

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2021 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    [X] Charter    [ ] Magnet[X] Choice

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

Official School Name Desert View Academy  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3777 W. 16th Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Yuma                      State AZ                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 85364-4502

County Yuma

Telephone (928) 314-1102                      Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL https://dva.dvsk12.com/                      E-mail dweigel@desertviewschools.com

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\* Mr. Richard Ogston                      E-mail rogston@desertviewschools.com  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Juniper Tree Academy School District                      Tel. (928) 817-8060

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. Richard Ogston  
(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, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The electronic signature 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 2021 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 must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

| Grade                 | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| PreK                  | 0          | 0            | 0           |
| K                     | 80         | 68           | 148         |
| 1                     | 82         | 74           | 156         |
| 2                     | 71         | 69           | 140         |
| 3                     | 84         | 73           | 157         |
| 4                     | 75         | 64           | 139         |
| 5                     | 62         | 72           | 134         |
| 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> | 454        | 420          | 874         |

\*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):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 70 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 21 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 11%

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

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

| <b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>   | <b>Answer</b> |
|--|---------------|
| (1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year   | 50            |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 55            |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]  | 105           |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019   | 923           |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)   | 0.11          |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100  | 11            |

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

Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, Filipino, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 6 %  
54 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44 %

Total number students who qualify: 384

8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %

108 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

16 Autism

0 Multiple Disabilities

0 Deafness

1 Orthopedic Impairment

0 Deaf-Blindness

0 Other Health Impaired

15 Developmental Delay

47 Specific Learning Disability

1 Emotional Disturbance

43 Speech or Language Impairment

0 Hearing Impairment

0 Traumatic Brain Injury

0 Intellectual Disability

0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness

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

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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

|  | <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.  | 34                     |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.  | 7                      |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.   | 25                     |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 0                      |

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 25:1

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

| <b>Required Information</b> | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 | 2016-2017 | 2015-2016 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Daily student attendance    | 95%       | 95%       | 95%       | 95%       | 96%       |
| High school graduation rate | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        |

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

| <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.

At Desert View Academy, our mission is to Educate our students with Knowledge, Empower our students with Character, and Equip our students for Life. This is our "Why" and drives everything we say and do. Our "How" may change depending on student needs and/or circumstances, however, our "Why" remains steadfast.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

The DVA leadership team worked diligently during June of 2020 with HealthyVerify (HV), sponsored by Barrows Neurological Institute and Arizona State University, to determine preventative measures and to set parameters and guidelines for reopening school in August of 2020.

Our plan was to open in-person learning for those who desired it and to provide a distance learning (DL) option for those who chose to learn at home. Due to a state executive order, DVA began with all students on DL on 8/17/2020. However, schools were required to provide a safe space on campus for students to learn in a supervised environment. During this time, we had up to 200 students attend the safe space, or “Eagles Nest” daily, logging in to interact and complete assignments via our DL format. In order to follow social distancing guidelines, we provided an “Eagles Nest” for each grade level and assigned staff to supervise students. It was evident that parents wanted their children in school, and they became frustrated that their child was spending time interacting with the teacher on a computer when the teachers were on campus, often teaching from the classroom next door. With our protocols in place via HealthyVerify, parents were given the choice of 2 learning paths beginning 9/8/2020: 5 days a week on-campus learning with safety protocols or 5 days a week at home learning with parent support. Approximately 2/3 of our Eagles reported to campus daily for learning, while the remaining 1/3 worked from home and participated

in synchronous and asynchronous learning provided by designated DL teachers. Each quarter we have given parents those two choices. Currently, 707 of our Eagles report to campus each day for in-person learning, while 174 of our Eagles remain at home participating in DL.

The local school districts shut down in-person learning and all students were on DL until March of 2020. DVA carefully planned and successfully executed both in-person learning and DL throughout the 20-21 school year. Thanks to our fidelity to the health and safety standards set forth in HealthyVerify, DVA did not experience any spread of COVID within our school community and therefore had no need to quarantine classes or close the school building and shift all students to DL.

Whether on campus or DL, we remain true to our mission of educating our students with knowledge, empowering our students with character, and equipping our students for life.

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

DVA is a tuition-free, Arizona Public Charter School, where all students are welcome to attend. We host an open enrollment period, and if enrollment in a grade level fills to capacity, we institute the lottery process.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Yuma is primarily an agricultural community located on the southern border, although the military has a significant presence represented by Marine Corp Air Station and the Army's Yuma Proving Ground. We also host a large population of Border Patrol Agent families. These populations affect our DVA community differently: many military students and staff are only in Yuma for three years, while some of our students from agricultural families travel back and forth between Yuma and Salinas, CA during the school year. It is vitally important that we recognize and understand how continual moving can affect the attitude and the performance of students. Therefore, our team works exceptionally hard to develop respect and rapport with, and between students.

Perhaps the greatest contributing factor to the school's success is staying true to our mission statement, which is more than a framed document on the wall. It is the heartbeat of DVA. Our mission is: Educate students with Knowledge, Empower students with Character, and Equip students for Life. DVA emphasizes excellence in education, as seen in the "A" ratings that the State of Arizona previously bestowed on the school. Empower with character flows from the curriculum, Character Counts, which provides the blueprint for the culture that DVA works so hard to achieve. The Six Pillars that comprise the model are: Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Respect, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. The DVA campus hallways are lined with actual street signs with names like: Trustworthy Blvd and Caring Way. The gym/cafeteria complex is aptly named Character Central. These signs serve as a reminder of the character traits that our Eagles are striving to develop. Equipping for Life is the result of activities like Positive Behavior for Learning (PBL), Technology Education, Playworks, and Project Wisdom. Students learn serious life skills as they interact with one another and their teachers. Teachers design lessons aligned to Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards in order to prepare and equip students for success after they leave elementary school. DVA believes strongly that our mandate is to reach the whole child. This is reflected in the fact that each student at DVA enjoys a broad array of weekly specials: art, physical education, music, media, and technology.

Another key factor in our success is our partnership with parents/guardians. We host conferences at the beginning of the year to share data that indicates strengths and growth areas and to set student learning goals for the year. Establishing positive relationships with parents/guardians is essential to the learning process at DVA. We believe strongly that parents/guardians are the primary educators in the student's life. Together, we are able to accomplish great things.

DVA educators are committed to doing whatever it takes to guide students to success. Each grade level has a master teacher who guides the team's weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) and is accountable for the team's consistency and fidelity to best practices in instruction. The master teacher is skilled in the disaggregation of data and advises the creation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 groups based on data. This collaborative practice ensures that whatever class a student is in, whether taught by a first-year teacher or a veteran, the student will receive the instruction necessary to be successful.

We believe that targeted, small group instruction is essential to our student's growth. DVA currently has 24 paraprofessionals, or Learning Coaches (LC), on our educational team providing support, intervention, and enrichment for our Eagles. One area that LCs have proven successful is in our kindergarten program. Not only do we offer full-day kindergarten with limited class size, but each class is also under the tutelage of a full-time teacher and a full-time LC. This provides the opportunity to work with individual students and small groups throughout the day building foundational skills and enrichment. This cooperative approach results in phenomenal growth, as evidenced by our kindergarten Galileo data from SY2019-20. Our youngest learners achieved 170% of the yearly expected growth in English Language Arts (ELA) and 207% of expected growth in math.

Whole Brain Teaching (WBT) principles are emphasized on a school-wide basis. Among other distinctives, WBT stresses that instruction is delivered in chunks, with far less "teacher talk". Students continually teach each other, throughout the lesson, to ensure understanding. Student leaders are developed and each student sets goals for improvement. Class celebrations occur when students "Level Up" by demonstrating consistent



improvement. WBT has become crucial in our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and in integrating new students into our DVA environment. The consistency of WBT, as implemented schoolwide, has created unity among our students and staff. Among other benefits, one can go anywhere on campus and instantly summon students' attention with a simple call of "Class" and receive a resounding "Yes!"

At DVA, our mission is clear, our methods are proven, and our fruit is evident.

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

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

DVA began the year with 2 weeks of DL for all students and transitioned to parent choice after Labor Day. Since more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of our student population chose in-person learning, we were able to continue as normally as possible, within HealthyVerify guidelines. Therefore, our instruction may not have been affected as drastically as schools that operated entirely in DL for the majority of the year.

DVA maintained fidelity to a 90-minute reading block for grades K-3 and a 60-minute reading block for grades 4-5. This has proven invaluable for both English Language Learners (ELL) and non-ELL students alike, as well as for our exceptional-needs students. An abundance of research-based materials, available to teachers, allow for a broad base of preparation and instruction on multiple grade levels. DVA implements core curriculum from Savvas Learning in ELA, math, social studies, and science. Since a digital component is included with our curriculum, the transition to DL was relatively smooth, as staff, students, and parents/guardians could freely access all necessary instructional materials and assessments from home.

Technology-infused learning has enhanced education at DVA. Students researching in core subjects, honing keyboarding skills, and mastering programs/software are only a few of the benefits garnered by leveraging technology for all students. Since our Eagles were confident in utilizing technology in their learning, they had an advantage when the climate shifted to learning at home.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is an integral element in DVA's success. Tier 1 students all receive core instruction, Tier 2 students receive an extra 30 minutes of targeted intervention, and Tier 3 students receive a double-dip of intervention, which may include skills practice or re-teaching. Phonics for Reading, Read Naturally, Reading Mastery, IXL, Renaissance STAR, iStation, Moby Max, and Freckle are some of the research-based programs utilized during interventions. We invest a lot of time and manpower in our K-3 interventions because we believe that if we fill the gaps during the primary years, students will enjoy greater success in the future. Title 1 funds pay for a full-time LC for an ELL kindergarten class, which we believe contributes to our high reclassification rate for our youngest ELLs.

In addition to traditional intervention support, we have implemented WIN (What I Need) time for all students. We dedicate time in the schedule, educators, and research-based materials to support students during WIN time. Our teachers collaboratively plan WIN time according to recent data from Galileo, iStation, or formative assessments. All Eagles attend WIN group for ELA and math, which prevents those who need extra support from feeling singled out. Since implementing WIN, we have noticed our educators now have the time and the resources to not only provide remediation, but also enrichment and acceleration. This is evident as each year we have 30+ kindergarten students participating in an advanced reading class during WIN. These young Eagles are so proud to share their reading skills with anyone around!

Since WIN is the norm at DVA, it was natural to implement it during remote learning. Providing a designated time for targeted, small group instruction has been key to maintaining connection and relationship with our DL Eagles. We often noticed a discrepancy between data produced at home and skills demonstrated when directly working with the teacher via Zoom. While parents mean well, it doesn't prove beneficial to assist their child during assessments to consistently earn a score of 100%. The opportunity for WIN allows educators go beyond the false front produced by inflated data and dig deeper to strategically target skills necessary for mastery.

Assessment is frequent and continuous for our students. Our educators have worked diligently to weave formative assessments throughout instruction to gain an understanding of student mastery and/or struggles. The use of exit tickets, class-created rubrics, self and peer assessment, and other formative assessments have transformed our approach to teaching and learning. A benefit of ongoing assessment is that our Eagles really own their learning.

Measuring proficiency and growth are important aspects of our learning path. Our Eagles are assessed, via Galileo, 3 times a year in ELA and math. These benchmark assessments also serve as an indicator for

preparedness for the required state assessments. We utilize iStation as both a diagnostic and progress monitoring tool in ELA. Our Eagles also assess in Renaissance STAR 4 times per year. Standardized assessments combined with summative assessments provided in the curriculum give a glimpse of student needs and mastery. When summative, formative, and anecdotal assessments by the educator are added, a multi-faceted approach to student data is normalized and provides a more focused picture to plan for student success.

One size does not fit all, especially in education. Allocating resources and personnel, based on a variety of data, has provided DVA with the necessary means to empower every DVA Eagle to soar.

**1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

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

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

DVA Eagles have been fortunate to continue with learning from our special area teachers even in the midst of the pandemic. Working out the process on how to implement specials for all Eagles, whether on campus or at home, was a bit challenging!

Eagles receive instruction in art, technology, and physical education one week, and music, library, and physical education the following week. Special area teachers created DL classes for each grade level, then, recorded lessons for asynchronous learning for our DLs while continuing to teach, in person, our on-campus students. Teachers also established office hours and Remind accounts for our DLs in order to touch base in “real-time”. When our music teacher needed to teach from home due to health reasons, it became necessary to think outside the box to continue to provide music to our on-campus learners. We hired a LC to facilitate music instruction in class while the teacher presented the lesson, live, from home. We essentially flipped the classroom, and it has proven successful.

Limitations of group gatherings, due to COVID, caused us to cancel many of our special events, such as the Holiday Program, Special Olympics, Family Fun Night, Family Math Night, and our Twilight Arts Exhibition. We recreated Field Day, having each grade level on a separate day in order to keep cohorts together. While this meant planning 6 different days instead of one big event on a single day, the students immensely enjoyed the opportunity to participate with their class in the events.

Character is woven into every aspect of life at DVA, whether in the classroom, in the hallways, at lunch, on the playground, or in specials. Staff and students use the common language of our Pillars of Character or the Three BEs: BE Respectful, BE Responsible, BE Safe. Students are proud to wear a sticker that has been earned saying, “I got caught being responsible, ask me how”. It is common to hear, “Thank you for holding the door. You were being a good citizen.” or similar compliment regarding character. Imagine how affirming it is to ask, “Why is following rules is important?”, and hearing time and again, “Following rules is important to keep everyone safe so we can learn.”

Our character pillar of caring is evidenced in our giving. Supporting the Leukemia Lymphoma Society (LLS) through our Pennies for Patients program is one of the biggest stakeholder partnerships that we are involved in. DVA has raised \$142,697.38 over the past few years and has earned multiple awards for fundraising for this worthy cause. In fact, DVA is the #1 fundraising school in all of Arizona for LLS! Our Yuma community has been greatly affected by cancer, so our efforts to support research in fighting blood cancers are celebrated community-wide. Local businesses join us by hosting collection boxes and our Eagles have been featured in the news for our extravagant giving.

Former students will often mention how the emphasis on character, as a DVA Eagle, impacted them

throughout their educational journey.

At DVA, our character always counts.

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

DVA's foundation is laid in a sound curriculum and strong instructional strategies. Not only is the curriculum aligned to Arizona's College and Career Readiness Standards (ACCRS), but the classroom instruction reflects the changes in how curricula are presented. Higher-level questioning is a key emphasis in ACCRS and lessons taught lean heavily toward the higher side of Blooms, often focusing on Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Instructional strategies are modeled by administration and master teachers and discussed with teachers to ensure that best practices are being employed in the classroom. Vocabulary instruction, and particularly the use of academic language in instruction, maintain a high profile and is seen as the norm in classrooms. DVA emphasizes always speaking in complete sentences, no matter whether students are on campus or at home. Our educational team encourages all stakeholders to hold our Eagles accountable to frame their thoughts in complete sentences.

All educators are provided training in effective Structured English Immersion (SEI) strategies. Implementing these strategies has proven to be powerful for all students, and especially our ELLs. Data indicates that 57.93% of our ELLs transformed to proficiency, and our ELLs demonstrated 103.7% proficiency growth.

Our Eagles with exceptional needs are provided services both in, and out, of the classroom, aligned with his/her individual goals. For our exceptional needs students who chose DL, it was critical to partner with parents/guardians to provide an extra layer of support for the student. Without parent/guardian support, many of our DL Eagles struggled to maintain a schedule, complete assignments, and submit completed work. When we strengthen the support system surrounding the student and work together, our Eagles soar through their goals.

WIN time is built into our schedule and students are flexibly grouped on a skill-by-skill, student-by-student basis. WIN time is intended to focus on what we do when some students do not learn, and how we will extend the learning for students who are already proficient. Data is collaboratively analyzed, and Eagles are retaught by teachers or LCs who have been most successful in this instruction, not necessarily by the same teacher in the same manner. With the restrictions placed upon us during the pandemic, it was necessary to rethink how we could continue to support every Eagle through WIN time. We only grouped students by skills from within a class, rather than mixing students from classes and grade levels. We sanitized between each new group. While this practice cut down on the flexibility of the groups, we believe that continually providing intervention and enrichment for our Eagles is essential. As students began returning to campus and our DL numbers decreased, it became challenging to provide strategic WIN time for every student's need, as the staff was spread thin. Therefore, students on DL were invited to zoom in to WIN time and participate with his/her peers on campus. When our on-campus and DL educators team up to collaborate to meet the individual needs of our students, we create an environment where every student wins.

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

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

Relationships are the key to engaging, motivating, and providing students with a positive environment that supports growth and development. We practice daily check-ins with students, whether on campus or DL. It is not uncommon to overhear a staff member chatting with a student about his/her soccer game, younger sibling, pet, or coding project. Taking an emotional “temperature check” by asking if they are okay and how they rate their feelings for the day provides insight into a student’s perspective.

Every year our Eagles write essays and create posters during National School Choice Week on why they love DVA. A common thread is that students feel safe, and they love their teachers.

We love incorporating school spirit days, such as Western Day, Rounding Up Kindness, Neon Day, Too Bright for Bullying and Drugs, Futuristic Day, and My Future is Bright! Eagles on campus and DL are encouraged to show school spirit, and pictures are shared in our yearbook. We also sponsor College Day, Purple Up for military kids, and True Blue to support law enforcement.

Since students are all facing forward and seated 3-6 feet apart in Character Central for lunch, we implemented “Music Fridays”, which has evolved into “Dance Party Fridays”! The music plays throughout lunch, and for the last 10 minutes we dance! It is so much fun to observe the creativity of our students. An added benefit is departing from lunch with a spring in their step and a smile under their mask.

Due to a variety of reasons, the board members of our Parent Teacher League were non-existent this year, so we found ourselves searching for fundraisers to support student needs. We held our first ever Read-a-Thon and raised over \$16,000 in 2 weeks. Our goal was \$10,000, and because we exceeded that goal, the principal and assistant principal surprised our Eagles by dressing up as Thing 1 and Thing 2 and visiting classes with 2 adorable dogs!

Our goal was to continue to provide as many “normal” experiences as possible, within our HealthyVerify guidelines. For example, Read Across America (RAA) day traditionally involves many community members and parents. Due to COVID restrictions, we aren’t permitting outside guests in the building, so virtual readers were scheduled and suddenly, location no longer mattered. The pandemic challenged us to approach the day differently, and the result provided our Eagles the opportunity to experience authors and readers from around the world.

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

One key strategy for engaging families and community members is using the app “Remind” for communication. Teachers link their classes with parents/guardians for seamless communication. Groups are also created for strategic communication, such as military families, DL families, and transportation, to name a few. The school liaison for the local military base is connected to our school-wide Remind, which facilitates ease of communication with military families. Remind is used to send photos, student work, newsletters, calendars, or a quick message. Parents/guardians are able to respond and send attachments to the teacher, which has alleviated the stress of lost paperwork. Since parents/guardians cannot come into the building due to COVID restrictions, it is crucial that we provide a way for parents/guardians to have a sense of belonging and partnership.

Teleconferencing and/or Zoom with parents for meetings provide options to connect while maintaining HealthyVerify protocols. For example, our Back-to-School evening was hosted on Zoom this year. Our teachers connected with parents/guardians, shared expectations for the class, and provided guidance on how to log into various programs that would be utilized in class. Partnership for learning was established as we launched the school year.

Community partnerships have been challenging this year due to COVID, however, we have been able to

maintain a few.

We partner with Northern Arizona University (NAU) and Grand Canyon University (GCU) to provide placement for education students into effective classrooms to earn their practicum hours or be placed under a mentor teacher for student teaching.

Our annual canned food drive benefits the local community food bank and provides our Eagles the opportunity to practice the character trait of caring.

DVA partners with the Marine Corps to collect toys to be distributed through their Toys for Tots program. By giving, our Eagles are putting their generosity and kindness into practice.

Operation School Bell provides students with uniforms, backpacks, shoes, and other basic needs at no cost to the parent/guardian. When students have the appropriate uniform and supplies, they feel proud of their appearance and are ready to learn.

Our Eagles partner with a community organization to provide “Cuddle Kits” for a student in the hospital or whose family is going through hardship. The Cuddle Kit has a handmade blanket, books, a toy, and other necessary supplies. Meeting the physical, as well as social/emotional needs is part and parcel of educating the whole student.

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

DVA provided 2 weeks of pre-service and work time to prepare our team for DL. We partnered with the University of Phoenix to provide training for our educational team via their Virtual Teaching Academy. One teacher put it this way, “Through this training, I felt like I was standing on the shoulders of master teachers.” Another staff member shared, “The presenters’ expertise gave me a solid base to launch from.”

During this pre, back-to-school training, DVA was also very explicit regarding the safety measures put in place to become a HealthyVerify certified school. These included purchasing air purifiers and UV wands for each classroom and establishing safety protocols. Staff members shared that they felt valued and appreciated as DVA went over and above CDC recommendations for safety.

After 2 weeks of everyone participating in distance learning, we were able to open up our campus for parent choice. At that time, we specified teachers for both DL and on-campus learning. This decision was huge in building, and keeping, staff morale. Our teachers were not expected to balance in-person learning and DL. Rather, teachers were able to focus on one class. Our Assistant Principal began overseeing the DL teachers and LCs providing ongoing support for DL teachers, students, and families.

DVA adopted SeeSaw as a Learning Management System (LMS) to provide a “one-stop-shop” to manage coursework, post assignments, and give instant feedback. Parents/guardians have access to their Eagle’s SeeSaw account. This has been a real game-changer for our learning community. Teachers have discovered the power of giving students immediate and corrective feedback in real-time, rather than collecting a stack of papers, taking them home to grade, and distributing them a few days later. Our educators cite the benefits of asynchronous learning and continue to implement it both in person and DL.

Since we had some staff only responsible for DL and others only responsible for on-campus learning, it was important to create unity. Virtual staff meetings on a weekly basis provide time to check-in, share positive stories, share challenges, in addition to professional development. Much of our professional development has focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and staff members have the opportunity to share strategies for the benefit of the team. For example, we recently discussed strategies on how to ease the DLs transition back to the classroom environment, especially if the student is experiencing anxiety.

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

Our leadership philosophy is akin to our mission statement, “Educate, Empower, Equip”. Several years ago we also adopted the idea, authored by Sam Parker, to SMOVE (Smile and Move). DVA follows the design of servant leadership, focusing on relationships and results.

The school principal serves as the leader of the campus and has occupied that role for 9 years. Our assistant principal (AP) just joined our team in June of 2020, after being urged by teachers at DVA to apply. Our office administrator has been at DVA for 17 years, and she and the principal work together on all things that are management-related. The above serve on our school leadership team, along with a master teacher from each grade level and a lead interventionist. The majority of the team has been serving together in leadership for 6 years.

This year we had to adapt to having an onsite team and a DL team. Our AP oversees the DL team and is accountable to the principal.

The leadership team is critical in developing the plan for academic success, empowering their teammates, and fostering a culture of character. After working through our Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and creating SMART goals for the year, our leadership team determined what was needed in order to effectively reach those goals. For example, lessons linked to the standards including higher-level questioning was indicated as a need, so we adopted a program called Bullseye which provides a platform for leaders to provide feedback to teachers. Bullseye provides a place to document strengths as well as growth areas, in a non-judgmental format. Our leadership members guide their teams in examining benchmark data to strategically plan, as well as work with the grade level below and above for vertical alignment of standards and expectations. For example, we have been building a comprehensive plan for writing. Our leadership team mapped out expectations for each grade level and collaborated with one another to build a cohesive writing plan to take back to their teams.

Our leadership team dedicated 3 days of their summer vacation to plan a safe and functioning return of staff and students. This was the beginning of our partnership with Barrows Neurological Institute to become HealthyVerify certified. Leadership communicated safety protocols with staff, parents, and the community. DVA was featured on the local news for the unique approach to ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for all.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

DVA’s culture of caring, focusing on the Golden Rule, the 6 Pillars of Character, and the 3 BEs, set the tone for culturally responsive teaching and learning. All students are held to high standards of learning, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or language.

Our community has a significant military presence and we have brought in LINKS training, provided by MCAS, to equip staff with strategies to guide students through the anxiety they may be feeling when a parent/guardian deploys. Also, many of our military children have lived in different places around the world and have a wealth of information to share with peers regarding life in other cultures. Sharing experiences with classmates builds bridges and expands cultural understanding.

As a border community, illegals and immigration are hot topics. Children of border patrol agents are often worried about the dangers of the job. Conversely, other students may have family trying to cross the border to make a better life. Since our educators have built relationships with their students, students are more apt to open up when worried or stressed.

This year has been challenging for students of police officers due to many events widely publicized in the media. In the same manner, the Black Lives Matter movement can be divisive. As a school of character, we teach our Eagles to always stand up for what is right.

Our staff is eager to share their culture with students as well. A first-grade teacher, who is Jewish, recently traveled to Israel for her birthright trip. During Hanukkah, she teaches all of the first graders about the significance of the holiday and they enjoy a game of dreidel together.

Implementing Project Wisdom has set a framework for culturally responsive teaching and learning. Each morning the principal shares words of wisdom with students and staff via a brief story. The words of wisdom share insights from poetry, literature, history, traditions, etc., and always end with something to think about. Students often stop the principal in the hallway to discuss the words of wisdom from the morning. Teachers may also follow up with an activity, which is included in a lesson plan.

Culturally responsive teaching and learning is not only being aware of other cultures, but respecting, honoring, and embracing differences. At DVA, all students are valued and expected to learn, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or first language.



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

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Desert View Academy is proud to be a caring community where students excel. We determined to stay the course by providing a safe environment, during the middle of a pandemic, where students would be nurtured and challenged to grow. We brainstormed solutions and wrote plans, with multiple revisions, that encompassed a variety of scenarios. We refused to sacrifice our high expectations just because students “were behind”. It was of utmost importance to provide safe learning environments for staff and students.

Becoming HealthyVerify (HV) certified provided security for staff, students, and parents/guardians, demonstrating that DVA cares greatly about the health and safety of our learning community. Due to our diligence to the HV protocols, and we did not experience a COVID spread among our DVA community that required any grade level or school-wide closures. Staff creatively connected with students while social distancing. The “high five” was replaced by the “air five”, and due to masks, we learned to pay close attention to what a person was saying and to read a person’s expressions through their eyes. Our safe, caring community was thriving, in spite of restrictions.

The question arose, “How can we maintain fidelity to HV protocols and continue to meet our students’ needs?” Our WIN (What I Need) groups traditionally served students from multiple classes and grade levels. To maintain cohorts, we modified our WIN groups to students from a common class, with staff rotating among each cohort. In our exceptional needs population, we discovered that a group may consist of 3 learners on campus and 2 learners at home. Through the use of technology, the group was combined, and we discovered that our Eagles actually enjoyed interacting in this manner, often rising up to teach one another. Our caring community where students excel is being demonstrated on a daily basis through our WIN time.

A caring community where students excel is not limited to our on-campus learners but also applies to our distance learners. Distance learners (DL) were assigned small groups, just as our on-campus Eagles. This has been a scheduling challenge, as needs keep evolving and students transfer in and out of DL. However, it has also been a key element in establishing relationships as well as guiding students in meeting their growth targets.

Desert View Academy is an outstanding example of how a school can cultivate a caring community where students excel, even in the midst of a global pandemic!