

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 6301 Tiger Eye Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City El Paso State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79924-1613

County El Paso County

Telephone (915) 434-6400 Fax (915) 821-0634

Web site/URL http://desertaire.yisd.net E-mail bharbison@yisd.net

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. Xavier De La Torre E-mail xdeletorre@yisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ysleta ISD Tel. (915) 434-0000

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. Cruz Ochoa
(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

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):
- 38 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 9 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 13 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 60 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	0	0	0
K	68	76	144
1	71	69	140
2	66	64	130
3	63	55	118
4	62	76	138
5	58	89	147
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	388	429	817

*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
 - 7 % Black or African American
 - 77 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 12 % White
 - 2 % 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: 26%

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

Many families in the Desertaire community live in rental properties, either apartment or low-income complexes. Rental properties are a factor for Desertaire's high mobility rate. When families are no longer able to pay their rent, they relocate. In addition, military families are the most transient of populations. It is not uncommon to see students, who have grown up in military families, attend many different schools by the end of their high school career. Factors of engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement come with high mobility rates.

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	101
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	115
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	216
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	824
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.26
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	26

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

Spanish, Korean, Philipino

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 26 %
209 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 77 %

Total number students who qualify: 633

8. Students receiving special education services: 18 %

149 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>9</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>26</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>38</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>14</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>59</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3

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	7
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	46
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

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	95%	96%	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.

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.

All students will learn in a safe and nurturing environment, with meaningful opportunities to become knowledgeable, responsible, respectful, and motivated learners in their community.

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

Desertaire Elementary is a Title 1 school and one of 60 campuses in Ysleta Independent School District (YISD) located in El Paso, Texas, the westernmost corner of Texas on the Rio Grande River, just across the border from Mexico. Data from March 2020 indicated Desertaire was serving 858 students, with a low socioeconomic status of 81.23%, from kindergarten through 5th grade. The culturally diverse student population was comprised of 7.24% African American, 11.78% Anglo, 0.86% Asian, and 77.67% Hispanic. Gender distribution indicated 48.59% male and 51.41% female. Within the overall student population, 209 students were English Learners (EL) and 147 students were receiving special education (SPED) services. El Paso is home to Fort Bliss Military Base, which bolsters a unique element to Desertaire in which 161 families are active duty military. Schools serving students whose parents are active duty military face challenges of high mobility rates (student enrollment and withdrawal within the school year) and deployment.

Desertaire Elementary embraces an educational philosophy that all students will have opportunities every day to learn respect and responsibility, while simultaneously demonstrating motivation and academic success in a safe and nurturing environment. Administration and faculty, as instructional leaders, understand that students need to be in school consistently to learn responsibility and respect, enhance motivation, and reap academic success. A student average daily attendance rate of 96.33% is promoted with free-dress pass incentives. Faculty also reap incentives for daily attendance with designated jean days. In addition to tangible incentives, daily attendance is promoted by an enthusiastic reminder during announcements each morning, to be here every day, all day, all the way! Attendance counts!

Desertaire has 14 school buses, with varying geographical routes, tasked with transporting 520 students to and from school each day. Students are provided free breakfast and lunch daily. Student success begins with being in school and having a healthy meal.

Well-rounded learning involves attention to 5 factors: physical, emotional, academic, social, and cultural. In addition to getting to school safe, and on time to receive a healthy meal, social and emotional well-being is consistently monitored across the curriculum. Two certified counselors take an active approach in supporting the needs of students, teachers, parents, and the community.

Desertaire is energized by its random acts of kindness initiative as the foundation to student success. Students are encouraged to perform random acts of kindness on campus, and teachers are encouraged to be vigilant and initiate positive office referrals when they see random acts of kindness. Students receive school-wide recognition on the morning announcements, their picture and description of the act of kindness is showcased on the school's social media, and they receive a certificate. Counselors deliver guidance lessons, targeting character traits, self-care, safety, inclusiveness, and college and career readiness to students in each classroom once a month. All lessons embed an anti-bullying campaign using real world application and examples. Desertaire prides itself with restorative circles every Friday. Teachers engage students in structured, purposeful talks, adhering to specific norms to build community and relationships with peers. Restorative circles provide students the opportunity to choose to share feelings/emotions/situations in a non-threatening, non-judgmental, risk-free environment. In restorative circles, teachers can identify those students who are struggling with a situation that merits attention and provide intervention in a timely manner or refer that student to the counselor for additional intervention and/or services. Random acts of kindness and restorative circles have contributed to student success by decreasing office discipline referrals from 400 in the 2016-2017 school year to 87 office discipline referrals in 2017-2018, and through February of the 2019-2020 school year, Desertaire had 22 office discipline referrals. When a student's social/emotional needs are met, the learning follows.

In the 2016-2017 school year, Desertaire welcomed a new administration comprised of one principal and two assistant principals. That same year, Desertaire was classified a "Focus School" by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) due to wide achievement gaps in reading and math when compared to schools nationwide and assigned to the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS). TAIS is a systematic framework of monitoring and support designed to incite continuous improvement of Texas school districts and campuses.

Teachers and administrators worked diligently to implement a comprehensive and strategic plan to improve student outcomes and the quality of instruction through a myriad of practices refined during Professional Learning Communities (PLC) every Tuesday and Thursday during conference periods. Practices included, but were not limited to, data talks and analysis, progress monitoring, instructional rounds, tiered intervention, and teachers teaching teachers. Teachers made a significant advance from a pass/fail mindset to one of targeting student growth. Implementing a co-teach inclusive model that discounts the ideology that students with disabilities, because of their challenges were destined to be less-than, rather implemented a universal learning design that works for all students. Teachers incorporated innovative initiatives to target student growth for the Gifted and Talented (GT) population with robotics and destination imagination.

In 2018-2019, one year later, Desertaire earned a "B" rating based on Texas' A-F accountability system. In 2019-2020 school year, two years after being classified a "Focus School," Desertaire is among the district's highest-performing schools, earning an "A" rating based on Texas' A-F accountability system in student achievement, school progress, and most significantly closing the gaps. Desertaire also earned four distinction designations from TEA, demonstrating outstanding performance in English/Language Arts, academic growth, closing the gaps, and postsecondary readiness. The turnaround at Desertaire Elementary is impressive and indicative of the rigor, vitality, and distinction of a faculty and administration driven toward higher levels of excellence.

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

Desertaire prides itself on the philosophy that all students can learn and all students are the responsibility of all faculty and staff. An ideology that SPED teachers are responsible for SPED students, or bilingual teachers are responsible for EL students is not conducive to a best practice approach of universal design for learning (UDL). Each learner in the classroom brings diverse backgrounds, strengths, needs, and interests. Classrooms are highly diverse, and curriculum needs to be designed from the start to meet this diversity. Desertaire’s UDL approach minimizes curricular barriers and maximizes learning by integrating genuine opportunities, involving the what, how, and why of learning, for every student. Students need to gain knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm in all 3 areas of learning. Innovation is key as a one size fits all approach is not practical to teaching and learning in 21st century education. The curriculum needs to both support and challenge students, and be implemented with flexibility, to accommodate all types of learners.

Desertaire’s success is attributed to the time and attention teachers take in planning, developing, and reflecting upon lessons. First, teachers identify the goal. They need to know what specifically they want their students to learn followed by identifying possible barriers that may inhibit students from meeting that goal. In implementing lessons, teachers use multiple means of representation, by presenting content using different media such as graphics and animation, highlighting important features, whole group, small group, and/or paired discussion, hands-on activities, high-level questioning, and stimulating understanding of academic vocabulary with visual supports. Students are provided multiple opportunities to express what they know, supported by models, feedback, and supports for varying levels of proficiency. Students are also provided multiple means of engagement because teachers understand that what may be motivating for one student is not motivating for another. Teachers provide students choices to ignite their interests and autonomy. In a classroom embracing a universal design for learning, students risk mistakes and learn from them because if they love learning, they will persist through challenges.

1b. Reading/English language arts

Desertaire curriculum follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), adhering to the scope and sequence from the Texas Resource System (TRS), which is aligned to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). In addition, a research-based comprehensive e-learning initiative is used as an early reading indicator in grades K-2 and a 3-Tiered indicator in grades 3-5. The e-learning initiative data drives progress monitoring and support intervention across platforms in an animated structure that is highly engaging for students. Teachers are also able to target specific standards based on individual student needs, and implement an e-learning, personalized intervention plan.

Teachers implement a balanced literacy framework in both reading and writing, whereby students are provided with a deliberate plan of components to develop skills to demonstrate success in readiness standards. The components of balanced literacy allow students to engage in Shared Reading, Interactive Read-Aloud, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, Shared Writing, Interactive Writing, Independent Writing, and Word Study. In implementing reading centers and word study, teachers not only teach whole class rigorous mini lessons on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension, they are also able to instruct students in small group and/or individually to meet their specific needs. A structured balanced literacy framework allows teachers to move students along the reading continuum while differentiating reading instruction to address each student's zone of proximal development, providing high levels of support and engagement.

The balanced literacy framework involves multiple components of reading, writing, and word study at various levels of scaffolding. Teachers use the gradual release of responsibility method, often referred to as I Do, We Do, You Do, to teach explicit skills and strategies, allow time for guided and independent practice, and provide student feedback. Teachers use read-aloud and think-aloud to model strategic reading and

thinking skills and give students frequent opportunities for collaborative conversations. Students learn to be critical thinkers by analyzing text and supporting thought processes by using context clues and citing text evidence. Word Study includes several foundational components such as phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar. Memorization alone does not improve spelling skills, rather, explicit lessons must be taught within the Word Study time followed by students transferring skills to independent writing. Desertaire teachers incorporate reading and writing instruction simultaneously and not in isolation. Students in grades K-5 maintain an interactive literacy notebook to foster vertical alignment between grade levels. Notebooks are organized by tabs identifying grade level concepts, and include teacher presented information merged with the student's own thinking.

1c. Mathematics

Desertaire curriculum follows the TEKS, adhering to the scope and sequence from the TRS and state adopted math materials for kindergarten and first grade. Grades 2-5 implement a math curriculum with a TEKS aligned scope and sequence, focusing on hands-on learning in a problem-solving format, to teach content knowledge, algebraic reasoning, strategies, data analysis, basic facts, financial literacy, and systematic concept lessons. Student success begins with engaging lessons that help students build the conceptual foundation and develop the mathematical processes needed for strengthening cognitive math skills, algebraic reasoning, and problem solving. Weekly assessments are administered to facilitate data-driven decision making and differentiated instruction in planning re-teaching, small group, and/or individualized instruction.

The problem-solving process can be difficult for some learners. Teachers implement structured math lessons with active learning experiences, to conceptualize skills being taught. The following is an example of an active learning experience that incorporates spiraling of concepts and learning across the curriculum. Students are provided a menu to a local fast food restaurant (reading and text features) and \$20.00 in varying denominations (money skills using manipulatives). They are to select what food they want and order with a partner (real word application, cooperative learning), add up the amounts (adding decimals), figure out the amount of sales tax (percentages), and figure out if they have enough money to buy what they want (financial literacy) and determine the amount of their change (subtracting decimals). As an exit ticket, students are required to respond to a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) question level 3 or 4. The following is an example of the DOK level 4 question for this lesson. What information can you gather to support your ideas about adding and subtracting positive rational numbers? The expectation is that students understand the importance of aligning decimals and digits in appropriate place value.

Building a strong foundation for understanding, with conceptual learning opportunities from concrete to abstract activities and spiraled repetition of readiness concepts, is powerful. E-learning resources are also integrated in math, driving progress monitoring and support intervention across platforms in an animated structure that is highly engaging for students. Teachers are also able to target specific standards based on individual student needs, and implement an e-learning, personalized intervention plan.

1d. Science

Desertaire curriculum follows the TEKS, adhering to the scope and sequence from the TRS, which is aligned to the STAAR. Student lessons include a variety of modalities such as e-learning resources, videos, hands on activities, and activities involving music and movement. Desertaire has a math/science instructional specialist who facilitates science experiments in the science lab two times per month and is an active participant in helping teachers with their hands-on activities in the classroom.

Academic science vocabulary can be difficult for students to learn. To facilitate understanding, teachers incorporate chants in their rituals and routines. Chants are developed with a distinct rhythm, rhyme, cadence, and movements to provide students an enjoyable, effective, and memorable way for them to learn difficult science concepts. The chant is simple, written on chart paper, and posted in the classroom. To provide additional support, teachers include a sketch or visual cue alongside the vocabulary words they feel students may struggle with. Students sing the chant everyday for the time they are engaged with that concept. New chants are developed for each transition to a different concept.

Desertaire students engage in learning activities that provide opportunities for higher level inquiry by collaboratively creating models and designing investigations. Students are tasked with a challenge with unique parameters and a specific objective. They must work collaboratively as a team to accomplish the task. Students learn the fundamental practices of the scientific method and must persevere through success and failures to successfully meet their objective. The hard work students put into their learning is showcased to the parent community at a STEM Night event.

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

Desertaire curriculum follows the TEKS, adhering to the scope and sequence from the TRS, which is aligned to the STAAR. The five areas of focus in the social studies curriculum include civics, government, history, geography and economics. Civics lessons help students develop a commitment to the values and principles that are necessary for the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy. Government lessons help students acquire an understanding of the development, purpose, and operations of political systems for them to make informed decisions and rational judgments as a member of their community and as a citizen in a global society. History lessons enable students to develop an appreciation of our nation's heritage and explain patterns of historical succession and change to form an understanding of current events and the future of our global society. Geography lessons help students recognize, analyze, and explain information about human and physical features of places and regions. It is important for students to understand how people interact with physical environments. Lastly, economic lessons develop students' understanding of the principles and concepts to prepare them to make wise, personal decisions when interacting in global economies.

Teachers create high-interest units using a variety of instructional practices, learning opportunities, and assessments. Students collaboratively participate in inquiry-based discussions, study primary sources, and analyze multiple perspectives. Learning opportunities are highly collaborative and incorporate strategies from Reader's and Writer's Workshop, including supporting reasoning with text evidence and main idea. Each instructional decision is focused on bringing history to life for our students. Teachers schedule field trips related to a historical unit or novel study, like the fifth graders visiting the local Holocaust Museum after reading *Prisoner B-3087* by Alan Gratz. Through the teaching of social studies our students become well rounded citizens.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Desertaire has two certified Physical Education (PE) coaches and 2 coaching assistants. All students in K-5 are provided 45 minutes of PE every day. Coaches develop lessons to engage students in collaborative activities focusing on muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, eye-hand and eye-foot coordination, balance, and spatial awareness. The goal is for students to learn to value physical activity and its contributions to a healthy lifestyle. Desertaire is committed to teaching the importance of valuing physical activity and promoting a healthy lifestyle for our students and their families. Wellness Wednesdays are days for parents to join their children during their scheduled 45-minute PE time. Parents and their children participate in physical activity and obtain information on overall health and wellness from the coaching faculty and staff.

Through flexible scheduling, teachers can sign up their class to go to the library once per week. The Library Media Specialist supports teachers with delivering a lesson, with appropriately selected reading material, that aligns with what the students are learning in class. Students listen to a story read aloud, participate in discussion about the story, and can check out books for their enjoyment.

Fifth grade students have Fine Arts for 45 minutes every day. Students can select a class based on personal interest. Classes offered are art, orchestra, band, and guitar. Each class is taught by a certified teacher.

Students in third through fifth grades are empowered to connect with technology in preparation for successful college and future careers. The instructional technologist meets with classes to teach elements of research, including reliable sources, using focused key terms, bookmarking, and citing sources. Teachers enhance student assignments by using Google Classroom. They learn details of formatting projects such as how to use insert options to insert images into a document and to resize or reposition images. Students use Google slides to create a series of slides for presentations. Google Sheets is used as a platform to teach students the functions of a cell, column, row, chart, and graph. The students learn how to create formulas and manipulate data in spreadsheets.

3. Academic Supports:

3a. Students performing below grade level

Students who struggle with academic progress are identified and monitored by a team committee coordinated approach, including Response to Intervention (RTI) and data talks, structured Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and evidence-based interventions implemented by specialized support teachers and instructional coaches. Faculty and staff buy into a culture that views students as everyone's responsibility, and not merely the grade level teacher in which the student pertains.

Desertaire has three specialized support teachers, two instructional coaches, two interventionists, a library media specialist, and an instructional technologist on staff who take an active approach to help teachers with students performing below grade level with instruction and intervention. All grade level schedules include a daily intervention block. During intervention, teachers target areas of need or low performance standards and develop lessons for small group or individual assistance. A common practice among faculty is teachers helping teachers. If one teacher has been successful with a specific lesson, standard, or concept, that teacher will take all grade level students who struggled with that lesson, standard, or concept during intervention block. In addition to teachers, instructional coaches, interventionists, library media specialist, and instructional technologist will also take intervention groups. After school tutoring is provided to struggling students two days per week. Active, data-driven progress monitoring allows teachers to regularly change tutoring groups based on specific need, minimizing having the same group of students in tutoring all year.

Each year, administration allocates funding for Saturday school. After Christmas break teachers begin to compose target groups, based on interim assessment data, for Saturday school. Saturday school is for students in grades 3-5 who will be administered the STAAR. Teachers volunteer to teach Saturday school and work collaboratively to deliver engaging and powerful lessons targeting Texas' readiness standards. Desertaire's parent liaison is on staff to assist with bridging home/school relationships, promote school volunteers, and support parent and community needs by locating resources for families. The parent liaison schedules regular parenting classes targeting various topics such as bullying, how to help children with homework, literacy, math/science, and others.

3b. Students performing above grade level

Desertaire's commitment to weekly PLC's, involving meticulous data analysis, ensures each student's progress is regularly monitored and teaching resources appropriately implemented with fidelity. Analyzing student performance facilitates the process for the data to drive instruction, and students who are performing above grade level can receive the depth of rigor required to challenge them to new heights. Students who are identified Gifted and Talented (GT), or not identified GT but excel above grade level, can participate in a locally sponsored competitive program. The program is academically focused and designed to challenge students in the areas of mathematics, engineering, and creativity. Specific challenges aligned to TEKS and with a heavy emphasis on S.T.E.A.M (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) are distributed to students. Students are required to work collaboratively, using a hands-on approach, to apply their knowledge and work through real world situations. Desertaire is proud to report that their 5th grade team won 1st place in regional competition this year.

Teachers also provide students performing above grade level opportunities for project-based learning to

increase instructional rigor and keep them engaged and motivated. An example of a project-based assignment is 5th graders compiling a biography scrapbook of a famous person in history. Project-based learning is research-based and empowers students to connect with technology as they are challenged to think critically. After conducting extensive research on an individually selected person, students compose a biography poem, construct a birth announcement and certificate, identify other famous people who lived within the same era, compose a diary entry, write to an advice columnist about a problem that the person had, respond as the advice columnist suggesting a way to solve the problem, write a letter to their person's parents, and finally compose an obituary with focus on what they believe was the person's legacy. Students enjoy a component titled the secret box. Based on the research conducted, students make an inference and identify something in their person's life they may not have wanted anybody to know.

3c. Special education

Currently, 147 students are receiving special education services. Desertaire offers a continuum of services to students with disabilities focused on independent educational need and least restrictive environment. Special educators understand how vital establishing relationships with students and families are in the extent of their success. Teachers maintain active communication by reaching out to parents each week.

Teachers pride themselves on maintaining a high level of curricular rigor while meeting students' unique needs. The most restrictive special education instructional environments at Desertaire are two, self-contained classrooms where students with Emotional Disturbances receive specialized support to mitigate behavioral struggles. Students in grades K-2 are grouped in one classroom and those in grades 3-5 grouped in another. Each classroom has a highly qualified, special education teacher and two paraprofessionals. Special education teachers plan with general education teachers and instruction in all subject areas is provided in the self-contained classroom. Educators work collaboratively to prepare students in the self-contained classrooms to mainstream into general education. Some students can successfully participate in the general education classrooms for certain subjects or a specific part of the school day.

For those students who need specialized support with specific standards, or a specific part of instruction, special educators pull students out of their regular class to provide small group support to mitigate areas of struggle. Support Facilitation is also provided whereby special education teachers and/or paraprofessionals go into the general education classroom, for a specified period and subject, to help students in small groups. Desertaire takes pride in its successful implementation of a co-teach model in grades 3-5. Co-teaching affords students with special needs expanded opportunities for concentrated and individualized assistance in the general education setting, increasing access to the general education curriculum while decreasing stigma. Students with diverse learning styles have greater opportunity for continuity of instruction as the teachers benefit from the professional support and exchange of teaching practices as they work collaboratively.

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

Desertaire has 209 students identified ELs (Spanish predominant), who are enrolled in either a dual language or monolingual classroom. Students whose first language is other than English, and whose parents disclose that upon registration, are enrolled in the dual language classroom. Students whose first language is other than English, and whose parents do not disclose that upon registration or make a specific request against a dual language classroom, are enrolled in a monolingual classroom. Desertaire follows a dual language one-way model, whereby instruction focuses on a gradual release toward transitioning students to become English speakers. For example, instruction in Kindergarten begins with 90% instruction in Spanish and 10% in English. By the time students are in 5th grade, the percentage of instruction is 90% English and 10% Spanish.

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAS) is an assessment program for students in Texas Public Schools who are learning the English language. TELPAS tests language proficiency of K-12 ELs in four language domains, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students are expected to make at least one year of growth in one academic year, measured by levels of beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. TELPAS measures learning in alignment with the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) that are a part of the TEKS curriculum to ensure ELs are provided full opportunity to

learn English and succeed academically, but most importantly establish a student-set purpose for learning.

Desertaire's success with its high population of ELs is attributed to viewing language acquisition as an integrated, balanced language approach expanding on theoretical research of effective strategies to promote language acquisition and academic literacy. Teachers plan with the end in mind by learning strategies for differentiation that modify the amount and type of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a language functional environment, while reflecting and engaging in dialogue around effective pedagogy in relationship to current practice. Strategies for ELs are specifically selected to provide linguistic, cognitive, and affective support. Desertaire dual language classrooms are environments with an abundance of meaningful reading and writing activities, where participation is possible without evaluation, and collaboration is ongoing. Language is taught and practiced, through all subject areas, all day.

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

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Desertaire students practice kindness, empathy, respect, giving, and service to the community through a variety of initiatives. School counselors take the lead in community initiatives. Throughout the school year, students participate in collecting items to donate to communities in need. Non-perishable food items are collected and donated to the community pantry through an initiative called Love Thy Neighbor. Pennies for patients is another annual initiative where students collect pennies and the money is donated to the Leukemia and Lymphoma society to help with research for cancer patients. Students collect beanies and socks for veterans and take them to the local veterans' home. Veteran's at the home are appreciative of the items, but mostly appreciate the kindness the students show by spending time with them. School counselors accompany the students to initiatives where items are distributed in person.

An important focus, supported by the district, is the anti-bullying initiative. Since the enactment of David's Law in 2017, expectations to decrease bullying have increased. In addition to adherence of a policy that establishes specific protocol for reporting, school counselors take the lead for providing all students, faculty, and staff safety guidance lessons throughout the school year. The district has also established an anonymous alert whereby anyone is able to report bullying without disclosing who they are. Students need to feel safe in their learning environment to be successful.

With a high military population, U.S. Army soldiers are Desertaire's partners in education. A U.S. Army troop is assigned each year to participate and assist with school needs and events. Soldiers lead the Ambassador's Program designed for students to develop or refine leadership skills. Teachers nominate students to participate in this military-led program. In addition, this program has a component that assists students, whose parents are active duty military, to make the transition to a new city, new school, and new friends a little easier.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

In addition to the initiatives for engaging students previously described, Desertaire's specialized support teachers, instructional coaches, interventionists, library media specialist, and instructional technologist also take an active approach in engaging families and the community with a variety of literacy projects throughout the school year. The library media specialist promotes literacy projects and events on social media to boost participation. Texas created an initiative to promote literacy whereby students can participate in the democratic process of voting by reading a book that has earned a Bluebonnet award and then voting for their favorite award-winning book. Students experience the voting process using computer-based ballots.

Each year faculty and staff host edible book night, whereby students, parents, and the community can participate in listening to different short stories involving an element of food. Different stations are set up, the story is read aloud to small groups at a time, followed by a treat featured in the story. For example, participants who listen to the story *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff get a cookie at the end of the story. Desertaire advances its push to promote literacy by hosting book fairs throughout the year, featuring an appealing buy-one get-one free. Data resulting from book fairs indicates students acquire an average of 4 new books per year.

El Paso experienced a mass shooting this school year which drastically affected the community, Desertaire students, faculty, and staff. As a result of this tragedy, Desertaire increased its books on kindness and initiated a family project. Parents and students could check out books on kindness from the school library, read them together at home, and create a kindness log. Desertaire recognized those families who participated in the project on a kindness wall in the foyer of the campus. If parents elected not to participate, teachers volunteered this initiative as a class project to ensure that all students could participate.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Desertaire leaders continuously aspire to be better to be able to do better for kids. Teachers are innovatively striving to prepare students with skills to be successful moving forward into high school, college, and future careers. Professional development (PD) is an important element in building the school culture. Desertaire's approach is building capacity in faculty and staff by providing differentiated learning opportunities, aligning with campus and district visions, followed up with meaningful reflection and output.

For most teachers, efforts to build capacity are intrinsically motivated because a teacher's impact in the life of a child may not necessarily be revealed during a year's tenure. Amid the Covid-19 global pandemic, Desertaire's professional culture exhibiting flexibility, commitment, innovation, compassion, cooperative learning, and grit and growth mindset revealed itself in grandeur. Transitioning to distance learning encompasses challenges with technology. Many families lack access to devices and broadband internet, meanwhile, teachers may also not be familiar with digital learning pedagogies. Even in the best of circumstances, effective distance learning can be difficult to accomplish. The week before distance learning began, Desertaire faculty and staff had successfully contacted 93% of all families. One week after distance learning began, faculty and staff had successfully contacted all but 8 students.

The stay at home order required faculty and staff to step out of their comfort zone, learn and try new ways of doing, while providing positive and successful experiences for students. Desertaires's professional culture revealed swift transition to online practices which purposefully embedded ongoing opportunities to engage students and their families in learning. Teachers established virtual labs to help students and families whole group, small group, and 1:1 if needed. Teachers shared newly found resources with one another, such as extensions and virtual math manipulatives. Virtual PLCs, faculty meetings, and committee and parent meetings were held on a structured schedule. Faculty and staff experienced unplanned, swift transformation of remarkable proportions whereby success was upheld by a professional culture of flexibility, commitment, innovation, compassion, cooperative learning, and grit and growth mindset indicative of Desertaire Elementary.

4. School Leadership:

The foundation of Desertaire's leadership is based upon a collaborative approach where relationships with stakeholders are established. While the principal and assistant principals lead and monitor efforts focusing on adhering to policies and procedures, a leadership team comprised of instructional coaches, interventionists, specialized support, library media specialist, parent liaison, focus efforts on monitoring the implementation and fidelity of programs and resources. Administration leads by valuing every member of the school community and encouraging innovation and problem solving in meeting student needs. Expectations, as accountability measures, are high and emphasis rests on ensuring each member of receives high quality support in refining their craft.

A shared leadership model has been a critical element of Desertaire's success. The administrative team meets weekly to discuss how students are meeting academic standards by examining curriculum implementation, instructional strategies observed during classroom visits, assessment tools used to monitor student progress, assessment results, and professional development needs. Administrators attend weekly PLC meetings, hold monthly faculty meetings, and meet for regular RTI and data talks throughout the school year, to closely monitor student progress and accountability in narrowing the achievement gap. Faculty and staff are empowered to leadership roles by volunteering to serve on specific committees, sharing lessons, strategies, and ideas with coworkers.

Desertaire's leadership team serves to develop and sustain relationships with faculty and staff, parents, and the community. To bridge the home-school connection, achievements are celebrated, information is timely and transparent, and instruction adheres to an aligned curricular focus. Parent volunteers also support the school community. Leadership believes in the reciprocity of collaborative efforts, understanding that success is actualized with the support of many. Together, Desertaires's leadership is a myriad of voices working together to improve learning for each child.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The single most contributing factor to Desertaire's success in narrowing the achievement gap and student growth is progress monitoring. Progress monitoring involves assessing students' academic performance by quantifying their rates of improvement or progress toward goals and determining how well they are responding to instruction, but also involves many more elements. Progress monitoring also involves the growth and progress of effective teacher and administrator practices.

Desertaire teachers are provided ongoing opportunities for focused planning, reflection on instruction and practices, and support in making necessary adjustments. Every nine weeks, a half day is allocated for teachers to collaboratively focus on the preceding elements. Substitute teachers are secured for each classroom during the time teachers are planning. Campus administration conducts periodic instructional rounds and frequent classroom observations, followed up by debriefing and feedback with the teacher, and individualized plans for improvement if needed. The purpose of instructional rounds is to develop a shared understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like and what administration and school districts need to do to support it. Participants for instructional rounds at Desertaire include campus leadership, faculty, and district personnel. Five different classroom observations are conducted each week by the principal and assistant principals, followed up by timely feedback for teacher review. Lastly, progress monitoring involves team committee support through RTI and data talks, structured PLCs, and interventions by specialized support teachers and instructional coaches.

Weekly PLC meetings focus on answering the four corollary questions: What is it we want our students to learn? How will we know if each student has learned it? How will we respond if students have not learned it? By grade level, teachers engage in a coordinated approach to ensure fidelity in implementing district initiatives and resources and refer to specific assessment data to guide informed instructional decisions. The faculty then analyzes the priority learning standards to establish a collective agreement about what the standards require students to know, understand, and be able to do after which they collaboratively develop strategies and action steps to build on strengths while addressing student needs. Research-based instructional strategies are discussed, and high leverage ones are incorporated into the lesson plans based on this work. Teachers use long-term plans and curriculum mapping to identify low performance standards to address in core content instruction. Teachers focus on areas of assessed need and collaborate to craft lessons and determine instructional practices to deliver the lesson. A common formative assessment tool is designed to collect data on the focus standards. The data is used to identify patterns and commonalities between classrooms and drive differentiated instruction. Teachers share best practices and determine teaching strategies to intervene for students not meeting grade level standards.

Students are also actively involved in monitoring their individual progress. Each student has a data folder, where they track their assessment scores within a bar graph model, reflecting their growth and needs over time. Teachers debrief with students after checkpoints and have critical conversations about their growth. Students recognize areas of their own strengths and areas to improve. Data from the folders is used to transform small group instruction by designing intervention specifically to student needs. Desertaire teachers have bought into the ideology that data is useless until it impacts instruction.