes student accountability with frequent opportunities for feedback and intervention. The advantage of this curriculum is that it meets the needs of all varied instructional levels that exist in one classroom. In lower grades, students master foundational skills like phonemic awareness, decoding words, and sight-word recognition through literacy centers. These skills are developed in upper grades as students work with leveled expository texts and narratives to accentuate text features and cultivate vocabulary. Across all classrooms, read-alouds engage students, nurture a love for reading, and increase comprehension. Carmen Anaya Elementary finds student conferencing and peer review indispensable to building students’ capacity as young authors. Teachers differentiate instruction by using results of frequent diagnostic and formative language arts assessments to form small, flexible groups of students with similar needs. This keeps students accountable for acquiring the reading and writing skills needed to be responsible producers and consumers of all genres, thus closing the learning gap.

Carmen Anaya Elementary’s science curriculum targets scientific process skills and conceptual knowledge of physics, earth sciences, and ecology in alignment with state standards. The teachers approach elementary science as a process of inquiry that engages students in hands-on discovery. To fortify foundational skills, students are taught contextualized vocabulary and key concepts that they discover in the science lab and on school grounds. In the science lab, students keep journals to track learning and complete lab reports that build procedural skills. The annual Science Fair engages all students to explore their inquiries about topics beyond the scope and sequence. Students consider the civic implications of scientific discovery in the school garden and compost area, where they learn about environmental stewardship. Students curate both the garden and the compost area as outdoor classrooms. Students matriculate to middle school with a firm conceptual foundation in science that enables them to attain high levels of academic achievement.

Teachers approach the mathematics curriculum with a problem-solving focus to teach content knowledge and skills mastery. Teachers engage students with math manipulatives like base ten blocks, math counters, and tangrams in all grade levels. This approach advances learning in foundational skills of numeracy, number operations, place value, fractions, and problem solving. In lower grades, teachers use concrete models to build student skills while scaffolding student experiences toward problem solving applications. In a similar way, upper grades emphasize advanced operations, decimal place value and fractions with strategic use of manipulatives to ground abstract skills in engaging experiences. Applying skills to problem solving empowers students’ algebraic reasoning, problem solving strategies and data analysis. Teachers ensure students attain high levels of achievement in math by challenging them to apply all math TEKS to solve complex problems.

The Carmen Anaya Elementary social studies curriculum emphasizes civic engagement by introducing students to themes in history to build an individual sense of how to participate in a democratic society. Students use leveled informational texts to build vocabulary, learn how to decipher maps, and conduct

independent research. Hands-on projects, student-centered lessons, and interactive activities engage the students in understanding how to be responsible citizens. Teachers strive to make social studies personal for students and craft lessons that address the history of holidays like September 11th, Martin Luther King Day, and Mexican Independence Day. Beyond the classroom, students acquire fundamental skills in social studies through campaigning and voting in Student Council elections, annually researching local history about Carmen Anaya and contributing historical narratives to the Dia de los Muertos altar. Carmen Anaya Elementary students' rigorous application of knowledge in a relevant, real-world setting promotes academic achievement in other areas.

Carmen Anaya Elementary's early childhood (EC) program includes math, literacy, science, and social studies for three and four year-olds. For enrichment, all EC students attend library, computer lab, music class, and gymnasium on a weekly basis. Teachers review formative and summative assessment data during CLCs to identify gaps in alignment of Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines to the TEKS. The early childhood teachers collaborate across grade levels to remediate gaps and build skills in numeracy and literacy. EC student's proficiency in reading is sustained after completion of the early childhood program, as measured by a reading inventory assessment in kindergarten through third grade. The EC program also targets foundational math skills, which has significantly increased mastery in the areas of algebraic reasoning and number operations as measured by local assessments. Students who participate in the school's EC program also acculturate faster to school routines and expectations in kindergarten.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Carmen Anaya Elementary School has a long-standing commitment to educating the whole child. The school's curriculum is designed to help students develop intellectually, emotionally, aesthetically, physically, and socially. Carmen Anaya Elementary staff encourages students to become engaged learners and responsible active citizens. In each grade level the teachers challenge students to help them achieve academic and intellectual competencies. The Carmen Anaya Elementary curriculum also focuses on music and performing arts, physical education, technology, library, and media.

The arts serve as a critical outlet for creative expression at Carmen Anaya Elementary. Through the music and performing arts program, children are exposed to means of expressions that capture their unique talents and allow them to showcase abilities beyond core academics. Students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade participate in music and performing arts lessons for 90 minutes every week. In lower grades, students focus on foundational skills in music like counting beats. In upper grades, students practice with guitars, recorders, and percussion instruments as they learn to read and play music. Achievement in the arts supports the development of cross-curricular skills, such as creative thinking, time management, teamwork, and effective communication. All teachers work closely with the school's music teacher to design lessons that reinforce TEKS through an engaging, multisensory experience. For example, when students count beats and rhythms, they practice fractions and fine motor skills. The music teacher introduces students to pitch and sound energy which supplements science standards. Students apply poetry reading strategies to understand lyrics. Students reap the academic benefits of the school's fine arts program through after school activities like Music Memory, Art Club and Choir. Students exhibit their talents through art in the school hallways, during the annual school play and at nearly every school and community event where the Student Choir performs. The arts at Carmen Anaya Elementary contribute to student ownership of the school culture.

The goal of the Carmen Anaya Elementary School physical education program is to provide students with the knowledge and skills to live a long, healthy life. Through active participation in physical activities and sports, students foster an appreciation for personal fitness and other social skills vital to becoming healthy, productive members of the community. Each lesson is carefully designed to maximize the amount of time students are engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activities. Carmen Anaya Elementary students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade attend 135 minutes a week in physical education classes and many participate in the city's after school intramural sports program. Students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade are administered fitness tests to determine proficiency in the physical education TEKS. Another way to expose students to healthy living is through Carmen Anaya Elementary's healthy snack initiative where teachers introduce students to a variety of fruits and vegetables. The school places an emphasis on its physical education program due to growing research that indicates that vigorous physical activity leads to

better cognition and academic performance (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015). By connecting physical education skills to academic content, students apply their learning in developmentally appropriate settings. The school's physical education teachers embed core content and skills within their lessons by planning with classroom teachers.

The Carmen Anaya Elementary Library and Media Center is the hub for literacy, technology, and multimedia initiatives on campus. The library provides computers and smart devices for student use and over 12,000 library materials which include audiovisuals, teacher resources, and e-books. All pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students and teachers visit the library for thirty minutes once a week on a flexible schedule. Students may also access the library's resources during open circulation before and after school. Through the library, students have unique opportunities to interact with guest authors, bring stories to life and develop literacy skills using engaging activities aligned to the TEKS. The library restructured its tiered reading program, and, as a result, over 90% of third through fifth grade students have demonstrated mastery in reading skills as indicated by STAAR.

The school's technology plan incorporates the use of resources that enhance acquisition of the Texas Technology Applications standards. Students select resources like online databases to access, navigate and evaluate informational technology. Teachers also introduce students to safe searching practices and online etiquette. The school's technology initiatives further impart valuable 21st century skills by using robotics kits, coding programs, and educational applications (apps) to drive student collaboration, communication and critical thinking.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

All Carmen Anaya Elementary staff employ best pedagogical practices to effect student outcomes in the classroom. These instructional approaches include classroom talk, collaborative groups, literacy circles, scaffolding, and think-pair-share. Students are also able to reference story maps, picture writing, word walls and anchor charts posted in classrooms to support high levels of learning. One successful schoolwide tool for reading is the Figure 19 graphic organizer that includes: text features, genre, sensory imagery, inferencing, summarizing, and reading connections to self, text, and world.

Carmen Anaya Elementary challenges all students to reach their full potential. Teachers apply specific interventions to respond to unique student needs along the learning continuum. If students perform consistently low on diagnostic and summative assessments, the school initiates a tiered Response to Intervention Plan (RTI) that enables additional school support. The RTI Committee meets regularly to monitor student progress. The committee is made up of the parent, counselor, administrator and the classroom teacher. The RTI Committee also determines whether to exit a student from the RTI Program or request a Full Individual Evaluation (FIE) to rule out a learning disability. Once a student has been identified as a student with a learning disability, they qualify for either inclusion or pull-out support. The school's special education staff and the classroom teacher tailor an individualized education plan (IEP) for each student. For English Language Learners (ELL), teachers follow the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model including the use of realia to contextualize vocabulary and the use of multimedia sensory experiences to increase comprehension. Because all ELL students are at different proficiency levels in language development, teachers are intentional about second language acquisition. Students that are at the beginning levels of language proficiency receive more language-embedded support than students that are at the more advanced levels of language proficiency. Like all other populations at Carmen Anaya Elementary, the Gifted and Talented (GT) students' needs also must be addressed. Teachers attend annual trainings to gain valuable expertise in challenging GT students. Through higher-level questioning and project-based applications of content, all GT students are individually challenged. These efforts ensure all Carmen Anaya Elementary students achieve their highest potential.

Teachers drive instruction with student achievement data. Data is reviewed to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum, programs, and instructional practices. Teachers make data-informed decisions about curriculum, programs, and instruction to ensure fidelity to student learning. Carmen Anaya Elementary staff uses a variety of formal and informal assessments to track student progress. During CLCs, teachers discuss results of weekly tests, benchmarks, and progress monitoring to adjust instructional practices. For example,

teachers determine flexible student groups based on benchmark quintile reports and reteach low-scoring standards based on TEKS performance results. Student data is also used to identify weak objectives so that teachers spiral TEKS within the scope and sequence of the weekly lesson. Additional assessment tools include computer program-based reports, pre-kindergarten progress monitoring instruments, TELPAS, reading inventory assessment results, and STAAR data. Teachers use this information to identify areas of focus for parent-teacher conferences and to determine weekly tutoring groups. These practices keep instruction responsive to student achievement. As interventions are applied, teachers confirm effectiveness of instruction to guarantee that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Currently, Carmen Anaya Elementary has a gap in achievement between test scores of all students and the test scores of the Special Education population in the areas of reading and math. To close this achievement gap, teachers identify the areas of concern for each child and prescribe a learning pathway to ensure mastery of the learning. If the areas of concern are different from what was discussed at the most recent Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee Meeting, the Special Education and classroom teachers revisit the students' IEPs to modify instructional decisions. The Special Education and classroom teachers also identify supplemental aids that structure students' understanding of assessed content and skills. Students are exposed to supplemental aids early in the school year so that they become familiar with the aids and utilize them during lessons.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Carmen Anaya Elementary staff executes activities that engage and motivate students in a positive environment before and after school hours by offering enrichment activities that support students' academic, social, and emotional growth. The school offers reinforcement classes after school and on Saturdays to close the achievement gap. To further foster a positive learning environment, each teacher mentors specific children in need and builds their confidence to tackle any challenges they may encounter. The Mentor & Mentee (M&Ms) program gives students an open door and safe space to express themselves and their concerns. Teachers also extend social and emotional support to students during activities like Art Club, Technology Club, Girl and Boy Scouts, University Interscholastic League (UIL), and emotional support groups. Carmen Anaya Elementary staff make every effort to ensure that all students feel valued and supported.

School and community partnerships reinforce a strong culture of learning where students apply their knowledge to real world scenarios. In conjunction with the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, students apply science concepts to environmental stewardship by planting community gardens and identifying local wildlife. The school's collaboration with the City of Pharr has fostered a sense of wellbeing among students and their families as they participate in athletic leagues and nutrition classes.

In order to motivate students, teachers incentivize student progress with in-class rewards systems based on cumulative data reports in core subjects. At the end of each marking period, awards assemblies and pep rallies are held to celebrate student achievements and motivate them to continue attaining high goals. Students look forward to awards for honor roll, perfect attendance, reading, physical education, and music.

Carmen Anaya Elementary has a strong collaborative culture that makes teachers feel valued and supported. Climate surveys and weekly meetings allow staff to discuss school goals and initiatives as well as monitor the culture of the school. This gives teachers an opportunity to play an active role in student success by voicing their opinions or concerns to the school administration. Because of this concerted effort, climate survey results indicate that teachers felt supported by administration. During the school year, staff are also provided with an array of incentives including small gifts, notes of encouragement, extended lunches, staff dinners, and a "Stress-Relief Day." Every week, staff members present a traveling trophy called the Golden Longhorn Award to their peers who demonstrate "Excellence in Education." Because the school values and supports its staff, teachers look forward to coming to work each morning, making Carmen Anaya Elementary a positive learning environment.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Carmen Anaya Elementary engages families and the community in schoolwide events throughout the year to support student academic success and strengthen students' confidence. Literacy events like Family Picnics, Granola with Grandparents, Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, and the Million Father March also invest in the school's academic program and encourage family reading. Most importantly, every six weeks at the awards assembly, the school invites parents to celebrate their children's success in attendance, core academics, music, and physical education. Since implementing these initiatives five years ago, the school has consistently seen significant growth in all academic areas based on STAAR results.

Carmen Anaya Elementary has strong communication ties with parents and the community. Through phone calls, social media outlets, parent notices, and monthly Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, parents are informed of the school's events and student progress. Additionally, the campus parent educator holds monthly Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Meetings, where ideas and suggestions are communicated to parents in order to help their child at home. Annual events such as Parent Nights, Curriculum Night, Meet the Teacher Night, and Open House provide teachers and parents the opportunity to discuss student progress. Because of these activities, parents have become more involved on campus and more informed about how to support their children academically. The school also communicates student performance with

the community through social media outlets and online platforms. School milestones and student achievements are shared on the school website which is referenced in all official correspondences with community members. The school also invites community members to all informational meetings and school celebrations where they receive updates on student performance.

Early on, Carmen Anaya Elementary staff instills a sense of civic responsibility in all students. The school undertakes several community service projects throughout the year to transform students into community leaders. The student council's involvement in the yearly trip to visit the cancer patients at the Vannie E. Cook Cancer Center (McAllen, Texas) has become a tradition and a valuable experience for the students. Carmen Anaya Elementary students organize the annual Canned Food Drive where students collect food items and donate to needy families as well as to the local food pantry. Furthermore, the Student Council hosts a breakfast for local city leaders and school board members, where students ask the guests questions about their lives and political careers. The school also works with a local Harley Davidson motorcycle club, which supports the campus' efforts to ensure that all children have a backpack and school supplies they need to be successful. Additionally, the school has partnered across state lines with the Rotary Club of Gwinnett Sunrise to install a peace pole as a community fixture that promotes a message of peace and diversity within the student body. The school's annual Career Fair brings many local businesses and city officials to the campus to talk about their careers. Through these activities, the students feel empowered to make a difference in the community.

3. Professional Development:

The Carmen Anaya Elementary Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) outlines an exceptional process for prioritizing professional development. Campus administrators analyze trends in student and teacher data to identify academic areas of concern, gaps in student learning, and teachers in need of additional support. Through attending prescribed campus, district and state professional development, teachers and administrators build capacity to impact student outcomes. This cohesive professional development plan is consistently revisited, prioritized and monitored by the campus Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) Committee.

In the 2012-2013 school year, Carmen Anaya Elementary had one of the largest averaged achievement gaps in reading and math among all Texas schools, identifying it as a "Focus" campus. As a result, the school has consistently invested in its reading and math professional development program to close achievement gaps. To address gaps in reading and math, all teachers attend local training sessions with research-oriented consultants every six weeks. During this time, teachers not only learn innovative, TEKS-aligned best practices but also review the curriculum and activities they will implement over the marking period.

As part of being a Focus school, teachers and administrators were required to evaluate trends in the school's previous state testing data. Administration determined that a lack of teacher capacity stymied student achievement. Following this insight, the school continues to build teacher capacity with several on and off campus trainings. Administration selects trainings that target teachers' familiarity with the instructional process, best pedagogical practices and level of content. Furthermore, administration provides opportunities for all staff to attend other sessions hosted by the district office and the regional education service center. At these trainings, teachers acquire the practice they need to instruct with fidelity, while administrators learn how to monitor implementation of new instructional strategies and processes.

Curriculum-based training in the core areas is vital to the alignment of instruction to the TEKS. After each session, teachers critically evaluate training content as a grade level to determine its effectiveness in addressing academic standards. During CLCs teachers collaborate to determine when and how new strategies will be implemented. As a follow-up, administrators meet privately with each teacher to review instructional practices and feedback from formal and informal observations. This process enhances existing lessons and ensures that all instructional activities are rigorously aligned to state standards.

4. School Leadership:

Carmen Anaya Elementary School's leadership philosophy is that a solutions-oriented chain of command can best predict and prevent rather than react and repair issues on campus. From the administrative team to the individual teachers, the fundamental decision-making criterion for all campus leaders is, "How will it help the kids?"

The school's leadership success depends on clear division of responsibility. Self-contained teachers are responsible for the bulk of school day instructional decisions and have flexibility to adjust schedules to fit student needs. All teachers take leadership positions on school committees that address particular operational aspects of the academic year like Good Choice Celebrations, Fall Festival and grant writing. Each grade level has a chairperson who is responsible for leading data-based instructional conversations during CLCs and serves as a liaison for administration. For decisions that require administrative guidance or behavioral intervention, teachers and chairpersons speak with the Counselor or Assistant Principal. Teachers have open lines of communication with specialists like the Librarian, Special Education teacher or Parent Educator for assistance as it pertains to their expertise. As the face of the school, the principal facilitates partnerships with the community and city leaders, staff, parents and any other organizations that become part of the Carmen Anaya Elementary family. Biweekly staff meetings ensure all team members have a direct say in the school's programs and decisions.

Campus leadership ensures all stakeholders feel a sense of ownership for the school's policies, programs, relationships and resources. The school implements district policies and adjusts its campus policies for the sake of the learning environment. For instance, the school implements a uniform policy to eliminate distracting affiliations based on clothing. Teachers and administration exhibit leadership with a "no exceptions" approach to the uniform policy, while at the same time offering financial assistance for families unable to afford the uniforms. At the beginning of each year, all staff meet to discuss and approve changes to the student code of conduct. The Carmen Anaya Elementary leadership team addresses potential issues on campus before they become a problem. For example, teachers and administration work tirelessly to track student attendance and tardiness, implementing the Attendance Recovery Program so students never miss instructional time. The same is true with fads like trading cards, which the school decided to ban in the first instance they interfered with student learning. The relationships among teachers, administration, parents, students, and the broader community ensure holistic accountability for student success. Those relationships are maintained through events like the Breakfast of Champions, holiday socials and appreciation events. Decisions are made to purchase resources that are aligned to the curriculum. Teachers collaborate with administration to check out resources such as content skill reinforcement books to address grade level concerns for student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Carmen Anaya Elementary staff strives to develop competent, responsible, and ethical members of the Las Milpas community. The Good Choice Celebration has been the most instrumental practice in the success of all students at the school. Every marking period, students who have made good academic and behavioral choices attend an activity on or off campus to reward their decisions. Past activities have included field trips to local parks, kickball tournaments, movies with snacks and other exciting, enriching experiences. Students look forward to the Good Choice Celebrations, and it motivates them to excel in all areas, including academic and character development.

The Good Choice Celebration holds students accountable to consistent rules across the campus. Teachers as well as administrators hold high expectations in every aspect of the students' development. Teachers use the Good Choice Celebration to ensure that 100% of their students turn in homework, attain reading goals, complete in-class assignments and maintain a positive attitude in their everyday interactions. Those expectations are clarified each morning during announcements when students recite the Carmen Anaya Elementary School Pledge and commit themselves to making good choices. The pledge includes a promise to be responsible for what they achieve every day and to demonstrate respect for themselves and others. The Good Choice Committee, which is comprised of staff from all grade levels, agrees upon the criteria to determine eligibility for the celebration. This cross-campus consistency enables students to make predictable behavioral decisions for which they know the outcomes. With clear expectations for student behavior, all staff can be fair and keep all students accountable for actions on and off campus.

Students have risen to the high expectations set forth in the Good Choice Celebration. This translates to the classroom where the responsibility to succeed is embedded in everyday lessons and activities. Students understand this responsibility and have pushed themselves to mature academically, socially, and emotionally. The achievement gap that the school once faced has narrowed over the years because of the development of consistent expectations for student behavior. Just as students set goals for their good behavior, they set and achieve academic goals with the support of all staff. Even when students make bad choices, the staff supports them through redirection guidance that builds students' capacity to succeed to their fullest potential. Carmen Anaya Elementary staff understands that when students succeed, the entire campus community benefits.