

U.S. Department of Education
2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[] Public or [X] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Dr. Michelle Barton
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name The Shlenker School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5600 N Braeswood Boulevard
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Houston State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77096-2924

County Harris

Telephone (713) 270-6127 Fax _____

Web site/URL http://www.theshlenkerschool.org/ E-mail mbarton@shlenker.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Michelle Barton E-mail mbarton@shlenker.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name _____ Tel. _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Ms. Leslie Margolis
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

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. 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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - Middle/Junior high schools
 - High schools
 - K-12 schools
 - TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	17	19	36
K	10	18	28
1	8	17	25
2	8	26	34
3	11	11	22
4	12	19	31
5	17	10	27
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	83	120	203

*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
 - 1 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 9 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 86 % White
 - 4 % 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 2018 - 2019 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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	10
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	203
(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. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish, Hebrew, Nepali, Russian, French

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %
10 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 1 %

Total number students who qualify: 3

8. Students receiving special education services: 19 %

39 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>0</u> Autism | <u>2</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>18</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>3</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	9
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	14
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.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

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

Required Information	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	96%	97%	96%	98%	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 2019.

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.

The Shlenker School of Congregation Beth Israel is proud to offer children, 15 months through fifth grade, a ten-year program whose graduates are lifelong learners who think critically, lead with confidence, and embrace Jewish values. The Shlenker School partners with families to provide students with an exceptional academic education, an integrated secular and Jewish curriculum, and a nurturing environment that helps shape their formative years and guide their future.

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

The Shlenker School is an independent Jewish day school located in Houston, Texas. The School is comprised of two divisions: an Early Childhood program (15-months–4 year olds) and an Elementary School (grades Kindergarten through fifth grade). It is affiliated with Texas' oldest Reform synagogue, Congregation Beth Israel, and shares a campus with the synagogue. The School's 16-acre campus is home to the 303 students who are currently enrolled in The Shlenker School (Young Toddler–fifth grade). (Note that 203 students are enrolled in the applicant division.)

In 1967, Congregation Beth Israel accepted its first nursery school class. Under the leadership of Rabbi Samuel Karff, the Congregation stepped forward as a leader of the Reform Jewish Day School movement by establishing one of the first Reform Jewish day schools in North America, and the first in the state of Texas. In 1987, the first class of fifth graders graduated from The Shlenker School, and for over thirty years the School has graduated confident students and compassionate Jewish leaders.

While 95% of the students at The Shlenker School are of the Jewish faith, the school benefits from a great deal of diversity. 14% of students identify as non-White; including 9% of students who identify as Latino or Hispanic, 1% are Asian, and 4% are of two or more races. 17% of Shlenker families speak non-English languages at home, including Spanish, Hebrew, Nepali, Russian, and French. Some families are Reform, Conservative, Modern Orthodox, secular, or interfaith. The Shlenker School appreciates and honors the diversity within our campus, both with respect to racial diversity and languages of origin, as well as the multitude of ways that families practice Judaism.

Graduates of The Shlenker School are lifelong learners who think critically, lead with confidence, and embrace Jewish values. The School partners with families to provide students with an exceptional academic education, an integrated secular and Jewish curriculum, and a nurturing environment that helps shape students' formative years and guide their future. The School is proud of its high levels of student engagement and achievement. The School's experienced faculty members continually assess student progress and mastery and differentiate instruction to meet students' needs. Elementary School teachers are certified by the State of Texas as Gifted and Talented teachers and complete a six-hour update on an annual basis.

The Shlenker School encourages the whole child approach to education by fostering each student's cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual growth. Shlenker strives to strengthen each student's self-esteem and sense of purpose through a myriad of social skills programs and the cultivation of Jewish knowledge and values. Jewish teachings and values are infused throughout the curriculum and the School's seven core values showcase the School's belief system and the teachings that are imparted to the students on a daily basis. The School is committed to helping students develop character (Midot), have faith (Emunah), acquire knowledge (Deah), maintain community (Kehillah), perform acts of loving kindness toward repairing the world (Tikkun Olam), celebrate being part of the Jewish people (K'lal Yisrael), and emulate a moral, ethical and compassionate path because of the belief that we are all created in God's image (B'tselem Elohim).

The Shlenker School's ongoing success and tremendous progress is attributed to the faculty and administration's commitment to excellence and their drive to incorporate best practices and apply their professional development learning directly into the classrooms. The focus over the past two years, in particular, has centered around providing students with hands-on, experiential learning with respect to core curriculum design, exciting initiatives in Jewish studies integration, greater STEAM integration, and social-emotional development. The creation of a new Purposeful Play Lab, a Makerspace (The Spark Lab), and enhancements made to the School's 1.5-acre nature preserve/outdoor classroom space are just a few of the meaningful ways that School has brought learning to life for students.

The Purposeful Play Lab is a space devoted to fostering a sense of wonder and imagination in students. When children engage in imaginative play, they not only develop creativity, they learn to be flexible thinkers who possess core social skills such as negotiation, collaboration, and empathy. These skills are too

important to leave to chance, so the School ensures that students acquire and practice these skills through purposeful play. Students must grow up to be proficient communicators, creators, critical thinkers, and collaborators. The Spark Lab gives teachers the space and resources to expose students to the iterative process and the design thinking process. Students at Shlenker are empowered to solve problems through teamwork and effective communication. Lastly, the School's nature preserve, known as the BackYard, is utilized for core academics as well as Jewish learning experiences. Students explore over 800 feet of trails containing a vast array of plants and animal species while learning about environmental ethics and the teachings of the Jewish value of Bal tashchit—not destroying or wasting resources in nature. As a result of these new initiatives, Shlenker students have the ability to explore their passions and take risks in ways that meaningfully shape their academic and social-emotional development.

The Shlenker School's goal is to ignite a "spark"—a love of learning and a passion for Jewish values and tradition—in every child. By igniting that spark during a student's formative years, it develops into an eternal flame—a ner tamid—that guides children for a lifetime. The flame depicted in the School's logo, which is intended to also resemble the letter "S," visually links Shlenker with the eternal flame and signifies a Shlenker graduate's ongoing commitment to lifelong learning, leadership, and love of Judaism.

The School's strong culture, commitment to excellence, and focus on nurturing the social-emotional development of every student has continually set The Shlenker School apart in the city of Houston, and among Jewish day schools across the nation, as a school that remains true to its mission of igniting the spark in every child.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

The Shlenker School provides an integrated approach to learning that weaves together various disciplines and content areas while intentionally infusing Jewish culture, religious teachings, and Jewish values into all aspects of the students' learning. Faculty members and administrators reviewed best practices in current educational research when selecting curricula. Teachers and administrators also ensured that curricular materials were aligned with national and state standards and benchmarks. Curricular materials utilized at Shlenker are comprehensive and easily differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers and administrators spend time on vertical alignment across all grades to ensure a seamless transition from grade to grade.

1b. Reading/English language arts

The Reading and Writing Workshop program is the foundation of the Language Arts curriculum at Shlenker. The Shlenker School believes that reading and writing should be taught with direct, explicit instruction from highly trained educators. Developed out of Teachers College at Columbia University, this research based instructional model provides students with explicit strategies in reading and writing. Daily instruction includes whole-class lessons, mini-lessons, read-alouds, shared reading/writing experiences, word study, small group reading instruction, and individual instruction. Utilizing this approach to Language Arts instruction allows students to be prepared for any reading and writing task they will face throughout their academic career and beyond, and turns them into lifelong, confident readers and writers.

The Early Childhood Program at The Shlenker School also integrates literacy throughout the classrooms. The focus on literacy, specifically stories, books, and the conversations related to them, enhances communication, narrative, and comprehension. Teachers engage children by reading good literature and encouraging interactive participation. Through the School's partnership with the Rice School Literacy & Culture program, teachers learn to introduce dramatization by allowing students to portray characters from a story. In addition, children dictate personal stories as the teacher scribes. These stories are recorded, dramatized by classmates, and sent home for family members to enjoy. The Early Childhood classrooms are rich learning environments and provide literacy opportunities in every center throughout the day and prepare students for additional literacy opportunities in Kindergarten and beyond.

Students in Kindergarten through second grade use The Units of Study in Phonics, which focuses on features of phonics, high frequency words, and numerous ways to extend instruction through small groups that reinforce foundational skills. There are many opportunities for students to transfer phonics learning into their reading and writing work. The School has seen growth in students' daily phonics skills and standardized testing scores as a result of adopting this curriculum.

Students in third through fifth grade use Words Their Way to support developmental spelling, phonics, and vocabulary. Words Their Way is an open-ended individual process. An assessment is given to determine where to begin instruction. Based on assessment results, students are given words to study in order to discover common attributes. In this manner, students actively construct their own knowledge of spelling patterns. Students learn features by completing activities such as word sorting, word hunts, games, drawing, and labeling. Students work individually, with partners, and in small groups to encourage cooperative learning and individual responsibility.

Students in first through fifth grade are taught vocabulary in context with high-quality science, social studies, and literary text using Vocabulary Workshop. This model teaches a variety of strategies for acquiring new vocabulary and helps students understand figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Assessment is used to guide the teacher in determining individual book choices and areas of strength and growth in the students' reading and writing development. Teachers also assess student progress based on partner discussions, journal writing, note taking, conferring, and teacher-created assessments. Teachers continuously monitor students for growth based on beginning of the year level assessment data. With this data, teachers and students develop individual goals to increase performance. Benchmark assessments are also used to provide targeted support. Students in PreK-4 through first grade take Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) three times annually (Fall, Winter, Spring) and students in second through fifth grade take the Educational Records Bureau Comprehensive Testing Program (ERB CTP-V). Standardized test scores are analyzed yearly, focusing on the performance of the school, distinct classes, grade levels, and individual students. This analysis informs decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.

1c. Mathematics

The Shlenker math curriculum centers on teaching students to become problem solvers and critical thinkers. The math program combines an understanding of mathematical vocabulary with engaging hands-on activities to foster a deeper conceptual knowledge of terms and practices.

Elementary school teachers use Pearson's enVision Math to drive the curriculum. They also supplement the program, depending on the needs of individual students, with various outside resources and an array of online programs including IXL, a comprehensive standards-aligned math practice program offering unlimited problems in thousands of skills. One of the many advantages to the enVision Math program is its built-in differentiation tool, allowing teachers to provide the appropriate level of instruction for each individual student. Students are encouraged to learn through real-world situations and hands-on learning experiences, allowing them to develop a lifelong love of mathematics.

In the Early Childhood program, rich math experiences help create problem solvers with strong number sense who are then ready to tackle the Elementary School curriculum. Math is integrated into daily centers and thematic units and students are encouraged to use math manipulatives to count, play number games, and make patterns. Circle time offers another opportunity to explore math related concepts as children graph, practice number recognition and quantity, and sing songs with math related themes. At the PreK-4 level, children further explore number sequence, numeral recognition, and grouping by counting up to 100 days of school. Children work to gain an understanding of number sequencing, quantity, one to one correspondence, and geometric shapes. Small group work and one-on-one conferencing gives the teachers a chance to differentiate instruction even further.

A wide variety of assessments are used to gather information on student learning. These include enVision Quick Check, enVision Problem of the Day, enVision End of Topic Assessment, teacher-made assessments, teacher observations, journal writings, student projects, games, workbook pages, and timed fact tests. Benchmark assessments are also used to provide targeted support. Students in PreK-4 through first grade take Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) three times annually (Fall, Winter, Spring) and students in second through fifth grade take the Educational Records Bureau Comprehensive Testing Program (ERB CTP-V). Standardized test scores are analyzed yearly, focusing on the performance of the school, distinct classes, grade levels, and individual students. This analysis informs decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.

1d. Science

The science curriculum at Shlenker is based on the Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core standards. Science lessons are inquiry-based and experimental so students learn to solve problems on their own. The Shlenker School also utilizes FOSS (Full Option Science System) kits, which further enhance the science program, and engage students through active learning. Students in PreK-4 attend science class on a weekly basis, students in Kindergarten and first grade attend science class once per week for 45 minutes, and students in second through fifth grade attend science class twice per week for an hour each. The School invests so much time in scientific learning because of the belief that inquiry-based science experiences create curious, engaged learners. Students are taught science in the science lab, Makerspace (The Spark Lab), and in the BackYard, a nature preserve and outdoor classroom situated on 1.5 acres of wooded areas

and trails.

Students in the Elementary School are taught scientific procedures by collecting and interpreting data, forming hypotheses, and drawing conclusions. Science in the PreK-4 program encourages critical thinking skills and hands-on exploration as well. Science is integrated into each academic unit studied and is often integrated with Jewish learning, in particular. For example, students study the Jewish lunar calendar and learn about the phases of the moon. As part of the Creation unit, children plant carrot seeds, water, harvest, and eat the carrots. When studying Sukkot (a Jewish harvest festival) students harvest an etrog (citron) and experiment with measurement through the use of scales, rulers, and tape measures as they weigh and measure the length of the fruit.

Students use grade level nonfiction science books and resources to reinforce expository reading skills. Students practice their writing skills by keeping a journal of their observations from the Shlenker BackYard, the science lab, and the classroom. The Shlenker School also sponsors an annual in-house Science Fair, where students aim to become experts in their topics of interest as they apply what they have learned about scientific principles to the projects they create. By the time students graduate, they will have explored a variety of topics including Earth Science, Life Science, Physical Science, and scientific reasoning across the curricula.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

The Shlenker School's social studies curriculum is designed to help students develop the ability to make informed decisions as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. Following the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, students build a foundation in history, geography, economics, government, citizenship, culture, and science, technology, and society. Utilizing the Social Studies Alive curriculum, The Shlenker School exposes students to a framework for developing responsible citizens and providing students with a knowledge and understanding of the past in order to effectively make decisions for the future. The content directly aligns with the core values of The Shlenker School to help mold outstanding citizens and leaders. Effective social studies instruction incorporates methods of inquiry, discussion, and decision making while providing opportunities for student involvement. Teachers allow students to think and act as historians, geographers, political scientists, and economists.

Students pursue the various strands of social studies through integrated units of study. Blending the processes and concepts of social studies with other subject areas allows for depth of exploration and creates opportunities to engage in a variety of learning styles. Lessons are designed to be hands-on, student-centered, and highly experiential. Jewish holidays, values, music, and culture are also regularly embedded into the social studies curriculum. Daily instruction is taught through whole group or cooperative groups and enhanced through projects, presentations, and the utilization of technological resources. Students are prepared to understand information, analyze issues, think and communicate critically, and work collaboratively.

A variety of resources are used to support student learning. Resources include various textbooks and reading material, online supplemental programs, audio lessons, and visual aids such as vocabulary cards, maps, atlases, and globes. Classroom social studies learning is enhanced by a variety of enrichment activities. Special presentations and visits include cultural performances, storytellers, professional authors, and guest speakers. Community workers enrich studies by sharing first-hand knowledge of community roles, professions, and experiences in other countries and cultures. Field trips also provide a wonderful opportunity to expand knowledge beyond the classroom as well as reinforce learning within the classroom.

1f. For secondary schools:

1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

The Early Childhood program is an integral part of The Shlenker School's ten-year program. The Early Childhood program uses a curriculum called The Creative Curriculum in which teachers create a classroom

environment that is appropriate to each child's level of development. The School also partners with Rice University and participates in the Rice School Literacy & Culture program. Teachers and administrators at Shlenker believe that children learn best by doing. Through active involvement with their environment, children make sense of the world around them. The classroom is organized into interest areas, or learning centers, where children are encouraged to explore not only the learning materials, but also their relationships with peers and adults. The classroom teacher acts as a facilitator to the child's learning, responding to the individual needs of each child. Activities focus on hands-on learning through interactive play and individualized instruction so that children are challenged, but not frustrated.

During the Early Childhood years, the primary developmental tasks children face are building trust, gaining autonomy and self-control, and developing competence and initiative. The Shlenker program supports these developmental milestones by providing opportunities for children to develop their own interests and pursue activities they select on their own. Children are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and therefore experience a sense of control over their lives. The teachers listen to the children, seek out their ideas, and allow them to express themselves. At the same time, teachers set clear, age-appropriate expectations for behavior in an effort to bolster skills and maximize student success. Children are encouraged to learn from their mistakes, to explore, and to take calculated risks within a safe, nurturing environment.

Because the Early Childhood program is an integral part of The Shlenker School's ten-year program, Shlenker students benefit from an educational program that is based upon consistent and enduring priorities and values promoting a lifelong love of learning. The PreK-4 program, in particular, prepares children for the transition to Kindergarten with activities and additional curriculum components that challenge the children in each developmental area. Activities build on existing skills while incorporating new, more sophisticated concepts in all areas of development to ensure a seamless transition to Kindergarten and readiness for our Elementary School program.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to the core curriculum, The Shlenker School places emphasis on other curricular areas that inspire and motivate students. The art program at The Shlenker School is designed to stimulate creative problem solving and encourage independent learning. Students in PreK-4 attend art class weekly and students in the Elementary School attend art class once per week for 45 minutes. PreK-4 students receive instruction in art skills and fine motor development and also participate in an artist study. Elementary students are introduced to developmentally-appropriate art skills, project planning, and craftsmanship through a variety of art movements, techniques, and mediums. Students acquire a strong sense of aesthetic values and an appreciation of how art helps shape our world today. Each year, the Shlenker Parents Association (SPA) also hosts a Night of the Arts to showcase students' work.

The music program prepares students for a lifetime of music appreciation and a love of music. PreK-4 students attend music class weekly for 30 minutes, Kindergarten and first grade students attend class once per week for 30 minutes, and students in second through fifth grade attend class once per week for 45 minutes. In the Music Room, students learn and experience the ways in which music binds our world and its cultures together. Students demonstrate their music literacy through creative expression, song, instruments, and movement. Students are exposed to traditional Jewish holiday songs, contemporary Hebrew songs, and American standards. They learn about instruments in an orchestra, musical periods and styles, and elements of music history. Students also obtain an awareness of the impact music has on people around the world. Students in third through fifth grade can participate in the Shlenker Star Singers, a choir that performs at various events throughout the Houston area and regularly sings at Seven Acres—a Jewish senior care center in Houston. Each spring, all Elementary School students also participate in a school-wide musical. During the musical, students learn public speaking and performance skills and showcase their talents through complex choreography and choral music.

The physical education program at The Shlenker School places daily physical activity as a top priority. Some activities and instructional approaches are Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) driven, where specific skills are introduced in Early Childhood and then built upon each year from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Students in PreK-4 enjoy motor development classes in the state-of-the-art gym on a

weekly basis in addition to daily outdoor play. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade participate in physical education for thirty minutes every day in addition to a fifteen minute recess. The primary goal of each physical education class is to include positive, fun activities that focus on the components of physical fitness, including muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and body composition. The program also includes activities that target specific skill development and encourage teamwork, cooperation, and good sportsmanship.

Because Hebrew is an integral part of Jewish life, Hebrew language instruction begins once per week in PreK-4 and continues in Kindergarten and first grade for 30 minutes per day and in second through fifth grade for 45 minutes per day. There are three different Hebrew levels offered at each grade level to meet students' wide array of language abilities. Teachers predominantly utilize the Chaverim B'Ivrit curriculum and also supplement the curriculum with an array of resources, projects, games, and online tools that enable differentiated instruction and high levels of engagement. Foreign language acquisition at Shlenker follows the same order as native language acquisition: comprehension of the spoken word, ability to speak, ability to read and comprehend, and then written expression. New vocabulary and language patterns are introduced in a logical and orderly manner and curriculum is aligned from year to year.

In order for students to compete in a global society, they must grow up to be proficient communicators, creators, critical thinkers, and collaborators. Therefore, technology is embedded within the curriculum and integrated into all content areas. Students in fourth and fifth grade have 1:1 laptops that further enhance their learning experiences. The Shlenker School Spark Lab is a space that also encourages students and community members to create, invent, and explore. Students are exposed to the iterative process and design thinking and are empowered to solve problems through teamwork and effective communication. The School's library is dedicated to ensuring that all Shlenker students, faculty, and staff have access to resources and information that support curricular needs, promote a love of reading, and foster lifelong learning. Students in PreK-4 through fifth grade attend a library class once per week for 45 minutes, where they check out books and participate in guided reading lessons that enhance the Reading Workshop program utilized in their classrooms.

Lastly, the Director of Counseling and Family Services serves students and families in both the Early Childhood and Elementary School. The counselor's primary role is to support students as they learn the skills needed for developing and maintaining positive peer relationships, conflict resolution, and positive self-esteem. The counselor works with classroom teachers to enact the social emotional curriculum and present classroom lessons in each grade. Subjects covered include manners, kindness, leadership, listening, problem solving, goal setting, resilience, self-esteem, and how to be a good friend. The counselor offers practical strategies for helping children develop academic and social-emotional competencies and this ongoing work with students demonstrates the School's unwavering commitment to educating the whole child.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Students in need of reading intervention work with the Literacy and Learning Specialist—a Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT) and Dyslexia Therapist. Using results from diagnostic testing, the students identified with characteristics of dyslexia are eligible for reading intervention. This essential instruction is provided to first through fifth grade students during the school day in addition to the reading instruction already provided by our classroom teachers. These students meet with the Literacy and Learning Specialist three to five days weekly for Basic Language Skills instruction, a research-based curriculum. Additionally, by incorporating a variety of supplemental books, students are provided opportunities to experience various genres, enhance vocabulary development, and develop reading skills necessary to become proficient readers. Multi-sensory techniques and direct sequential instruction in reading, spelling, and writing are also essential components during small group instruction. Multi-sensory grammar is another means of assisting students performing below grade level. The Literacy and Learning Specialist is trained in the Neuhaus curriculum, which uses systematic teaching of the parts of speech and sentence structure. Lessons are centered on using color to code different components of a sentence, which allows students to

engage in grammar instruction using kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning. The Literacy and Learning Specialist works closely with classroom teachers to support students, customize instruction, and establish an environment that ensures academic success for all students. Resources in the Literacy Lab support all students on our campus, as teachers are able to check out a variety of guided reading materials that enhance our Reading and Writing Workshop programs.

The Catapult Learning resource teachers also meet the needs of students who need extra support at their grade level in the area of Language Arts or math. The math teacher uses a web-based program that assesses a student's strengths and needs. A personalized learning path is prescribed with a rigorous and engaging curriculum. Customized reports help to track and measure student progress, as well as inform instructional decisions.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Students who are performing above grade level participate in the Learning Excellence through Accelerated Paths (LEAP) program, which is a weekly pullout program for students in second through fifth grades who show "Gifted and Talented" characteristics. Each class period lasts between 30-45 minutes and is centered around project-based learning opportunities that enhance the classroom curriculum and instruction. The lessons are tailored to each grade level and/or ability level. Students receiving support through LEAP must meet two of the following criteria: a stanine score of 8 or above from independent norms on standardized testing, a grade point of 90 or above in reading and/or math, and/or have a teacher recommendation.

Students in this program exhibit the ability to extrapolate information and collect data from teacher-selected and interest-based informational texts. They also work independently and collaboratively and create projects to demonstrate their learning. Students who demonstrate a mastery of math facts and high-level problem-solving skills also receive additional support. These accelerated programs are designed to motivate and challenge students. Students in these programs consistently exhibit problem solving skills, and are reading with comprehension well above grade level. They are critical thinkers with good deductive reasoning skills.

3c. Special education

When students are struggling and do not appear to be progressing, even after additional supports have been put in place, the administration partners with a family and refers the student to be assessed by an independent psychologist who can provide a psychoeducational evaluation. Once the School receives the report, the Division Head and the Director of Counseling and Family Services review the report and create an individualized learning plan, in collaboration with the student's teacher and parents, based on the diagnosis and recommendations. The Shlenker School offers several accommodations to help students with academic testing, including: time and a half on assignments, preferential seating, note-taking support, and checking for understanding in a one-on-one setting. These tools and strategies allow students to strengthen their academic abilities and develop a foundation that will lead to future success and independence.

3d. ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

At the beginning of each school year, the Director of Counseling and Family Services and/or the Division Head administers the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) to students in grades PreK-4 through 5th grade who indicate upon registration that a second language is spoken at home. Students who meet the eligibility requirements are identified as an English Language Learner (ELL) and receive appropriate accommodations to aid with language development. The Director of Counseling and Family Services also serves as the liaison between the Houston Independent School District consultant for ELL students and The Shlenker School to ensure that students are receiving all eligible services. If the student is a native Hebrew speaker, the Director of Integrated Jewish Learning and/or a Hebrew Specialist provides additional assistance and pushes into the general studies classroom on a weekly basis to provide the student with some added support.

3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The Shlenker School places a great deal of emphasis on building student leaders. Students are consistently given opportunities to take on greater responsibility, whether mentoring younger peers or performing mitzvot (good deeds) and giving back to the community through tikkun olam (community service/social action) projects. Students lead Torah services, Kabbalat Shabbat services, and “Good Morning Shlenker,” (the school’s morning assembly). Fifth grade students serve on the Safety Patrol and open car doors for younger students each morning as they greet and welcome them to school.

The Buddy Program allows older students to serve as role models to younger students. Fifth grade students are paired with Kindergarten buddies and fourth grade students are paired with PreK-4 students. The fourth graders and PreK-4 students take part in the annual Tikkun Olam dinner, where students gather together with their families to make Thanksgiving food baskets for students at a local low-income Early Childhood Center. Fourth graders then deliver the bags of supplies, food, and toys to the local school and spend time reading to their students. They learn to take care of others who are less fortunate, and they serve as role models for their younger peers.

For many years, The Shlenker School has earned the distinction of being a No Place for Hate School through the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The No Place for Hate program encourages schools to gain recognition as a "No Place for Hate School" by promoting diversity education, respect for individual differences, and anti-bullying behavior. Under the leadership of two teachers and the "No Place for Hate Coalition" (made up of student members in third through fifth grades), Shlenker students conduct activities to sustain an inclusive school environment such as a "No Place For Hate" t-shirt design contest, Chesed (Kindness) Week, and weekly messages and skits. These activities are closely tied to one of the School’s core values of B’tselem Elohim—the notion that we are all created in God’s image and therefore have a responsibility to one another.

The Shlenker School is also fortunate to have a Student Senate program. The Student Senate provides both leadership training and service opportunities for students in first through fifth grades. Members are elected by their classmates and meet on a regular basis to develop and organize school projects and activities throughout the year. Activities include food drives, tzedakah (charitable giving) distribution, and service projects. This unique opportunity provides students with crucial leadership skills enabling them to be effective communicators and empathetic and engaged citizens.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Meaningful parent involvement happens on a weekly, and even daily basis, for prayer and celebration. Every morning, parents are invited to attend “Good Morning Shlenker” where the entire Elementary School gathers together for prayers, songs, and morning announcements. The community also gathers together every Friday for a joyous, music-filled Kabbalat Shabbat service. Parents, grandparents, and visitors fill the chapel and welcome Shabbat together along with that week’s fifth grade leaders and the Congregation Beth Israel clergy.

Each November and February, the Elementary School and Early Childhood, respectively, host a Grandparents’ and Special Friends’ Day. Grandparents and special friends come to school to participate in activities and watch as students sing songs in Hebrew and English and showcase their classroom learning. The program honors the adults in students' lives who make a difference and consistently support them, and in turn, those adults receive a glimpse into the wonderful learning experiences taking place at Shlenker.

The School also connects with parents throughout the year via ongoing parent education events and parent coffees, where parents participate in conversations with the Division Head and teachers about curriculum and school initiatives. Parents learn about the inner workings of the school by attending an Open House and a State of the School address given by the Head of School as well as reading a weekly e-newsletter, called

the Friday Final, that contains a calendar and event highlights. Parents and community members also receive an Annual Report detailing the School's initiatives, goals, and measurable progress.

Parents have consistent opportunities to learn about their child's individual academic achievements and challenges. Formal parent conferences occur twice per year and additional in-person meetings, phone calls, and emails are exchanged throughout the year as needed or requested. Parents receive narrative progress reports and report cards at the midpoint and end of each semester. Teachers and members of the Instructional Leadership Team regularly call or email home to let parents know about positive interactions with children, specifically students' exceptional academic or behavioral progress.

All new families at Shlenker are paired up with a parent ambassador who welcomes them and accompanies them to a New Parent Dinner held in August each year. In order to maintain the positive parent culture at Shlenker, it is important that new parents feel welcome and learn about the ways they can become involved in the school community. Parents lead the Shlenker Parents Association (SPA) and hold positions of leadership on the Board of Trustees and various school committees. The SPA hosts several community-building events including family fun nights and a school-wide carnival. The Shlenker School recognizes that when the School and parents partner together to create community and cohesion, students thrive.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Passionate, professional, and experienced educators are the single most important factor in a successful school with high student achievement. The Shlenker School believes that excellent instruction is the result of on-going professional learning opportunities, and therefore all Shlenker teachers fulfill a 25-hour annual professional development requirement, in both general pedagogy and Jewish learning. This also includes a community service component, which reflects one of the School's core values of tikkun olam—repairing the world through social action. The School allocates a significant portion of its budget to professional development, demonstrating its commitment to faculty members and ultimately to student learning outcomes.

The Shlenker School cultivates teacher leadership by providing teachers with opportunities to serve as content liaisons, to lead book studies for their peers, and to mentor new teachers. The School and its teachers also take pride in being accredited by the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and appreciate the ways in which these accrediting organizations hold the School and its faculty to high standards of professionalism.

Teachers are regularly supported by members of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Division Heads meet weekly with teachers on an individual basis as well as in grade level teams to discuss curriculum and individual student or teachers needs. Members of the ILT are present and available to assist with lunch and recess coverage and can regularly be seen in the classrooms interacting with students and helping with any classroom management or behavioral needs that may arise.

Teachers feel valued and appreciated not just by their administrators, but also by Shlenker parents. The Shlenker Parents Association (SPA) regularly provides lunches and various appreciation events throughout the year. Teachers are given commemorative pins to celebrate their years of service at Shlenker. The average teacher tenure is over ten years, with several teachers having taught at Shlenker for over twenty-five and thirty years! The low teacher-turnover rate signals a strong school culture, where teachers feel supported, which makes for a productive and positive student learning experience.

4. School Leadership:

The Administrative Team at Shlenker adopts a servant leadership mentality, where administrators focus on empathy and deep listening. All administrators share a commitment to the growth and development of teachers and students, take a collaborative approach, and focus on building community.

The Shlenker School's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) is made up of The Head of School, Elementary School Division Head, Early Childhood Division Head, Director of Integrated Jewish Learning, Assistant

Elementary Division Head, and Director of Counseling and Family Services. The ILT is part of a larger ten-member Administrative Team (AT) that includes the Director of Finance, Director of Admissions, Director of Marketing and Communication, and the Director of Technology. The ILT and AT meet bi-weekly with the ILT focusing on specific student and curricular needs while the AT focuses on larger whole-school strategic matters.

The Head of School meets with each member of the Administrative Team on a weekly basis. Both Division Heads meet with teachers individually and by grade-level teams on a weekly basis in order to ensure that teachers and students are appropriately supported. The ILT consistently reviews and monitors student progress and ensures that appropriate plans are put into place to maximize instruction and student achievement. Teachers regularly share that they feel supported by the administration.

There is a great deal of trust and autonomy at Shlenker. The administration provides teachers with ample classroom resources and access to high-quality professional development and trusts them as experienced professionals. Administrators send the message to teachers, students, and parents that their voices matter and that their ideas are wanted and encouraged. In keeping with the servant leadership model, members of the AT facilitate growth and help teachers maximize their potential, empowering them to be the best educators possible for their individual students' needs.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Igniting the Spark in Every Child is much more than a tagline at The Shlenker School—it is at the forefront of all that we do. With this mantra in mind, teachers and administrators help unlock passions and talents that the students may not have realized they had. Perhaps, the most impactful way we ignite the spark is by providing opportunities for our students to give back to the community in meaningful ways.

PreK-4 students and their fourth-grade buddies "adopt" an Early Childhood Center in a low-income neighborhood. The children collect gently used clothing, shoes, school supplies, and toiletries for students at the Early Childhood Center. At the end of the collection drive, students and their families gather for a Tikkun Olam Dinner—an evening of mitzvot (good deeds), where students and their families decorate cards and package the items to be donated before delivering them.

Kindergarten students participate in a recycling project with Crayon Collection. The students collect used crayons from their classrooms and homes and then send those crayons to Crayola, where they are recycled into new crayons. Students learn about the Jewish value of not wasting resources (bal tashchit) and learn to take care of our Earth.

First grade students dedicate tzedakah money toward adopting an animal at the Houston Zoo. Adopting an animal provides food and medical care for the animal and supports education and conservation efforts at the Houston Zoo. This project teaches students about the Jewish value of protecting and caring for animals (tza'ar ba'alei chayim).

Second grade students raise money by participating in a Read-a-thon. The money raised is used to make teddy bears at Build-A-Bear. These bears are then donated to the Houston Fire Department, where they are distributed to injured, sick, and frightened children who must ride in ambulances. The students place a heart inside each bear and say a blessing (bracha) for the bear's recipient, wishing them a complete and speedy recovery (refuah shleimah).

Third grade students participate in a project with Service Dogs, Inc. The students kick off their project with a visit from a service dog and its owner. In order to understand how these canine companions help their owners, the students participate in a Mini Special Olympics, where they experience what it is like to live with disabilities. Third graders then host a Read-a-thon to raise funds, and the money is used to cover the cost of training a service dog.

Fifth grade students visit Seven Acres Jewish Senior Care Center on a monthly basis. Before meeting residents, Shlenker students learn how people change as they age and learn how to effectively communicate with the elderly residents, respecting their dignity and wisdom. Students interact with the residents in a variety of ways including celebrating holidays, singing songs, playing games, and much more.

Each week, students in Kindergarten through fifth grade bring money to school to put in their classroom tzedakah boxes. The tzedakah boxes are emptied regularly and the Director of Integrated Jewish Learning works with the Student Senate to distribute the funds. By giving tzedakah and performing various mitzvot (good deeds) throughout the year, students at Shlenker learn that repairing the world begins with a single act of kindness.

PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. Non-public school association(s): Jewish

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes X No
3. What is the educational cost per student? \$18467
(School budget divided by enrollment)
4. What is the average financial aid per student? \$7700
5. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 12%
6. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 33%