

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Heights Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1208 Market Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Laredo State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78040-8898

County Webb County

Telephone (956) 273-3600 Fax (956) 273-3695

Web site/URL http://heightses.elisd.org E-mail apadilla@laredoisd.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.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Sylvia G. Rios E-mail sgrios@laredoisd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Laredo Independent School District Tel. (956) 273-1000

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.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Hector J. Noyola  
(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.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

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**

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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 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

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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):
- 20 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 5 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 29 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	52	74	126
K	56	35	91
1	50	36	86
2	27	35	62
3	29	32	61
4	26	39	65
5	25	24	49
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>	265	275	540

\*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
  - 0.8 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 99 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0.2 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 19%

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

The mobility rate at HES is 19% because our families are housed in multi-family units, move as they rent, and are in local family shelters (Bethany House and local battered women's shelter).

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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	51
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	47
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	98
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	522
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.19
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	19

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish, Mandarin

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 63 %  
341 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 73 %

Total number students who qualify: 395

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

40 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>10</u> Autism                 | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>10</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>12</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>5</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</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: 14

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:

	<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.	27
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	16
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	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.

<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.

HES staff and parents work together with the surrounding community to provide the necessary values and skills needed by our students to become productive citizens capable of accomplishing any endeavor in our ever changing multi-cultural 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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It has been well over a century since Heights Elementary School (HES) opened its doors and began educating the students of Laredo, Texas. Located along the US Mexico border of South Texas, HES was built in 1912 and is one of the oldest and most historic schools in the community. Named after the neighborhood it serves, HES has been at the epicenter of expansive growth and change amongst its residents. At one point, the “Heights neighborhood” was home to upper-middle-class families and such reminiscence can be noted in the fading facade of large plantation-style homes. While the social capital and faces across the neighborhood may look drastically different today than they did decades ago, the core values of the school have not wavered. HES believes in empowering every student and stakeholder of the community with the educational tools necessary to succeed in every facet of life. Successful educational practices at HES do not come easily and such efforts are truly a collective effort that go far beyond traditional pedagogical practices. Cross-disciplinary practices can be seen on a daily basis across every corner of the campus such as skip counting in the gym, sight and power words in the hallway, science curriculum in the music room, and higher order thinking activities in the maker space center of the library among many others. Every staff member is heavily involved in the educational process and academic success of students.

“Multicultural education, and all good teaching, is about transformation-individual, collective, and institutional. Each of these levels is needed to foster student learning” -Sonia Nieto. These words from Nieto, are but a small glimpse into the core values that resonate within every stakeholder at HES. Teachers, parents, the surrounding community, and students themselves all desire the best for their education

As with many schools along the U.S. - Mexico border, diversity lies between the division of socio-economic class rather than race. HES demographic data is representative of this fact. Ninety-nine percent of the student population at HES are Hispanic and the vast majority of that population suffers some sort of hardship, economic or otherwise. Students at HES are eager to break beyond the gravity of the past and be the first family member in the household to go to college. To the rest of the community, this aspiration may seem like a generational requirement, but to students at HES it would be a pivotal moment of change. The tapestry of the past may have shaped the socio-economic identity of students, however, the future is still being woven by the determination of students and the collective efforts of those enriching their academic lives.

Students are immersed and daily engage in a variety of activities that foster true holistic learning. From early childhood initiatives, to upper grade level challenges, HES seeks to empower students at every stage of their educational journey. HES understands the foundational role it plays in a child’s academic career. Habits learned and cultivated at HES continue and empower learners through their entire academic journey. HES provides an orientation tour for early childhood students transitioning from home to school. HES also showcases senior graduates that return to walk the same hallways they did as children. This special ritual acts as a teaching moment for future graduates to see the potential achievements that exist inside every one of them. Graduates stand front and center and clearly articulate the challenges and potentials that will soon come via middle and high school. The students of HES watch with adoring eyes as they see larger versions of themselves overcoming the impossible.

While the student population of HES may appear similar to that of neighboring schools, the academic profile and school culture is unique. HES acts and functions more like a family unit than an educational community. There are programs in place to support parental engagement, opportunities for student growth via extra-curricular clubs and teams, and superb activities for professional development for teachers and staff. HES is doing more than just enriching the educational needs of its students, it is transforming the community they live in as well. Various relationships between small business owners in the community have existed for years as they value the power of education and the reciprocal effects it has to the neighborhood. Both community leaders and HES staff have grand aspirations for students. Over the past couple of years, a paradigm shift has been occurring at HES. The campus and community act as catalysts for transformative knowledge in the lives of the students and their overall academic success. Knowledge is power. At HES, “We dream it, dare it, and do it.”

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

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

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

HES approaches curriculum and instruction from the viewpoint that proper alignment, implementation, and depth of knowledge act as a direct corridor to the overall academic success of students. HES understands that student depth of knowledge is a fluid process involving differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and a sensitivity towards complexity and content. HES aligns itself to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the Career and College Readiness Standards (CCRS). The core curriculum subjects at HES are English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR), Math, Science, and Social Studies. HES incorporates the state's English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) in the daily delivery of instruction. Foundational to the core subject areas at HES is the district-mandated, Curriculum Alignment Resources for Educational Support (CARES) document. This in-depth framework provides teachers with excellent guidance to direct and successfully implement state-aligned standards on a daily basis. The CARES document provides teachers with classroom ideas regarding interactive journaling, high fluency vocabulary, word walls, anchor charts, digital resources, depth of knowledge questions, and daily objectives. Throughout the year, HES utilizes both summative and formative assessment data such as Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE), State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam, various forms of progress monitoring, and Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA). As well, teachers use informal observations, teacher-made exams, and other various reports generated from the district-based data management system. Disseminating data collected across all these platforms is at the forefront in properly directing learning for the students of HES. Curriculum and instruction alignment, scope and sequence, understanding and implementing depth of knowledge, and utilizing all the tools provided by the district help direct the best practices available to cultivate overall academic student success.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

Teachers at HES provide ELAR instruction through the district-mandated CARES curriculum that is aligned to the TEKS, CCRS, and ELPS. Throughout the year, HES utilizes both summative and formative assessment data such as TPRI, STAAR, RIGBY, TELPAS, and CBAs. Aside from the district curriculum, teachers find creative ways to enhance their classroom scope and sequence with unique supplemental resources. Teachers prepare lessons utilizing the district Year-At-A-Glance (YAG) pacing guide, and Vertical Alignment Document (VAD) to plan lessons and formulate activities that focus on specific skills and varied genres per six weeks. Teachers structure their lessons by incorporating high-yield strategies that play a vital role in classroom instruction. This includes framing the lesson, staying in the power zone, having students engage in purposeful dialogue, writing critically, and closing the lesson as a type of formative assessment; or aptly known as the “Fundamental Five.” At HES, the daily routine for ELAR includes 90 minutes of instruction with the implementation of vertically-aligned reading models that pique students' interests. HES implements strategies for English Learners (EL) such as academic vocabulary, reading and writing interactive journals, Read Aloud Daily (RAD) as well as a variety of others which are used to foster positive academic success. ELAR teachers are able to retain student interest through the use of cooperative techniques that rely on the concepts of Positive interdependence, Individual responsibilities, Equal participation, and Simultaneous interaction (PIES). Student engagement is also attained by challenging students to expand their knowledge beyond core curriculum standards. An example in the primary grades, HES teachers approach the concept of letter recognition/introduction by focusing on Total Physical Response (TPR) learning strategies. Annually, the early childhood students engage in a tactile learning experience entitled, The Wedding of Q&U. Thus, early childhood students annually engage in this memorable activity and learn a variety of important spelling/grammar rules in a fun and glamorous context. At the end of the day, however, the biggest take away is the cultivation and appreciation of ELAR as a whole. This foundation and love paves the way for a variety of campus-based initiatives.

At HES, in grades 1st-5th the ELAR program supports the initiative of reading novels. The reading of  
NBRS 2020

novels is introduced at a young age to the students of HES to help foster a love of reading and as well, develop much needed reading stamina and vocabulary. At HES we believe that reading is the crux of foundational success across cross-curricular learning. ELAR teachers work in a collaborative manner to select curriculum-aligned appropriate novels that invigorate young readers' minds. HES understands this strong fundamental practice acts as a catalyst for other campus-based ELAR initiatives. For example, the GT program at HES requires students to complete specific projects throughout the year; however, the campus-based ELAR team also extends these challenging learning initiatives to students in grades 1st-5th. HES has earned ELAR recognitions in 2nd grade for winning the district reading fair project, and in 4th grade for achieving the highest writing scores on the STAAR exam. Challenging students' traditional thinking cultivates a culture of rigorous thinkers that leads to overall academic student success.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Teachers at HES provide math instruction through the district-mandated CARES curriculum that is aligned to the TEKS, CCRS, and ELPS. Students at HES are keenly aware of “the why and how” in relation to the math curriculum. Instruction is differentiated in a variety of content areas and across all grade levels, in order to ensure successful student practices of higher-order learning. Teachers use a variety of data analysis, such as distractor analysis reports, benchmarks, checkpoints and Power of Seven reports during PLCs to plan and prepare instruction. This practice of progress monitoring is a crucial and consistent process in which teachers engage in daily dialogue providing their students with immediate and corrective feedback. Analysis of data is no easy task; however, successful student progress could not be attained without it. Disaggregation of data, curriculum alignment, and scope and sequence practices all move in singularity with one objective in mind at HES - constant and successful student academic progress. During the 2018-2019 academic school year, HES was one of four schools in the district selected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as an exploratory site to implement a math initiative called Math Innovation Zones (MIZ). As a blended learning campus, HES has augmented its implementation of best practices for monitoring and improving students' progress through technology. With blended learning, teachers not only design standards-aligned assessments with varying DOK questions, but also track their students' strengths through the implementation of formative and summative assessments. Additionally, the coaching process has enabled teachers to build capacity in the planning and delivery of instruction. Teachers differentiate instruction based on data-driven decisions and high fidelity teacher engagement.

At HES, student academic success in the area of Mathematics can be noted across a variety of initiatives, programs and grade levels. Primary grade level students at HES learn mathematical operations and skills such as addition, subtraction, and comparing objects by measurable attributes. The instruction for upper grade level students is centered on the four basic operations that help solve multi-step problems correlated to everyday life. As part of the campus best practices, HES incorporates technology-based programs such as, “Math Facts,” and “All Tech Math,” from an online digital math platform. These programs are not only highly engaging but also extremely successful in helping students attain the highest levels of academic success. In a complementary nature, these programs help invigorate the overall math fluency of all student populations. As students progress throughout the year, their math lexicon grows daily. HES understands that high math fluency allows students to be successful in an array of real-world math scenarios. One such area of focus is financial literacy. Students develop skills such as budgeting, understanding the concepts of loan interest rates, and a variety of other mathematical skills necessary to navigate in today's financial world. The focus on relevant and engaging math curriculum has helped HES earn the following math accolades from both TEA and the Laredo Independent School District (LISD): 2018-2019 top math STAAR Scores, (LISD) and the TEA distinction for Academic Achievement in Mathematics for 2016, 2017, 2019.

### **1d. Science**

Teachers at HES provide science instruction through the district-mandated CARES curriculum that is aligned to the TEKS, CCRS. Throughout the year, HES utilizes both summative and formative assessment data such as campus CBA's, checkpoints, benchmarks, progress monitoring through technology-based software applications and STAAR exam. During a daily 65 minute block, students in grades K-5 are instructed through the science standards of physical science, earth science, life science, experimentation, and the scientific method. The instructional approach at HES for science is brought to life in the classroom

through various models of experimentation and exploration. Science teachers at HES facilitate and guide students through the understanding of science objectives, as well as students delivering peer-to-peer learning through collaborative small group instruction. Students utilize a variety of technology-based programs and interactive journaling. Young learners at HES are guided along a fun-filled journey that expands their hands-on and real-world science experiences. Students tangibly investigate science concepts with one another resulting in a reinforced understanding of important standards. This methodology of teaching paves the way for a variety of campus and district-based science initiatives that are implemented yearly at HES. An example of this can be noted through a multitude of field trips that allow students to venture into unique educational settings. Students at HES yearly visit a state aquarium, the local water treatment plant, university planetarium, fairgrounds, recycling and environmental centers. These field trips act as portals, as well as, sounding boards for students to access critical thinking skills and gain an appreciation of scientific applications in the real world. Science objectives are brought to life as students hear from real-world science professionals speak about the practical and thought-provoking nature of science. Providing these experiences in combination with rigorous classroom expectations create transformative knowledge. Academic success in the area of science at HES is a direct result of the various initiatives in place across the campus.

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

Teachers at HES provide social studies instruction through the district-mandated CARES curriculum that is aligned to the TEKS, and CCRS. Throughout the year, HES utilizes both summative and formative assessment data in the form of checkpoints and CBAs. The curriculum alignment includes the study of foundational skills and concepts from history, geography, economics, government, citizenship, culture, and other social sciences. The content, as appropriate for the grade level, enables students to understand the importance of patriotism, functions in a free enterprise system, and an appreciation of the basic democratic values of our states and nation. Students in the lower grade levels identify basic human needs, the ways people meet those needs, and how the interdependence and sensitivity to others is important. As well, students learn the purpose of rules and the role of authority figures in the home, school, and community. Students in grades 3rd-5th develop and understand how Texas, The United States, and other parts of the world are economically, socially, and physically interdependent on one another.

Concepts of history from the local, state, national, and global levels are imparted in the social studies curriculum. One social studies practice was a multicultural experience, “Culture Around the World.” This global systematic project allowed students to venture beyond their current world view and experience the variety and beauty of other cultures. Every classroom acted as a “host nation,” to countries around the globe and were transformed into virtual portals.

This allowed research-led student lessons to depict attributes countries had to offer. Students were allowed to taste a variety of authentic cuisines that are unique to each country, as well as, hear music and see relevant dances. The experience was further solidified by allowing students to carry passports that were stamped at every stop along their journey by students acting as customs agents. This sojourning experience acted as a sounding board in which teachers could instill wisdom that reaches far beyond the pages of a book.

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

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

HES provides a full day, three and four-year-old Pre-Kinder program, which builds meaningful learning experiences on the following educational philosophy: learners are captivated through a balanced approach of real-world experiences and practical, purposeful, playful activities. HES aligns all curriculum to meet the TEA guidelines for early childhood across the following subjects: reading/early literacy, math, science, social studies, and social-emotional development. Students in the HES early childhood program receive excellent educational opportunities which more than adequately prepare them for the challenging expectations set forth by the upper-grade levels. An example of such can be noted in the area of early literacy. HES Early Childhood Program cultivates student learning through, but not limited to, interactive

read-aloud books, picture walks, alphabet rich books, as well as various blended learning initiatives.

Instruction provided in the core areas of HES Early Childhood Program sets forth a strong foundation for all future student achievement. Intentional emphasis placed across the program assures the best possible outcome for early childhood students. Such can be noted in HES Head Start Integration Model. The second cohort of its kind to the district, this campus and county-based partnership have provided unique opportunities to HES students. Due to a smaller student to teacher ratio and a more flexible schedule, this integration model provides ample opportunities for quality, transparent, and holistic learning to take place. Teachers are able to build deep meaningful relationships with students and stakeholders to help advance academic success. The development of social and emotional skills is an earmark objective of both Head Start and the entire HES Early Childhood Program.

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

HES understands the importance of fostering academic environments that are conducive to holistic learning. Students' overall academic success is more transformative and life-long when all of the learner's needs are met. The school culture has always placed a heavy emphasis on supporting supplemental curriculum areas such as fine arts, physical education, technology, library media, and various character-building programs/clubs for students. HES understands the pivotal role that these diverse curricula play in regards to the academic needs of students.

The fine arts curriculum at HES adheres to the TEKS as it includes, but is not limited to, singing, music theory, dancing/movement, theater arts, and visual arts. Once a week, students in grades PK-5 attend a 45-minute block period where they are able to express and practice the fine arts curriculum. During this allotted time, students tap into a very important creative portion of their educational development. HES further supports said development through a variety of campus-based fine arts productions. Annually, students at HES showcase their talent during the winter season through the school Christmas program. This school production grants students in every grade level opportunities to engage in dancing, drama, singing, and the playing of instruments. Every grade level on campus participates and performs a mixture of seasonally and culturally-related songs. Furthermore, as a campus, students and staff have also participated in a collaborative rendition of the Nutcracker by Tchaikovsky. It is through these campus-based productions, and the fine arts curriculum as a whole, that students are able to showcase their talents in a manner that supports cognitive development and improves overall academic student success.

The HES physical education department is aligned to the TEKS and CCRS. The goal of the physical education department at HES is to teach students from various grade levels a set of fitness skills that promote lifelong physical activity. Students attend PE class daily for 45 minutes. During this time, the HES physical education department implements the HELP philosophy (Health, Everyone, Lifetime, Personal) throughout the day as needed to provide insight about the importance of physical activity, as well as, encouraging others to participate. Students' physical development is also encouraged through a number of unique district-based initiatives, such as teaching "non-traditional sports" including swimming, golf, and tennis. These special moments allow students to gain an understanding of activities they would not normally have access to in their community would it not be for the opportunities afforded by HES. HES understands the need to promote a balanced healthy lifestyle in students in order for them to be academically successful across all areas of life.

The HES library adheres to the School Library Program Standards and Guidelines for Texas. Students at HES attend library classes once a week, across all grade levels for 30-45 minutes. This block of time is but a small glimpse and reflection to the true quantitative effort put forth at HES by various campus and district-based library initiatives. For 5 consecutive years, HES has had 100% of its students meet the reading goal set forth by the district. This rigorous expectation is supported by several campus-based initiatives such as 24/7 student access to online digital books, interactive e-books, as well as an above exemplary student to book ratio made possible by extensive financial planning at the hands of school leadership. Reading is a foundational pillar to the academic success of students at HES.

order to ensure students are competitive and career college-ready in the 21st century. As a part of this curriculum, students make colossal strides in their overall academic achievement. Students in grades PK-5, meet once a week for 45 minutes in a start-of-the-art technology lab. Students learn how to navigate and operate crucial real-world word processing and spreadsheet software, as well as computer coding, and keyboarding. The young minds at HES are taught the important responsibilities surrounding various methods of digital citizenship. Technology at HES is more than just a curriculum standard, it acts as a funnel that directs many of today's blended learning initiatives. Digital literacy at HES helps prepare and equip students with the necessary tools in our present and future technological society.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

HES strives to provide all students with an exceptional education, but realizes to attain that lofty goal, extra attention must be paid to struggling and underachieving students. In combination with TEKS-based district-mandated curriculum and interventions, preventative measures have been set in place to provide progress monitoring tools that aid in data-based decisions. Teachers and intervention specialists provide targeted intervention based on RTI (Response To Intervention) data, failure, and "Power of Seven" reports. Teachers assist struggling learners by providing tutorials, a differentiated approach of reteaching difficult concepts, and extra opportunities to show mastery of content. A multi-sensory and systematic approach drives interventions. HES provides intervention activities that guide auditory and visual discoveries, letter and sound recognition, oral spelling, phonological awareness, math fluency, etc. These prescriptive interventions range in implementation, but regardless, they operate in conjunction with general education instruction. HES aims to provide students educational opportunities with the least restrictive environment, however, students that continue to struggle and require more extensive interventions are provided support outside of the general education classroom in small group settings. HES provides small group instruction through intervention classes, dyslexia, and special education programs. Instruction is refined to better meet individual weaknesses using third-party programs with personnel that have been specifically trained to deliver these interventions. As interventions progressively become more individualized and student achievement does not progress accordingly, other educational avenues must be considered. After exhausting all other strategies of intervention, HES is better equipped to provide a more practical method of identifying students in need of special education and dyslexia services. Instruction is tailored to meet the individual needs of students and help them overcome learning difficulties so they can continue to be academically successful across all areas.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

HES identifies students performing above grade level by the following two criteria: students who scored "meets or masters" on the STAAR standardized exam and students in the campus-based GT program. These criteria provide HES opportunities to target and engage a rather wide set of students; however, individual attention is made a top priority. HES implements a variety of strategies across the campus to help meet the needs of these special learners. One district led strategy implemented at HES for students performing above grade level is grouping the students into homeroom classes referred to as trailblazers. This initiative allows teachers to set the rigor of the classroom scope and sequence at a level that is appropriate for the academic needs of these students. This classroom grouping has been proven to be an essential tool at HES. This same group of students also follows what is referred to as an enrichment schedule. This scheduled time allows students to be placed into even smaller groups where they engage in technology-driven curriculum. These special programs help enrich and extend the students' knowledge base. HES provides students with interactive tablets, laptop computers, and other innovative technological tools. Students' knowledge is stimulated in a manner that helps shape and guide their higher-level cognitive thinking. The other main component HES uses to target and support students performing above grade level is the GT program. HES utilizes depth and complexity researched-based visual supports to extend students' rigor and relevance across all grade levels. Students in the HES GT program annually participate in a year-long project that promotes higher-level thinking skills. Students are challenged and taught to engage in the academic research process, creative writing, blended learning, proper oral presentation, and speaking skills. Students performing above grade level at HES are taught and challenged to exceed their own preconceived

expectations regarding their academic abilities. HES provides the tools necessary to make learning equitable; however, it is the inner desire of students at HES that drives the motivation to succeed and become more academically successful.

### **3c. Special education**

HES trusts that a multifaceted approach using innovative programs, the effective use of school resources, and properly trained faculty best facilitates learning for our Special Education Department (SPED) students. HES promotes and implements special education support services in the least restrictive environment, thereby granting students with disabilities access to a consistent and thought-provoking curriculum. Unique to HES, the campus offers Early Childhood Special Education (ESCE) through a specially designed classroom unit for students ages 3-6. These students are identified using the federally mandated Child Find Program which helps identify and bring public awareness to special education services. In combination with various instructional settings, varying from a resource and self-contained classroom, in-class support, and full inclusion with students without disabilities, HES SPED students are able to make yearly progress. After reviewing data from 2018, it was determined that there was an achievement gap of more than 10% points between the test scores of all students and the scores of special education students. Once student data was disaggregated and student deficits narrowed down, Admission and Review Dismissal (ARD) committees could better create Individual Education Plans (IEP) that promoted student growth. Instituting purposeful and researched-based interventions that target specific weaknesses by using varied methodologies and technological integration such as tablets, text to speech software, and phonemic and literacy programs, have enabled special education students to bridge this gap. Cooperative planning between general and special education teachers ensures that differentiated instruction is being implemented at all times. Along with all modifications and accommodations, HES guarantees that special education students are not left behind. It is through the combination of both effort and fidelity to the district curriculum that HES is able to help special education students meet their goals with efficacy.

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

HES has a Bilingual Program in place for all students identified as English Learners (ELs) in kindergarten through 5th grade. This program is in place as required by state and federal education agencies, to ensure that students become both fluent and literate in the English language. HES utilizes the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) to monitor English student language acquisition in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. HES understands the importance of cultivating learning through language and reading enrichment. Throughout the year students are monitored in the program by utilizing various technology-based bilingual curriculum. These blended learning programs allow students to interact with learning concepts in a highly engaging manner. EL students at HES can consistently be seen across the campus enjoying learning as they write, speak, and gain instant feedback with these amazing programs. As well, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) monitors the progress of all EL students every six weeks. Based on results, the committee helps adjust students' plans for continued growth or student exit from the bilingual program. Teachers at HES are aware of all the requirements in the bilingual program; however, classroom teachers also have access to an excellent district-based bilingual strategist. Working in a collaborative manner, these individuals are able to develop, plan, and set goals for EL students. Teachers also use these planning moments to further pursue professional development training to help enrich their teaching methodologies regarding EL students. Teachers constantly attend both district and campus-based training regarding EL teaching initiatives. Providing academic support for this student population at HES is a top priority across the campus. HES exhausts every resource available to ensure education is made equitable for these students and overall academic student success is achieved.

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

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

HES understands the importance of providing a safe and nurturing educational atmosphere that helps cultivate knowledge that is both erudite and relevant. Foundational support for students' emotional and social growth is of equal importance in the implementation of education at HES. The credo of HES resonates with the belief that students who feel valued and loved attain knowledge as a reciprocal effect of this purposeful investment. The overall culture and school climate of HES is created and maintained by various stakeholders across the campus. From the moment that students walk through the doors of the campus, they are valued as individuals and cared for on a need by need basis.

HES believes in the transcending effects that an appropriately placed aphorism can have in the campus culture. At HES, the campus daily implements a power word/phrase entitled W.I.N.G.S (Wise Independent Nurturing Growing Students). This campus-based initiative helps focus and redirect students' choices throughout the day. W.I.N.G.S creates opportunities for teachers to directly engage and support the various needs of their students. Teachers are able to reward, praise, and encourage specific choices students make using W.I.N.G.S specific incentives. Consistent implementation of the W.I.N.G.S power word/phrase at HES helps remind students that their emotional and social choices positively affect their education.

HES fosters a healthy number of student clubs to help enrich and support the overall achievement of students. HES offers clubs that encourage the more sagacious learner such as: robotics club, chess club, library club, and computer coding club. As well, HES appeals to the artistic, outgoing, and extroverted-minded student with clubs such as: honors choir, folkloric dance group, dj club, and participation/speaking roles in the daily hosted campus live stream newscast. Choices for clubs are in abundance and every student on campus is encouraged to participate in one or another. HES understands the unique learning opportunities that exist across all these campus-based clubs. Teachers are able to bring to life classroom-based concepts in a tangible manner. These clubs encourage students to do more than tout their various talents, but rather create safe spaces where students can feel valued for their innate abilities. These clubs and the aforementioned campus-based initiative play a vital role in supporting the overall academic, social, and emotional growth of students.

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

HES realizes the role the campus plays in the educational endeavors of students is specific, but not exclusive. Community partnerships and relationships cultivated with various stakeholders are just as important to the overall academic success of students. HES understands that to impart continuous and effective knowledge, teaching moments never cease. Community partners are vital in ensuring students are successful in every facet of life. Some of the HES community-based partnerships are specific to the neighborhood surrounding the campus, while others belong to the city at large. HES partners with local institutes of higher education such as the local college and university. On a yearly basis, HES partners with local business and community outreach programs to put on a career fair at the campus. HES invites partners such as local banks, civil service personnel, business owners, and nonprofits to participate and feature their organizations. During this interactive program, students learn about the importance of entrepreneurship, financial literacy, leadership, civic responsibility, etc. Students are able to ask questions and hear real feedback about the experience and dedication required to enter the global workforce. Furthermore, teachers are able to draw connections between classroom content and job skill expectations. Nevertheless, the goal is the same, to provide students with differentiated educational experiences. Curriculum becomes relevant, learning becomes tangible, and overall student success is pointed in the direction of future achievement.

HES believes in involving parents along each and every step of the student's educational journey. Never wavering to the commitment of this campus-based core value, HES sets aside the resources required for parental involvement. In both English and Spanish, parents are made aware of school events via personal phone calls, telephone communication systems, face to face communication, and social media platforms. Conveying information is an earmark component for success in partnering with parents. This consistent

dialogue allows parents to be made keenly aware not only of events pertaining to students, but also specific programs offered to assist the parental community. HES offers parental support in the form of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, special access to the school library collection, vocational skills training, and adult-based reading initiatives. HES believes that valuing the parental stakeholder community and providing tools for parents to empower themselves, yields a reciprocating value that is trickled down to students. When families and communities are properly engaged with a common goal, a paradigm shift can occur in overall academic student success.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

The atmosphere surrounding the professional culture at HES is a place where teachers and staff feel valued and supported on a level that goes deeper than simple camaraderie. Traditions and celebrations are a key focus of team building. One example is the annual Taste of Heights family style potluck meal where staff members submit a recipe to collectively build a campus cookbook. Participation of these traditions helps build up the social and emotional welfare of the campus professional culture that staff sustainability at HES yields very few vacancies.

Professional development for teachers and staff at HES is a practice of self-efficacy. Like pieces of a complicated puzzle, every teacher and their professional development choices play an important role in the clarity and effectiveness regarding overall academic student success. HES staff members have access to a vast amount of professional development training. These trainings range from, district-led sessions by the Curriculum and Instruction Department (C&I), Region 1 Education Service Center, campus-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and various online virtual trainings from a variety of resources. HES teachers have attended specific training regarding GT programs, Fundamental Five boot-camps, Region 1 Literacy academies, writing academies, and Mental Health Mondays, to name a few. Teachers bring back the knowledge they gained, and become the trainer of trainers throughout the entire academic year. Regardless of the training offered or attended, it goes without question that teachers become better equipped to enrich the overall academic lives of their students.

At HES, annual goal-setting is a key component of professional culture. Many of the foundational choices for professional development lie in goals set forth every year by teachers. Twice a year, teachers set and evaluate teaching goals as a part of their Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Teachers work in a collaborative manner with the campus administration to set and align goals that support student achievement. The Goal-Setting and Professional Development (GSPD) process allows teachers to reflect on current professional methodologies, to identify potential growth and goals, to develop a plan to attain those goals, and to develop a method for tracking progress and moments to reflect on growth. Teachers evaluate and plan how to refine all their professional development during this collaborative practice. The teacher self-assessment, goal-setting, campus culture, and professional development are all interwoven and applied throughout the year to positively impact professional ability and ultimately increase student performance.

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

The role of campus leadership at HES strives to enable others to leave behind a legacy of empowerment. HES does not ascribe to traditional models of leadership and micromanagement but rather incorporates a bottom up leadership method that seeks to value the input of everyone at the campus. HES places importance on creating leadership groups rather than singular roles. Leadership is a collaborative effort that, much like a well-tuned machine, functions efficiently due to the core values that exist at HES and are so widely spread across every stakeholder.

HES consists of two administrator positions in the form of one principal and one assistant principal. The collective educational experience between these two administrators alone is 89 years. These two top levels of administration are what help guide and focus the rest of the campus-based leadership team and values. The campus and the school culture not only are aware of the campus-based mission, but can also clearly articulate and focus its meaning. Teachers, staff, students, and parents understand the role they play in the campus-based mission statement.

HES leadership begins with the principal, but empowerment and leadership can be seen across multiple levels. Campus administration empowers leadership teams, which in turn empower individual teachers, which in turn empowers the students themselves for the ownership of their education. This shared leadership strategy is modeled by encouraging others to partake in the decision making process. An example of this can be seen in a student-led leadership initiative called the future teacher's club. This group is led by a leadership team comprised of teachers and administrators. The future teacher's club conveys the campus mission to the student population via a conduit of language that peer to peer communication can truly translate. Students in this group learn about the campus mission, alignment of goals, but more importantly, how to act as leaders and take ownership of their future. HES leadership teams are very hands-on, such as our campus principal being directly involved with the fine arts by sponsoring and participating in a folkloric dance group and Nutcracker production. HES understands this leadership process is a journey and not a simple destination with a means to an end. The reality and responsibility of leadership across every individual at HES ties directly to the overall academic success of all students.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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HES has made an intentional effort to maintain a positive campus culture and also places a high value on this sole initiative. The environment surrounding the culture is a direct link to the emotional, social, and academic support needed for the whole child and their overall student success. Authenticity rings true in every collective effort made by the various pillars supporting this campus initiative. Teachers, parents, the community, and the students themselves encompass this wholehearted culture. The culture at HES is more than just a physical building, it is a movement driven by a clear and focused mission to direct every student to academic success.

HES has an open-door policy to help maintain a warm, welcoming atmosphere in which authentic growth takes place. Students can routinely be seen navigating the front office space in a comfortable manner. Office staff also lend aid to a variety of student's academic needs such as assisting in homework questions and in reading via the AR buddy program. These efforts humanize a space that is often seen as inaccessible and reverent. The proverbial wall that often divides administration and students is broken down by the overall positive campus culture. Allowing students to peek past the veil of the front office may seem like a small gesture, however, it symbolizes and communicates comfort to students. The role of the administration is expanded beyond the traditional as they make themselves visible and available rather than staying behind closed doors. HES administrators also involve themselves by assisting in the daily campus duties such as cafeteria monitoring, traffic control, walking hallways, visiting classrooms, addressing students by name, and the often overlooked important gesture of a smile.

HES values everyone's input and believes this open dialogue helps create true ownership providing everyone on campus with a voice and opportunities to vocalize themselves. For example, teachers' opinions are highly sought when making budget decisions regarding the purchase of supplemental curriculum. The HES administration values the unique point of view that teachers have and understands the vital role they play in the decision-making process. Students are also afforded ample opportunities to voice and communicate their suggestions and concerns. HES implements various student-led leadership groups that allow students to express themselves and take a hands-on approach regarding their education. Students recommend book choices, lunch menu items, and even have input regarding campus-based behavior plans. Leadership, but more importantly, leadership opportunities, play a vital role in the overall equity of the campus culture at HES. Feeling valued and supported is foundational regarding all facets of success at HES.