

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 1440 East Cliff Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City El Paso State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79902-2835

County El Paso County

Telephone (915) 236-3150 Fax (915) 534-0083

Web site/URL https://www.episd.org/lamar E-mail lamar@episd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Vince Sheffield E-mail _____
superintendent@episd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name El Paso Independent School District Tel. (915) 230-2000

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. Alfonso Velarde
(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

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

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

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

84 TOTAL

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

- 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

- 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	6	11	17
K	23	15	38
1	18	22	40
2	20	26	46
3	20	34	54
4	22	25	47
5	31	28	59
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	140	161	301

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0 % Black or African American
 - 99 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 1 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 42%

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

Throughout the year, we register students from the whole county that enter the El Paso Behavioral Health Hospital. This hospital provides psychiatric and chemical dependency treatment for children. Treatments in average last a week, therefore we register them when they enter and withdraw them once they leave. El Paso ISD (EPISD) provides services to those students therefore they need to be tied to an EPISD school, Lamar E.S.

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, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	61
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	67
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	128
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	302
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.42
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	42

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 75 %
227 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 97 %

Total number students who qualify: 292

8. Students receiving special education services: 11 %
32 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.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>8</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</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: 15
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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	21
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	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 20:1

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

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	98%	98%
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.

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. 2015

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

Our mission at Lamar School is to educate children academically, physically, emotionally, and socially so they can pursue dreams and achieve goals in education, community service, friendship, and wellness in a diverse global culture.

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.

Lamar implemented an online model from August until October. In October, we started Learning Pods. Learning Pods consisted of face-to-face classes for students that could not connect and were willing to come. In January, we opened up the school to 25% of the students that wanted to attend face-to-face classes. In February, 50% of the students that wanted to attend face-to-face were able to do so. In March, we opened up face-to-face classes for any student that wanted to attend school. Currently, about one third of our students attend face-to-face classes, and the rest of the students have virtual classes.

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

PART III - SUMMARY

Lamar Elementary School history begins in 1906 in central El Paso, Texas, as part of the El Paso Independent School District. Originally, the school was located approximately less than a mile from its current location, being one of the first public schools in El Paso's early years. Named in honor of Mirabeau B. Lamar, the second president of the Republic of Texas. He is considered the "Father of Texas education" having set aside land to establish public schools and universities and was himself an accomplished author, poet, military leader, and statesman. The current campus built in 1963, continues the tradition to proudly serve a diverse and culturally rich population.

One of fifty elementary schools in the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), Lamar's student enrollment for the current year is 301 from pre-kinder to fifth grade. It maintains a student population of 99% Hispanic students with 97% economically disadvantaged. Many students have come from El Paso's neighboring city, Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico due to violence and unstable living conditions limiting opportunities for quality education. The campus also reaches out to another neighbor, the Lee & Beulah Moor Children's Home. This facility has been a landmark El Paso institution since 1959 serving children in need. The mission for all students who have come to Lamar then and now is to "motivate every single student to achieve excellence and become productive citizens. Students are welcomed with a positive, nurturing environment regardless of background or circumstances.

Since receiving the National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2015, students, teachers, and administration have been recognized for continuing achievements twice by The Educational Results Partnership Honor Roll in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. This distinction recognizes public schools that demonstrate high levels of student academic achievement, improvement in achievement over time, and reduction in achievement gaps throughout the United States.

Lamar also achieved recognition in 2019 with a Texas Gold Ribbon Award from Texas School Guide with an A+ rating. Lamar's ranking was 149 out of 4582 elementary schools in Texas. The schools are assigned ranks and grades based on student achievement on standardized tests, student growth year-to-year, and how well schools support economically disadvantaged students. Despite the pandemic in 2020 The Texas School Guide ranked Lamar #1 "Consistent Gold Ribbon Elementary School" in El Paso. The spotlight and recognition online and social media have encouraged parents to enroll their children at Lamar.

The Lamar's vision statement is "Lamar School will continue to meet the needs of the students. The goal is to prepare students academically, emotionally and socially to succeed in a highly competitive world." Teachers strive to ensure that students are ready to be life-long learners from prekindergarten through fifth grade. Some of the unique programs we offer are dual language program, chess classes, and a social emotional learning curriculum, reading and physical education events.

Approximately, 2/3 of students are in dual language classes and instructed in the 50/50 model. Half the day is in Spanish and the other half of instruction is in English. Students continue with this program in middle and high school that helps them attain college credits and a certified translator certificate.

Lamar offers a chess program to any student that wants to participate. Students not only develop cognitive and memory skills, but they also learn to build healthy social relationships. Just as in life, students win and lose, chess teaches them to get back up when confronted with failure and come back stronger and wiser. It helps them exercise empathy and winning with grace, two important character traits.

Another spark that lights the flame of life-long learning is our social emotional learning curriculum. The program teaches students social skills, and how to responsibly express and cope with emotional situations building a framework of mutual respect and cooperation.

Lamar encourages families to work together. A Reading Fair is coordinated yearly to bring families together where they can enjoy one another and at the same time, parents learn strategies to help their children at home.

The Physical Education coaches also bring students and community together with a variety of wellness events such as wellness fairs, community fun walks, and other Heart Foundation activities. When students share their learning experiences the family is also enriched.

Only by the energy and efforts of all, that success for students is possible. The teachers set the example of life-long learning in which administration supports teachers to continually update their skills with professional development, thus creating staff capacity. Parents and families give support to teachers by actively communicating with them and following through with expectations for their child's learning and participating in surveys to seek their input for general matters about campus and district policies.

The campus has a welcoming culture by involving students, families, community members, staff, and faculty in a variety of ways. Everyone is a unique thread that comes together to create a brilliant tapestry of community.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Lamar’s K-5 curriculum is driven by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and administered online. The scope and sequence for instruction is provided by the District and accessible through the online program. Language arts, math, science, and social studies curricula are broken into units. Each unit of instruction includes performance assessments, authentic tasks that reflect the student’s ability to apply their knowledge of the objectives taught in the unit. The units are planned around the performance assessments and end with a summative assessment. Students in third through fifth grade take mock standardized state tests. The scores are disaggregated for low performing objectives. Remediation is planned. Students are identified for tutoring and are provided small group remediation from reading and math coaches.

The language arts curriculum uses a balanced literacy framework with vocabulary, word work, shared reading, modeled reading, guided reading, writing, and workstations or centers. Students create weekly products to reflect learning from teacher-picked reading selections. A class-shared reading generates conversations about the story. The student products include original illustrations about the book. Elements of the literature are identified, and students develop their real-life connection, conclusions, and reflections.

Math notebooks are generated at all grades. Concepts are introduced with a concrete step by step approach, often using manipulatives, hands-on activities, and/or video lessons. Students learn the topic in a systematic routine, from a simple concrete approach to independent practice demonstrating the proficiency for the addressed TEK. Notebooks include samples of the student’s independent work, all summative assessments, and a skills daily practice.

The science curriculum is applied in notebooks. Most units are introduced with an instructional video. Teachers guide students through the topic and enhance understanding by encouraging student discussion. Students create a glossary in their notebooks using the academic language, and write a summary of each lesson, reflecting on the learned concept. Students at Lamar have access to the science laboratory where the science coach guides them through experiments. Students are invited annually to participate in the science fair. An assembly is held for parents and students where the instructional coach and a teacher from each grade level give instructions and guidelines on how to generate a science project.

Social Studies is integrated with language arts through biographies, autobiographies, and written essays. Historical events are connected to current events. The school counselor provides classroom lessons that teach good citizenship, anti-bullying techniques, career ideas, drug-free awareness, and college readiness.

This school year started with remote learning. Teachers have been creative in reaching all students since access to online instruction varied. Early on, kindergarten through second grade students received new handheld touch screen personal computers with attached keyboards. Third through fifth grade students received new laptop devices. Students lacking internet access were provided with hotspots. Everyone at the school, including support personnel, office staff, administrators, teacher coaches, and paraprofessionals, have all pitched in to support parents and students who were dealing with connectivity problems.

Students access learning applications through an online single sign-on dashboard. This dashboard includes an app for books, apps for math and reading remediation, and access to text adoptions and other resources. Students can also use this dashboard to access the district online learning management system which connects students to the teachers’ virtual meetings, class documents, schedules, and grades.

Beginning with the spring semester, teachers returned to campus along with a small percentage of students. Lamar now employs a hybrid model using a mix of technological devices that can reach the students in the classroom while engaging the students off-campus. Teachers use overhead projectors, 360-degree cameras with built in microphones and speakers, touch screen pcs, multiple laptops and even their own personal devices like phones to create learning systems that best project and support the objectives being taught.

addressed. Data drives students' instructions, therefore, when student's performance is minimal or exceeding it indicates a specific learning and/or social need. Students are identified and screened through a Student Success Team (SST) and provided with appropriate interventions. The SST is comprised of an administrator, teachers, counselor, and parents. Some of the interventions provided are small group targeted instruction by the reading and or math specialist, tutoring, referrals to dyslexia, speech, special education and/or gifted and talented programs, school counseling and therapy with a licensed school psychologist. Any of the interventions recommended are specifically tailored to the need of each student. The SST meets at the end of every grading period to review student's progress and adjusts interventions accordingly. Lamar's intervention system has proven successful throughout the years since students' growth is evident in state assessments as well as in student-parent surveys.

Lamar's curriculum, whether face-2-face or remote, is rigorous and provides the essential guided instruction required for students to acquire foundational skills and scaffolds them to a fully independent performance level.

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

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

Lamar is amongst the city's schools that provide full day pre-k to the community, along with a dual language curriculum that supports the region's bilingual population. The instruction for the dual program follows a 50/50 model, where students are taught in each language for 50% of the time, with support for those students that need it. Students are introduced to rich academic foundations through both languages in core academic areas: number sense in mathematics, and the living world around them through science and communities through social studies. All of this is done through language arts integration, using thematic units to teach and promote the use of rich vocabulary to develop language and communication, as well as phonemics awareness for preliteracy skills. Aside from the core academic areas, students in PreK are also exposed to the use of technology via the use of tablets with preloaded apps appropriate for their age. In this age of Covid-19 safety protocols, all students have been assigned a device to enable them to continue their learning, whether in a face-to-face setting or virtually. Students also take part in physical education and music classes. They also can show their creativity through art activities in the classroom. All of this is done following the State's preK guidelines, which guide the preK curriculum that is used in the classrooms. The guidelines are aligned with the Kindergarten TEKS so that students are exposed to the pre-requisite skills that students will be exposed to through their school years. Students in preK learn not only academic skills, but self-help skills that will prepare them to be independent learners, and independent individuals with the strength to face challenges, all while providing them with a safe environment to explore the world around them.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Lamar faculty believe educated students benefit from experiences and lessons that are outside core academic curriculum for the benefit of their physical, social-emotional, and creative needs. All these classes follow a curriculum calendar and document. The curriculum calendar addresses what TEKS will be covered, the content, and when these will be covered, the sequence. The curriculum document addresses instructional methods, instructional resources, evaluation approaches, and how and when adjustments to the plan will be made if necessary.

Vocal music is a non-elective class in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. Currently, classes are asynchronous. Students learn fundamentals of vocal music with technology i.e., singing with ascending and/descending solfege exercises. The music teacher delivers concepts of melody, rhythm, singing high/low, slow/fast, and softly/loudly conveyed with the use of interactive resources. Pre-kindergarten students attend music classes on a weekly basis. All Kindergarten students used their tablets F2F and remotely. Pre-pandemic, vocal music students showcased skills at regularly scheduled public PTA performances. Now they have opportunities to experience performing by leading in the singing of the songs during each class

session with their choice of at least two friends.

Lamar's orchestra class is an elective class with an average of twenty fifth graders. Students use instructional videos that help learning instrument and music theory. An online program helps students tune their instruments. An interactive app enables students to play with the music. There will be live virtual Solo Concert/Fine Arts before the end of year. Lamar Elementary will be combined with another elementary school for the concert. Students may choose a song, original artwork, or poem, etc. of their choice to perform at the concert.

Lamar's P.E. program is a for 45 minutes daily MVPA (moderate-to-vigorous physical activity) non-elective class for all student in grades pre-k-5th. Campus grounds include an artificial grass field for activities and sports. Lamar shares courts with a neighboring middle school. Mutual grounds allow activities for individualized attention. A gymnastics/tumbling facility provides opportunities for growth in agility/strength. A multipurpose building provides an area for events and P.E. instruction. Students receive classes in nutrition along with daily balanced breakfast/lunch choices. Hygiene classes are given throughout the school year. Pre-pandemic, the school community was invited for a Health Fair. Free screenings/health information were offered. EPISD's "Coordinated School Health" combines math,

science, health and PE. A monthly "Walk-to-School" promoted wellness. Students, their families, and school staff met at a nearby park before school to socialize, followed by walking to school to before beginning daily activities.

Technology is integrated seamlessly into everyday instruction. However, all students attend computer labs for a 45 minute weekly non-elective class to formally address Technology TEKS. Students are required to create products using various computer programs as part of their lessons. The librarian coordinates research skills lesson and digital citizenship curriculum. Students in the upper grades are required to complete a digital science project yearly which is show cased. Gifted and Talented students are also required to develop a digital project that is show cased as well in a fair for parents to see.

3. Academic Supports:

The Lamar Elementary has established a culture of collaboration, teamwork, and trust for one another. The very positive school atmosphere has led to creating an environment where teachers feel valued, appreciated, supported, and respected. As a result, teacher morale is very high, and teacher turn over low. For example, during teacher appreciation week, students are "secretly" given a list of items they can bring to their teacher each day during that week. The culmination of teacher appreciation week is a catered lunch from a local restaurant and a token of appreciation is given by administration. Teachers' birthdays are announced and posted in the teachers' lounge, followed by cake brought by colleagues. At the end of each nine-week grading period, the principal purchases pies for all staff to enjoy! A positive school environment is a product of staff capacity and Lamar is an example of a school that has curated relationships and a motivating academic environment.

Lamar administration realizes that professional development is extremely important for expanding staff's knowledge and refining their skills to implement best educational practices. Lamar's professional development occurs during weekly professional learning communities (PLC). During PLCs, teachers focus on student learning expectations by collaborating on common goals, inviting collective inquiry on best practices, and using formative or summative data to examine strengths and weaknesses in instruction. Teachers and instructional coaches view upcoming TEKS and prepare lessons together. Instructional coaches provide district-endorsed strategies and assessment techniques as well as instructional modeling of key concepts. Professional development has assisted teachers in becoming specialized in the preparation and delivery of standards-based curriculum which in turn has increased student achievement. The principal provides extra support to teachers new to the profession or new to the school by having Instructional coaches model lessons, provide support to parents and thus building staff capacity, and making sure the curriculum

pacing is being followed.

Remote and hybrid learning has been a challenge that Lamar Elementary has faced head on the active learning department has provided self-paced courses on how to use learning management system, video conferencing and a variety of sessions that focus on increasing student engagement, implementing meaningful strategies that tie in with relevant best practices, developing student/parent-centered communication and collaboration based on instructional design, differentiation, accommodations, and pedagogical delivery. It is Lamar's focus that students receive the same challenging instruction that they would normally receive.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Lamar provides Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills embedded in daily activities, reinforcing a sense of belonging and trust for one another. Morning circles are an example. Each morning students and teachers gather in a circle for twenty to thirty minutes and interact with one another and share information about important events in their lives. Listeners offer empathetic comments or ask clarifying questions. Teachers use SEL activities that focus on interpersonal skills such as the ability to express feelings while strengthening bonds with schoolmates separated by COVID-19.

Friendly competition motivates students to work harder and excel academically. Through an online reading program, the top scoring classes and top scoring readers are recognized. Every nine weeks students receive prizes in a “store”. Additional engaging activities include the “Wellness Championship,” held at the end of the year, “Multiplication Competition” and an annual “Spelling Bee.” These activities have continued regardless of remote learning. Rewards and incentives are distributed to students accordingly.

The counselor’s motivational program for fourth and fifth grade students is called “Rainbow Star”. Students’ academic and behavioral performance is monitored by the counselor each nine-week grading period. Students who improve throughout the year are invited and bussed to a school party at a local amusement park. “Homework Patrol” is another incentive program. The counselor unexpectedly visits classrooms with a colorful cart full of prizes (school supplies) and rewards those students who have consistently completed homework or improved in areas the teacher wishes to recognize.

Students are rewarded with a “Perfect Attendance Lunch In” at the end of each nine weeks. Students are given a token for a special lunch treat and sit in a thematically decorated area. Similar rewards are provided to students during remote learning. Students meeting the attendance criteria, receive via mail, email, virtual coupons for local restaurants.

Lamar strives to create an environment where everyone feels valued, supported, and respected. Staff and student morale is very high. During teacher appreciation week, students are “secretly” given a list of items they can bring or make for their teacher each day during that week. Teachers are thankful for the students’ expressions of appreciation and students feel excited to participate to build a positive relationship with their teacher and everyone around them. A positive school environment is a collective effort and Lamar creates an optimal setting for student success in all areas, thus making the school successful.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parents are made to feel welcomed where their children are educated and enriched. If there is a disconnect between families and the school their children attend, there will never be a sense of comfort required to ensure their children’s overall success. These values have been continued through remote learning by keeping in close contact with all parents through phone calls, online learning management programs and other platforms of communication.

Lamar began each year with a traditional “Open House.”. A virtual open house was held this fall. Other events and traditions could not be held due to the pandemic. The principal hosted a monthly “Coffee with the Principal” during which trainings on various topics are held for the parents, followed by a question-and-answer session. The Science Fair was a great opportunity engaging the community by inviting a variety of individuals from surrounding businesses, non-profit organizations, institutions of higher education and students from the neighborhood high school to serve as judges. Administrators, faculty, parents and students gather at a nearby park early in the morning for “Community Fun Walks to School.” Teachers, coaches and police escorted the students to school. Parents would also take part in the American Heart Association’s “Jump Rope for Heart,” pledge drive that culminated with parents joining their children during P.E. classes. Participation from parents and Partners in Education such as local businesses, active and non-active military, city and state government agencies, and law enforcement is fundamental to the

success of the Fall Carnival, Health Fair, and Field Day. Local dignitaries, including EPISD school board members, and representatives from other schools participated in the celebrations. Students performed singing concerts during monthly PTA meetings. These concerts attract parents that may not ordinarily attend a PTA meeting. The campus will return to these traditions as soon it is safe to do so.

During the COVID-19, the campus experienced an outpouring interest from businesses providing a variety of support from incentives to donations for students. Lamar also works closely with a local church that provides families with school supplies as needed and also provides food baskets/supplies for Lamar families on a weekly basis. The church volunteers remodeled the teacher's lounge for the staff during the fall semester thus having the room ready when teachers returned to campus this January.

Community and family engagement at Lamar Elementary is of utmost importance striving to always keep that connection and communication needed for students' overall success.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

The Lamar Elementary has established a culture of collaboration, teamwork, and trust for one another. The very positive school atmosphere has led to creating an environment where teachers feel valued, appreciated, supported, and respected. As a result, teacher morale is very high, and teacher turn over low. For example, during teacher appreciation week, students are "secretly" given a list of items they can bring to their teacher each day during that week. The culmination of teacher appreciation week is a catered lunch from a local restaurant and a token of appreciation is given by administration. Teacher's birthdays are announced and posted in the teachers' lounge, followed by cake brought by colleagues. At the end of each nine-week grading period, the principal purchases pies for all staff to enjoy! A positive school environment is a product of staff capacity and Lamar is an example of a school that has curated relationships and a motivating academic environment.

Lamar administration realizes that professional development is extremely important for expanding staff's knowledge and refining their skills to implement best educational practices. Lamar's professional development occurs during weekly professional learning communities (PLC). During PLCs, teachers focus on student learning expectations by collaborating on common goals, inviting collective inquiry on best practices, and using formative or summative data to examine strengths and weaknesses in instruction. Teachers and instructional coaches view upcoming TEKS and prepare lessons together. Instructional coaches provide district-endorsed strategies and assessment techniques as well as instructional modeling of key concepts. Professional development has assisted teachers in becoming specialized in the preparation and delivery of standards-based curriculum which in turn has increased student achievement. The principal provides extra support to teachers new to the profession or new to the school by having Instructional coaches model lessons, provide support to parents and thus building staff capacity, and making sure the curriculum pacing is being followed.

Remote and hybrid learning has been a challenge that Lamar Elementary has faced head on the active learning department has provided self-paced courses on how to use learning management system, video conferencing and a variety of sessions that focus on increasing student engagement, implementing meaningful strategies that tie in with relevant best practices, developing student/parent-centered communication and collaboration based on instructional design, differentiation, accommodations, and pedagogical delivery. It is Lamar's focus that students receive the same challenging instruction that they would normally receive.

4. School Leadership:

Lamar's leadership team transformed a trouble school in 2006 to a great thriving school throughout the years. Lamar received a National Blue Ribbon School Award in 2015 and once more in 2021. The school's philosophy is to build a school environment that enables teachers to excel in their craft and, in turn, students succeed. This is accomplished by establishing high expectation for students and teachers, fostering the talent of teachers, and giving everyone clear directions.

The leadership team at Lamar Elementary consists of the principal, assistant principal, counselor, instructional coaches, grade level representatives and a representative from the staff. The school's leadership team makes every member of the campus a priority. Lamar faculty and staff are inculcated by determination and high expectations for shaping students' learning. The entire team believes in safeguarding a nurturing and challenging environment, in which students can succeed academically and emotionally.

Collaboration and communication between all school personnel is a contributing factor to the success of the school. Instructional coaches and faculty have a positive working relationship that allows them to work as a team to ensure that they become better at their craft. There is a clear sense of what goals need to be achieved and how to achieve them. Systems are in place that provide clarity, consistency, and common language.

The principal's role is to provide guidance and support by fostering a sense of community and cooperation among the campus stakeholders. Teacher empowerment contributes to remarkable academic results, as children are at the forefront of every team members' priorities. Faculty and staff efforts are held to high standards nonetheless recognized which maintains a high morale.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning had to be revolutionized. The leadership team and faculty had to redefine what success would look like now during remote learning, and how to achieve it. Teachers knew that many students would not be able to connect eight hours daily. Therefore, priorities were set on what needed to be taught and learned while students were connected. Teachers created short engaging lessons that targeted and assessed learning standards within the time students were connected. As time has gone by, teachers and staff continue to meet and discuss what remote learning practices have worked best to keep students in attendance, engaged and performing. This pandemic has brought many challenges however, it has also brought an opportunity to learn how to prepare students regardless of any situation.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Lamar's students come from multiple diverse backgrounds. Students with families that migrated from Mexico, were born in El Paso as second-generation U.S. citizens. There are also very large disparities between the students' different socio-economic backgrounds. A portion of the student population are in a temporary custodianship from a nearby children's home. This cultural and economic diversity offers a unique environment for Lamar that brings many different types of viewpoints and dispositions. This welcomes many challenges of the academic aspect and the social/emotional ones. With such a large disparity, teachers and staff are constantly creating and improving new methods to promote inclusion in the school environment. For several years curriculum has included teaching the students kindness and empathy using social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL techniques have been very supportive during these difficult times in the pandemic (COVID-19) where students have been engaging in collaborative learning from their own homes, away from the in-person support of teachers, friends, and school community. This situation can be very stressful and confusing to deal with, especially for children. Participating in daily greetings, holding class meetings, and talking and writing about how to best manage one's emotions, have been some of the activities that have been helpful via long distance. These activities help the students struggling with this new way of learning. SEL has also helped the students demonstrate caring for others and make better decisions in the classroom and out of the classroom. These are critical life skills for successful learners and socially well-developed members of the next generation.

Cultural diversity is an emblem of current society. Diversity at Lamar is honored by showing respect for everyone. The rich culture of the close-proximity to Mexico, and the influx of recently-migrated families, influence the socio-emotional and academic status of students. Lamar is cognizant that a student's overall development must be inclusive of diversity, equity enrichment activities and teaching lessons that encompass recognition and celebrations of various culture practices. Teaching practices go beyond the inclusion of Mexican traditions and holidays as

learning also focuses on other world cultures directed to cultivate young minds. Equally important is that Lamar's administration acknowledges the varying English-language proficiencies of its students and implements teaching strategies for the spectrum of language tiers.

In summary, Lamar Elementary is a campus made of acceptance and empathy. We welcome the cultures and the status of others by demonstrating fairness and acceptance. We want to show we are an inclusive and caring school.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Schools are constantly facing multiple challenges in education. Diversity of their students regularly pressures teachers to alter and develop their curriculum to better serve each generation of students. During the pandemic of the 2019-2020 school year, teachers at Lamar were faced with a new set of challenges. However, the staff and faculty came together as a school community to ensure student academic success.

It is amazing to think that in a single week, a mass experiment was introduced where everything would be modified and switched to a 100% virtual setting. In a matter of days, Lamar educators had to look at curriculum and adjust it to a new virtual environment. At the beginning, the students struggled to understand the lessons through a screen and were unable to get that hands-on approach in learning that is detrimental in young children. Because the school district offered multiple training courses on a variety of tools and programs, teachers have since learned new strategies and added new programs in implementing virtual lessons that adhere to the rigor of the curriculum.

Students are engaged in using videos to explain their learning, they type essays on word processing programs and presentation software, take tests, and annotate during their reading lessons on the computer screen. Teachers give clear expectations and minimal deviations to planned lessons and activities. In conclusion, a new way of teaching has offered students an enriched and challenging way of learning.

In addition to ensuring the success of students, the faculty and staff at Lamar believe that the most essential practice for addressing academic success was the heightened level of communication between teachers and parents. Teachers and administration continue to keep the lines of communication open through the use of emails, texts, and phone calls. The teacher communicate their child's successes as well as concerns, and striving to work together to better assist their child in learning. Teachers provide parents with technology training and hands-on guidance to the newly virtual classrooms. Teachers also continue to follow up with wellness checks to ensure the safety and well-being of the child and his/her family.

Lamar Elementary has been tested with uncertainty, due to the pandemic. However, the staff have found alternative ways to help better prepare students for the next year. With a growth mindset, Lamar Team will continue to work together as a community to ensure the academic success of students and their well-being.