



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) 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
  - 4 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 28 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	54	65	119
K	47	43	90
1	53	46	99
2	38	51	89
3	39	43	82
4	43	42	85
5	37	28	65
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
<b>Total Students</b>	311	318	629

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 100 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 5%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	15
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	30
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	637
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 64 %  
403 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: 629

8. Students receiving special education services: 9 %  
55 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>11</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>18</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>14</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>8</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</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: 11
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	30
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	14
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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.

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	96%	96%
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 2018.

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

ZES provides diversified educational experiences for all students so that they may be prepared to meet the demands of living in today's complex society.

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**

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H. B. Zachry Elementary School (ZES) is located in Laredo, Texas, a border town known as the “Gateway City” since it is the nation’s largest inland port of entry into Mexico. ZES is one of twenty elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District (LISD) and serves 629 students from PK3 through 5th grade. The most recent United States Census shows Laredo at a population of 260,654, of which 95.4% are Hispanic, 65.8% are high school graduates, 17.9% have a college degree, and the poverty level is 30.6%. ZES’s demographic makeup is 99.68% Hispanic, 64% English Learners (EL), 96% Economically Disadvantaged, and 69.3% At-Risk.

Built in 1977, ZES represented the fulfillment of many dreams and substantial planning by LISD and the benefactor. He donated not only the land but also a variety of supplies and equipment to promote better education and opportunities for the students attending the southside school. The campus’ dilapidated conditions and outdated equipment posed a challenge for the students, faculty, and staff, so the district proposed to build a new school. In 2015, ZES moved into a 90,000 square-foot, two-story, state-of-the-art, energy-efficient facility, designed to accommodate 950 students. The new building not only met the needs of students, faculty, and staff but also boosted morale, influencing overall student academic achievement.

At ZES, a culture of high expectations is non-negotiable for faculty, staff, and students. The philosophy is to educate all students effectively regardless of differences in students’ interests, capabilities, and learning styles. ZES commits to empowering the students for the choices, challenges, and demands of the 21st century. A tradition at ZES is the daily reciting of the Learner’s Creed. This custom promotes a passion for learning and instills confidence in their academic ability. The school’s motto, “Determined to Believe, Achieve, and Succeed!” supports the school philosophy and creed. These beliefs and high expectations coupled with dedicated, well-trained teachers and staff contribute to ZES’s yearly academic success.

Teachers follow the LISD curriculum that aligns to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Students’ strengths and weaknesses aid in the design of prescriptive lessons that promote academic growth. Small group interventions are part of the daily schedule to enhance learning. In addition, ZES hires tutors in Kindergarten through 5th grade that work with small groups to individualize instruction and increase academic success. ZES’s students have overcome language acquisition deficiencies through rigorous listening, speaking, writing, and reading lessons created by the district to increase performance on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). After-school tutorials offer students extra academic support three times a week. Super Saturday tutorials allow teachers to provide prescriptive lessons using an in-depth approach to address specific needs.

Despite the diverse social economic and learning challenges faced by ZES, in 2018, it earned five academic Distinction Designations assigned to elementary schools by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), which include Academic Achievement in English Language Arts/Reading, Academic Achievement in Science, Top 25% Comparative Closing the Gaps, Top 25% Student Progress, and Top 25% Post-Secondary Readiness. The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores obtained in the academic areas of Reading (92%), Math (93%), Science (96%), and Writing (85%), and excellent scores in the domains of Student Achievement (86), School Progress-Part A (83), School Progress-Part B (91), and Closing the Gaps (100), earned ZES an “A” rating from TEA.

Besides preparing students academically, the school focuses on the emotional, social, physical, and cultural aspects as well. The counselor assists in the emotional well-being of students. She addresses crucial issues such as bullying, self-harm, family issues, and testing anxieties through individual counseling sessions. She also addresses social issues such as friendship, conflicts, and self-esteem during classroom presentations, school assemblies, and mediation. The counselor’s intervention along with the support of community agencies and programs such as Child Adolescent and Parent Services (CAPS), People with Ideas of Love, Liberty, Acceptance, and Respect (PILLAR) empower students to solve problems when faced with adversity.

ZES ensures the physical well-being of the students through presentations on hygiene and personal care

provided by the school nurse. Community agencies along with the local health department contribute to our students' health needs. In addition, the Physical Education (PE) Department personnel advocate healthy lifestyles through daily exercise and well-planned lessons that promote a proper diet. Moreover, students take part in a variety of school-sponsored sports such as volleyball, basketball, track, and flag football to enhance physical strength and health.

ZES addresses cultural awareness through activities and many school-wide presentations such as Grandparent's Day, Mother's Day, and the Christmas Program. Also, teachers commemorate students' heritage by organizing activities for the 16-de septiembre celebration (Mexican Independence Day). Teachers explain that this holiday is similar to the Fourth of July holiday celebrated in the United States. A unique tradition at ZES is the "Around the World Day" where students learn about different countries, their attire, foods, customs, and landmarks.

Overall, at ZES students are prepared academically, emotionally, socially, physically, and culturally to become lifelong learners who will succeed in the local and global community.

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

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

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

ZES's English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curriculum aligns to the TEKS and the College Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). This rigorous curriculum and academic standards prepare students for college from a young age. ZES incorporates the state's English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) in the daily delivery of instruction. These standards increase English language development by guiding teachers in making lessons linguistically accommodated with the student's level of English language proficiency to support the TELPAS assessment. This assessment requires that every student's English proficiency increases each year by one level.

The ELAR program for Kindergarten through 2nd grade consists of 120 minutes of reading and writing instruction every day whereas 3rd through 5th grade consists of 95 minutes. Incorporated into the timeframe is a 30-minute daily intervention/enrichment block. In Kindergarten through 2nd grade, the curriculum focuses on the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students engage in a balanced literacy approach through flexible groups and centers to help close the achievement gaps. Through modeled, guided, and independent reading strategies, comprehension increases. For example, in 1st grade, a teacher addresses comprehension through small group instruction. The teacher conducts guided reading in a small group, while the other students work on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in independent centers. She uses a direct instructional approach to model reading using a daily read-aloud of authentic text. Genre-based reading instruction occurs daily in 3rd through 5th grade. The teacher teaches skills through specific strategies that support comprehension. Other materials used to enhance reading include novels, poetry reading, drama, and expository texts. An emphasis on vocabulary to develop comprehension occurs daily. Through progress monitoring, ZES ensures the mastery of daily instruction. Teachers then use this data to design learner-centered lessons that address strengths or weaknesses to increase learning.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

The math curriculum aligns to the TEKS and CCRS. Students in Kindergarten through 5th grade receive 65 minutes of challenging math instruction every day. Vertical alignment to plan for instructional gaps across the grade levels takes place every week throughout the school year. ZES provides a relevant and rigorous math curriculum that creates independent thinkers. Students learn skills that prepare them to be problem solvers in everyday life. First, teachers introduce concepts in small groups using manipulatives and games to enhance learning and improve skill acquisition and retention. Small group instruction, a focused approach, supports instruction and differentiation through exploration, practice, and remediation. Teachers address basic math skills every day in all grade levels to ensure mastery, as these are essential for future learning. In addition, math relationships using real-world applications to bridge the concrete to the abstract are critical to learning. For example, when teaching fractions to 2nd grade students, they use a paper to illustrate the fractional parts through multiple folds and then illustrate each section with the fraction to reinforce the concept. Students use prior knowledge and make connections between concepts to understand math problems. Mathematics reference charts, various graphic organizers, and manipulatives support and scaffold instruction in addition to differentiating it. Students can break down the problem and solve it with ease using these aids. For example, 4th grade students learning angles use rubber bands to make them on geoboards. Then they use protractors to measure the angles formed on the boards.

At ZES, tests and district made assessments measure student academic performance every week. Progress monitoring identifies patterns of difficulty or misunderstandings. Teachers and administrators analyze the data gathered from the progress monitoring or assessments to determine the need for intervention, tutorials, or provide a rigorous plan of action.

#### **1c. Science:**

The science curriculum aligns to the TEKS and CCRS. In Kindergarten through 5th grade, the concept of science is a journey of discovery. Students learn the life cycle of plants and animals, the water cycle, and other science skills. Throughout the school year, hands-on and inquisitive exploration activities are essential to academic success and to a solid science foundation. Teachers use pictures, posters, anchor charts, and videos to introduce key vocabulary words. Students continue to deepen their understanding of science through lessons and experiments designed to build and enhance their knowledge. Students have access to a state-of-the-art Science Lab where they learn science facts by experimenting with many materials that react in different ways. Countless opportunities to observe, measure, predict, and explain occur when engaged in science lessons. Students experiment with static electricity, the different states of matter, and insect and rock collections. For example, the students may take a nature walk to help them learn about their environment. While walking, they collect rocks to take back to the lab for classification. These experiences help facilitate participation in ZES's Annual Science Fair. Students from Kindergarten through 5th grade participate in this annual event and create science projects, using the scientific method previously learned in class.

A tradition at ZES is "MAD Scientist Day". Teachers dedicate this day to reviewing the science curriculum learned throughout the six weeks. They reinforce Earth, Life, and Physical Science Curriculum on this special day. Each teacher prepares a hands-on activity or experiment depending on the grade level to secure an understanding of the skills previously taught.

Science is a vital part of the core curriculum, and its importance is evident throughout the grade levels. Teachers plan engaging and meaningful lessons, thus encouraging the students to become active participants in their learning.

#### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

ZES's social studies curriculum aligns to the TEKS and CCRS. Teachers provide 30 minutes of daily instruction for Kindergarten through 5th grade. The social studies TEKS build the foundation of concepts and generalizations through the strands that include History, Geography, Economics, Government, Citizenship, and Culture. Unique to our school is a school-wide event, entitled "Around the World Day". In this instructional event, each classroom selects a country and presents information such as geographic location, population, traditions, attire, and cuisine. The students receive a passport to travel "Around the World". They get the passport stamped upon entering a country. An example of a classroom presentation entails selecting a country such as Italy. The students and teachers decorate their classroom with Italian décor, and they dress in traditional Italian attire. The student presentations focus on Italian traditions and provide the audience with samples of Italian cuisine.

In 3rd through 5th grade, students learn about Texas and United States History. Students learn about the civic duty of serving in a jury by taking part in the distinct activity entitled "Classroom in the Courtroom". The students travel and visit a local courtroom to see a mock trial. Students serve as junior court officers or as jurors who will decide whether the accused is guilty or not guilty. Other students vote as the Court of Public Opinion. Regardless of the role assigned, students learn how the law works, the importance of obeying it, and the consequences of violating it. These social studies activities teach our students to learn respect and dignity in order to exhibit good citizenship qualities within the community.

At ZES, students apply the foundational skills needed to become responsible local, national, and global citizens. It is essential for students to respect individual and group identities as we live in a multicultural and diverse world.

#### **1e. For secondary schools:**

#### **1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:**

ZES provides a full day, Early Childhood Program to three- and four-year-old students. Teachers provide a high quality, research-based core curriculum through centers that target language, communication, math,

science, social studies, and social and emotional skills. Teachers increase language acquisition through daily language and phonological awareness activities. The students learn to distinguish and manipulate sounds as they relate to the spoken and written word. The relationship between sound and print is crucial, as it is the foundation for reading. Phonological awareness skills align with the TEKS as they support school readiness and influence success in the primary grades. To ensure the alignment between early childhood and K through 3rd grade academic standards, collaborative and vertical planning occurs every week.

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

The music program at ZES aligns to the Fine Arts TEKS. It services Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. The sessions range from 30 minutes for Pre-Kindergarten to 45 minutes for Kindergarten through 5th grade. The TEKS based music curriculum provides a quality vocal and instrumental instructional program. Movement, coordination, rhythm, count, and beats are part of the music program too. The student's collaborative use of technology, core curriculum content, and social skills impact each music lesson. Additionally, students have the opportunity to join the ZES choir, a 50-member club. They take part in a variety of campus activities and represent the school in district and civic events. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms incorporate the Fine Arts program into the daily schedule. Teachers integrate role-playing and theater into the weekly lessons to reinforce the unit of the week. For example, if the unit of the week is about community helpers, teachers provide students with costumes and props and encourage them to pick the outfit of their choice. The students have fun dressing up and imagining themselves in these important roles.

ZES provides a strong PE, Health and Nutrition Program that aligns to the TEKS and CCRS. Students engage in physical education for 45 minutes a day from Kindergarten through 5th grade. The PE curriculum encourages healthy lifestyles through daily physical activities to decrease obesity and promote eating habits for healthy bodies and minds. Students enjoy partaking in physical aerobic activities, such as playing basketball, soccer, or dancing two to three times a week for twenty to thirty minutes. In addition, ZES students participate in a fitness program, twice a year that assesses student cardio, flexibility, strength, and endurance. It is the goal of this assessment to monitor student growth in the aforementioned traits. At ZES, students learn that to maintain a healthy lifestyle, one must engage in daily physical activities and maintain a proper diet. By applying this mentality in their daily lives, they experience success both in and out of the classroom.

ZES's teachers and students have adopted the integration of technology in Kindergarten through 5th grade that aligns to the TEKS and CCRS. ZES's teachers use iPads, Mimio Teach bars, document cameras, interactive whiteboards, augmented reality, virtual reality, and computers daily to support instruction. Long-distance learning provides a unique opportunity for students to go on virtual field trips, connect, and interact with different authors at least once per six weeks. Using technology in the classroom increases lesson engagement and provides immediate feedback. Augmented and virtual reality allows 3rd through 5th grade students to have an immersive learning experience at least once per six weeks in all content areas. Teachers create e-portfolios with many applications to monitor student growth and provide quick results. For example, teachers collect student data, including writing samples, listening, and speaking files to support the TELPAS assessment. In addition, ZES has a coding club that helps students improve their critical thinking skills and become problem solvers. ZES ensures the integration of technology and provides Kindergarten through 5th grade with the advantage of learning from meaningful lessons that promote skills needed for a 21st century career.

At ZES, the library adheres to the School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines for Texas adopted by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC). The library program curriculum aligns to the TEKS. The librarian provides classes to Pre-Kindergarten for 20 minutes and Kindergarten through 5th grade for 45 minutes once a week. The librarian plans and collaborates with teachers as library classes are an extension of the classroom and support instruction. The library program promotes reading as an essential skill for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment. An example of an activity that supports student academic learning in the library is the annual reading fair project. In this competitive project, students present information on their favorite book and must include story elements such as characters, setting, plot, problem, and resolution. The library is the heart of the school where students and teachers love to visit because it is

aesthetically appealing, functional, and staff members make everyone feel welcomed. The layout lends itself to accommodate a variety of spaces for different activities and learning needs whether individual, small group, or whole class. ZES's library print and digital collection meet the "Distinguished" level outlined in the state standards for school library services. The goal of ZES's library is to influence each student to foster a love of reading and become literate, lifetime readers.

### **3. Special Populations:**

ZES's priority is to customize instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the individual and diverse needs of students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Supports and accommodations provided through the Response to Intervention Framework (RTI), a three-tiered approach to the early identification of learning needs, are important in closing the achievement gaps. At Tier 1, "Core Instruction", all students receive rigorous instruction addressing the TEKS. Tier 2, "Targeted Intervention", includes 30 minutes of additional small group intervention. Tier 3, "Intensive Intervention", includes 45 minutes of additional small group intervention. Progress monitoring occurs every three weeks; other specialized programs are available for students that display minimal progress.

Under the 504 program, a student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities may qualify to receive an Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) recommended by the 504 Committee. The specific plan includes proximity, redirection, shortened assignments, and extra time. The 504 program is also available for students with dyslexia characteristics.

In addition, ZES provides special education services to students who may require additional support because of other disabilities. The classroom teacher receives an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with the student's level of academic performance, as well as accommodations, supports, and/or assistive technology needed to achieve success. The special education teacher provides a pullout service for students that need more than classroom accommodations. To increase student achievement, teachers use supplemental aids such as math charts, calculators, thinking maps, dictionaries, prescriptive software, and oral reading assistance. Progress monitoring is ongoing throughout the year to ensure academic growth and success.

Moreover, ZES provides a Bilingual Program for all EL's in Kindergarten through 5th grade to ensure that they become fluent and literate in the English language. In Texas, all EL's assess with the TELPAS to determine English Language acquisition in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To increase academic performance by at least one proficiency level, teachers create accommodation plans at the beginning of the year to ensure student success. The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) monitors the progress of all EL's every six weeks. The results help adjust plans for continued growth.

Upon reviewing TEA's 2018 STAAR Performance Data Table, a 10% achievement gap between the test scores of all students and the special education subgroup was of concern. To meet the needs of these students, ZES's teachers adjusted instruction and created lessons that addressed areas of weakness. Small group intervention, after-school tutorials, and super Saturday tutorials ensure the closing of achievement gaps.

Furthermore, ZES provides a Gifted and Talented Program (GT) for Kindergarten through 5th grade. Students demonstrate skills in self-directed learning, thinking, and research. They also complete a project following the Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) Guidelines. The TPSP ensures students engage in meaningful tasks aligned to the TEKS. The projects require research, an oral presentation, and technology integration to enhance their learning. Students display the projects twice a year. The goal of the GT program is to provide students the opportunity to learn and produce work that exhibits high-levels of performance in the intellectual, creative, and artistic area.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

ZES understands that the love of learning occurs through a nurturing and safe environment. The campus secures success by addressing the social-emotional and academic needs of all students. Strong teamwork and a laser-like focus on lessons that are rigorous and relevant help students reach their full potential. ZES's priority is to create independent learners that will be successful and productive in our community. ZES believes that by challenging our students daily through a culture of academics and clubs such as the National Elementary Honor Society, Chess Club, Coding Club, Library Club, University Interscholastic League (UIL), Spelling Bee, and Science Fair will help accomplish this goal.

In addition, social and emotional components are important to the development of a school's culture. Activities that promote social growth are a critical component for developing the whole child. At ZES, cheerleading, volleyball, basketball, cross-country and flag football promote socialization. Collaboration and teamwork are vital to a child's emotional development. These two skills develop through friendships created when belonging to a team. Good sportsmanship and school pride transpire through these daily activities.

Moreover, ZES creates a positive teacher, faculty, and staff culture by empowering them in all campus decision-making and maintaining open lines of communication. Teachers, faculty, and staff can make recommendations to improve the quality of instruction, school climate, and culture at any time during the year. ZES builds a sense of community among all staff through various activities such as The Golden Apple, Teacher of the Year, Para-Professional of the Year, School Bell Award, Teacher Appreciation Week, Christmas, and Thanksgiving Luncheons. Teachers receive a small gift as a token of appreciation during these events creating a feeling of respect and admiration that leads to an increase in student academic success.

Furthermore, ZES holds various events throughout the year to highlight student success. An example of an event held to increase success is our annual STAAR Pep-Rally. Motivational speakers along with high school bands, cheerleaders and guests from our community partake in this event. Student celebrations occur during weekly, monthly, and end of the year ceremonies. They receive recognition for perfect attendance, student of the month, and extra-curricular activities. Other platforms used to highlight student and teacher successes include the school webpage, marquee, hallway monitors, twitter, Facebook page, and the school public awareness system. Highlighting students' successes builds and strengthens self-esteem and keeps them motivated throughout the year resulting in academic achievement.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

At ZES, customer service is a priority; therefore, an "open-door" policy is in place. Parents and other stakeholders feel welcomed and happy to be a part of the school. They support decision-making at school thus creating strong partnerships between the two. Teachers and parents share responsibility as true partners for student success. All parent communication sent home is in both English and Spanish including a monthly calendar that keeps parents abreast of all school events. ZES attracts parents to school through different functions throughout the year such as Open House, Grandparent's Day, and the Christmas Program to name a few. Teachers set expectations and form a bond with students and parents during Meet the Teacher Night held at the beginning of the year. One of the most successful yearly functions at ZES is Family Reading Night bringing in more than 500 parents at once. Parents enjoy spending quality time reading to their children, which attributes to the success of this endeavor.

The school parent liaison's primary focus is to increase parental involvement, as it is crucial to student success. Meetings and sessions that help build parent capacity are a priority to ZES. The liaison designs trainings to educate parents and provide knowledge on how to help students be successful in school. Through these trainings, parents can assist their children at home thus resulting in improved academic performance. Furthermore, ZES provides opportunities for parent participation in a variety of program

activities such as Drug Awareness, Parenting Skills, and Child Abuse & Neglect. Collaboration with one of the local businesses facilitates educating and empowering parents by providing books to prepare early learners with the opportunity to succeed. Monthly sessions to support classroom instruction, help parents understand the academic expectation of their children at school.

In addition, ZES enjoys many partnerships with other community organizations that play an essential role in shaping the students' future. The most influential presentations used to bring awareness are Career Day and the Junior Achievement Program. For the last ten years, ZES has included a career day to educate students on the many careers available to them. Another area of importance to ZES is the students' social and emotional development. Through the collaboration and strong partnership with outside community entities, the school counselor offers support or may refer students to the local counseling and mental health agencies. Strong parental and community involvement is a critical component and contributes to student success.

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

ZES's priority is to provide continuous improvement in all academic areas and to help close the achievement gaps for all students. Teachers attend campus-based Professional Development (PD) throughout the year that targets the TEKS or student's needs according to weekly tests, benchmarks, and state assessments. In addition, teachers attend district staff developments on crucial topics such as state standards, ELPS, differentiated instruction, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and the Fundamental Five Framework. District content deans, professional consultants, and the Region One Service Center, provide campus-based staff development too. Topics covered include writing, reading, math, and data analysis. Turnaround training after every staff development keeps all teachers abreast of the latest initiatives or strategies that affect student success. In addition, continuing education courses provided by the local university are available to all teachers for professional growth.

Moreover, the PLC composed of administrators, instructional specialist, and teachers meet weekly and share PD expertise to improve the quality of instruction. After every school assessment or district benchmark, an extensive analysis of the data identifies learning challenges, student weaknesses or missed TEKS. Teachers work collaboratively to create a prescriptive plan of action to address all the non-mastered TEKS. Administrators provide an ongoing system of support to ensure effective teaching strategies are in place and students are growing academically.

At ZES, technology plays a vital role in the delivery of instruction. Teachers attend technology PD workshops to help them grow professionally and improve their technology skills to enrich student learning. It is the district's expectation for each teacher to acquire a minimum of 15 hours of web-based or hands-on technology training yearly. ZES's campus trainer designs lessons and provides teachers with the latest applications and/or web-based programs to engage students and make learning fun.

PD is equally important for administrators. Administrators attend Leadership Trainings and Retreats to help with the daily administration of the campus. Topics discussed include Strategic Planning, Data Analysis, Policies and Procedures, Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and School Safety. The principal's continuous improvement and learning are important as it cultivates a healthy and supportive school community for all students, teachers, and stakeholders.

ZES understands that PD for teachers and administrators is at the helm of student success. Helping teachers reach their maximum potential is of utmost importance as it is vital to closing the achievement gaps.

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

The Principal, Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Instructional Specialist make up the leadership team. Each member has a unique role essential to student success. The primary function of the leadership team is to ensure that all stakeholders execute the school's mission, vision, and goals. The principal nurtures the strengths and talents of the other leaders to create a united and focused team. She ensures that all policies and procedures are in place, which leads to improved instruction and academic success. Daily

walkthroughs verify that high-quality instruction is occurring in every classroom. Weekly PLC's ensure that effective planning and collaboration are clear across all grade levels. The principal serves as a mentor to teachers and staff through conferences held at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Professional growth, student progress, and goal setting are important to the discussion. The principal is always accessible and willing to meet with teachers, parents, or students. Another role is to motivate students through incentives to promote attendance, good behavior, and academic achievement.

The assistant principal also has an important role in the school. One of her priorities is to support the teachers and the school's mission, vision, and goals. She provides ongoing support to all teachers and other stakeholders. She monitors the effectiveness of programs and instruction through daily walkthroughs. School and student safety, attendance, and discipline are an important part of her duties. Visiting parents at home to discuss any student concerns, and/or attending court for student truancy is very important as it affects student academic performance. She ensures that teachers are implementing researched-based instructional strategies and provides immediate feedback. In addition, testing and monitoring data are an important part of her role.

The counselor is also an essential player in the administrative team. She addresses the social and emotional needs of students through, a strong guidance and counseling program to maximize academics. The counselor's collaboration with teachers, parents, and staff helps lead to academic success.

The instructional specialist is also a key player of the administrative team. She helps monitor instructional programs and their effectiveness. She helps teachers interpret data and create prescriptive lessons for non-mastered TEKS on any assessment. She also helps in the delivery of lessons through either whole group or small group instruction.

The leadership team ensures that all interventions, programs, and staff developments remain focused on student success. Complying with district and campus policies and procedures is extremely important to the feat of the campus and therefore monitored closely by the team. Allocating and utilizing the school's budget and resources appropriately is also a priority for the administrative team.

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

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At ZES, one academic practice that helps the campus improve significantly is the analyzing of student data. After every district or campus-based assessment, the district web-based data management tool provides different reports with student results. During PLC's, teachers review the data with the administrative team and focus on non-mastered TEKS. The benefit of these meetings is to analyze the results in-depth and create a plan of action to address any non-mastered TEKS. Teachers reflect on their class data before sharing and comparing to the other classes. The most important part of this reflective practice is that the teachers get to discuss the questions missed by most students and provide feedback. The teacher with the highest test scores shares her effective techniques and lessons. Her shared knowledge helps with the identification of instructional strategies that can help develop interventions and/or remediation plans for the tested objectives. Teachers use the system to design lessons that will improve the TEKS needing remediation or maintain mastered TEKS.

The teachers review the item analysis report generated after every assessment. This report shows if the assessed TEKS align with the instruction and if mastery learning took place. The data reveals if the teacher's instruction was effective or if the error was due to a lack of instruction. To increase sub-population scores, examining data will help appropriate resources and adjust instruction. Based on the data, teachers can create and adapt lessons to meet the various needs of all student populations. In addition, throughout the instructional day, students have several intervention opportunities to learn the content they have not mastered. Small group instruction, peer-to-peer learning, one-to-one learning, and web-based instructional software are examples used for intervention.

At ZES, the team analyzes data and places high importance on closing the achievement gaps for all students. Teachers use student assessment samples to look for conceptual or procedural gaps for every skill. Before creating a lesson plan, teachers identify what every student should know about the respective content area skill. They look at student errors and possible conceptual misunderstandings to help them create stronger lessons for remediation. Teachers leave the planning session with prescriptive plans to ensure student academic success.

Academic increases are significant when test results assist in creating prescriptive data-driven instruction. Through teacher collaboration, effective teamwork, and strong leadership support, students close the achievement gaps and secure academic success. Ultimately, hard work and dedication leads to and supports our school motto, "Determined to Believe, Achieve, and Succeed!"