

***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 [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

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

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

School Mailing Address 380 Link Road  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Seguin State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78155-0243

County Guadalupe County

Telephone (830) 372-1933 Fax (830) 379-3145

Web site/URL https://es.nisd.us/o/navarro-elementary E-mail laurel.wilson@nisd.us

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\* Mrs. Wendi Russell E-mail wendi.russell@nisd.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Navarro Independent School District Tel. (830) 372-1930

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 Mrs. Renee Rehfeld  
(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)
  - 2 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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
<b>PreK</b>	11	14	25
<b>K</b>	59	39	98
<b>1</b>	66	52	118
<b>2</b>	52	59	111
<b>3</b>	68	79	147
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	256	243	499

\*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
  - 1 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 39 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 56 % White
  - 1 % 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: ≤1%

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

Less than 1%

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	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	0
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	0
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	0
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<1

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

Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 45 %

Total number students who qualify: 225

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %

66 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>7</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>9</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>25</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. 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.	29
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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 17:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

We value relationships. We engage learners. We foster resilience and confidence.

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.

Navarro Elementary operated with a hybrid learning model this year where the campus was fully open for face-to-face instruction; however, parents were given a choice from August 2020 until March 2021 to receive remote instruction from home. PreK through 2nd grade students were offered asynchronous remote instruction with optional live zoom sessions throughout the day. Third graders were offered synchronous remote instruction, requiring them to attend remotely through zoom for at least 180 minutes per day. Beginning March 16th, 2021 families no longer have the choice of remote instruction and must attend face to face, however remote instruction is still available for students who must quarantine for Covid reasons.

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**

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Navarro Elementary is located in the heart of Geronimo, TX, just northeast of San Antonio. Originally settled by German immigrants in the mid 1800s, Geronimo's economy was primarily based upon agriculture and ranching, with a focus on the cotton gin industry. The original Navarro School was named for José Antonio Navarro, a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence and a large landowner in the community. The land for the one room schoolhouse was purchased for \$60 and M. E. Bittner received a teacher's salary of \$35 per month. School supplies for the students were purchased in October and classes were held during the months of December, February, March and April. The school, named Navarro Agricultural High School, served students beginning in 1889, and over the years, focused on teaching proper agricultural techniques. The school was moved to its current location just in time to celebrate the first graduating class, which consisted of 10 students. As the community continued to grow, the Navarro Independent School District became known for its deep-rooted values and commitment to traditions that celebrate agricultural values, such as "Drive your tractor to school day."

Navarro Elementary is home to 532 students in grades PreK through 3rd. With 45% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, 13% participating in special education services and 5% identified as English Language Learners, the number of students on campus who are at risk or in need of additional support is significant and is growing. Despite these risk factors, the school is known for having heavily involved parent participation and support. It is common for frequent family events to draw crowds of 400 or more, and parents are involved daily on campus through tutoring, volunteering, participating in the PTO, serving in the Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program, or eating with students in the cafeteria. The school involves parents in the progress and growth of their students through frequent parent conferences, and a high level of communication from the school. In addition to creating opportunities for families to be involved on campus, teachers and staff members live in, and are active in the community as well. It is common to see them at district sports events, local charity drives, and community rallies. While the impact of Covid has placed a temporary constraint on group gatherings and visitors, staff continue to maintain these personal connections. Because of the strong relationships built that extend beyond Navarro Elementary, it is easy to understand how the high expectations of families for academic and personal excellence are exemplified in the school.

The long-standing commitment of teachers and staff is a testament to the success of Navarro Elementary. Teachers are extremely in tune with the individual needs of each student, whether that means providing an after-school club for enrichment or adjusting activities during intervention time to close gaps. Many staff provide before and after school tutoring and they also create lunch groups to meet with students. Character education is promoted through classroom lessons and supported school-wide, with tailored lessons provided based upon need. Student experiences are valued, so it is common to have guest speakers, presentations, and visits from student groups at the other campuses. During planning time, you will find the teachers in collaborative groups, sharing ideas and discussing what mastery looks like. They take ownership for each other's students and incorporate this into lesson planning and assessments. In short, the teachers know their students and hold an extremely high level of accountability for ensuring that each child is ready for their next challenge, whether it be academically, emotionally, physically or socially. Not only do they hold a commitment to excellence, but they live the district's vision to provide a safe, positive environment where relationships, student engagement and confidence are fostered.

Today, the Navarro ISD rests along one of the fastest growing regions in the country, the Austin-San Antonio corridor, which is expected to grow by more than 2 million people in the next ten years. This growth is creating a surge in construction of homes, bringing new families to the area and with that, a change in the cultural foundations of the community. As the district grows, it is increasingly important to the school community that the "feeling" of a small-town, rural district does not diminish. As students are prepared for long-term success, the traditions that have made the school and district one of excellence must also be fostered. Students need to feel a connection to the history of the area, through visits to the local agricultural and heritage center. They need to be involved in the important events occurring at district schools through band performances, pep rallies, and the senior walk. The personal connections built to

ensure that the school is grounded in high standards will be critical moving forward, as Navarro Elementary embraces new students and their families who want to become Panthers.

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

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

Navarro Elementary strives to provide a cohesive sequence of instruction to students based on individualized instructional needs. Navarro ISD is a partner of the Texas Curriculum Management Cooperative (TCMPC) and uses the TEKS Resource System provided by TCMPC as the foundation for the district curriculum. The TEKS Resource System provides a scope and sequence for study along with various resources, unit pacing guides, vertical alignment resources and performance assessments for all courses of study. Teachers plan collaboratively, both horizontally and vertically, to ensure that Texas standards (TEKS) are covered in the classroom according to the depth and intensity designed by the State of Texas. Student mastery is measured through unit and teacher created assessments, as well as quarterly benchmarks. K-8 students are screened three times a year to identify instructional gaps among students, classes and content areas. Teachers use comprehensive data spreadsheets to house and analyze student performance and make adjustments to instruction. These records are reviewed regularly with interventionists, support staff and administration to discuss trends in data and to ensure students do not fall between the cracks.

A focused literacy plan has been developed for teaching English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) for grades K-5 which emphasizes explicit instruction of the 5 components of literacy. This literacy plan includes daily explicit writing process instruction, intense phonics instruction, handwriting instruction and a commitment to both small group and whole group instruction. Cross-curricular mentor texts are utilized to bridge content areas and reinforce TEKS with depth and complexity. Students regularly visit the library and share a love of reading with their teachers across genres. Student reading progress is measured using a computer-based program and teacher assessments. Struggling students are provided intervention at designated times built into the master schedule, either by the teacher or a support staff member using research-based activities through Response to Intervention (RtI).

In mathematics, teachers build a solid foundation by helping students to understand patterns and measurement and develop an understanding of the numeration system. Emphasis is placed on hands-on activities, small group instruction, and aligned vocabulary. Students utilize concrete methods to develop conceptual understanding, and then they build fluency through mathematical procedures. Teachers utilize adoption materials, manipulatives, music and teacher created materials to develop engaging lessons. Over time, students become more skillful at using multiple representations to communicate ideas. For example, students may draw a picture to represent their ideas or write them in mathematics journals. Student discussions are encouraged, and students are exposed to solving everyday problems that connect with their experiences. Student progress is measured through unit and teacher created assessments as well as benchmarks, and struggling students are offered intervention through the RtI process.

Teachers at Navarro Elementary intentionally build interdisciplinary units of study which combine science and social studies TEKS with literacy. Both subjects are taught on an alternating two week schedule, allowing for more depth and investigation. Mentor texts of various genres, non-fiction articles, videos, research projects and online resources are used to bridge learning and make connections. Field trips are also a treasured method by which students get to participate in community events, and tie classroom learning to their environment and surroundings. Each grade level hosts guest speakers or events tailored to align with social studies and/or science TEKs. For example, second graders participate in a living wax museum and first graders research their favorite animals to write book reports. This year, the PTO even supported interdisciplinary efforts by bringing in a company with live exotic animals to share information with the students. Students then wrote about their learning and shared with peers.

During Covid, Navarro ISD offered both in person as well as remote learning options to families with similar learning expectations, deadlines, course loads and assignments. The intention behind this was to allow smooth transition for students between home and school for remote learners. On campus, learning spaces were impacted due to limited seating arrangements, spacing and sanitizing procedures. Fortunately, Navarro ISD supports students with 1:1 technology, allowing for assignments to be viewed and completed online, in addition to online assessments. Prekindergarten through 2nd grade students were offered asynchronous learning with teachers offering live zoom sessions throughout the day. Students completed

the work with the help of parents at home and submitted through a learning management system to show mastery. Third graders and up were offered synchronous learning with two-way real time, live instruction through the use of electronic devices in the classroom and at home. These students followed a specific schedule that mirrored on-campus instruction and also submitted work electronically. Teachers had to become adept at addressing the needs of both types of learners simultaneously, while learning how to navigate the technology component that was new for many of them.

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

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

For the four-year-old students in full day PreK, students are taught ELAR, Math, Science and Social Studies through an adopted PreK program which aligns with Texas PreK Guidelines and Standards. This curriculum also reinforces social emotional development promoting independence, decision making, cooperation, creativity, and problem solving. The PreK classroom promotes effective learning through the organization of routines and materials, as well as opportunities for interaction and self-discovery. To align with K-3 standards, teachers first begin with individualizing instruction and meeting students where they are at. This means building children's skill levels over time and providing them experiences and activities that are relevant to each child's developmental levels and abilities. While informal observation and progress monitoring assist teachers with guiding instruction on a daily basis, teachers have adapted the PreK report card to align with prerequisite Kindergarten expectations so that student progress can be measured, and potential gaps can be filled during small group intervention. During Covid, remote PreK students were offered opportunities for live zoom with their teacher and classmates, and manipulatives and additional hands-on coursework were sent home to support students and parents. A positive that came from remote learning was the strict alignment that had to occur during planning for teams, in terms of assessment, activities and pacing. Because of the time and work involved to prepare face to face and remote instruction, teachers found it necessary to come together even closer to work collaboratively. Professional development for teachers has included promoting oral language development, behavior de-escalation strategies, and early literacy foundations to build teacher capacity in understanding PreK outcomes. Despite the pandemic, the PreK program has experienced growth in enrollment as parents see the benefit and impact of early education on school readiness.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Ongoing professional learning and rigorous academics are only part of what makes Navarro Elementary exceptional. Student social and emotional wellbeing is at the forefront of every decision made. These characteristics are reinforced by the elective classes (P.E., Music and Technology) that serve grades K-3, which are driven by the TEKs and connect back to the core content areas. Navarro Elementary currently does not offer a fine arts program but is working to add one in the near future aligned with fine arts expectations for upper grade levels in the district.

All kinder through third grade students (approximately 475 students) participate in PE daily, and alternate through music or technology every other day. In P.E., the goal is to provide every student with rigorous physical activity that will promote a healthy lifestyle. Physical movement not only helps students with regulating emotions, but also provides opportunities for teamwork, essential to cooperative learning and problem solving. Gross and fine motor skills are addressed through games and activities that also support student self-discipline. Physical education provides children the opportunity to set and strive for personal, achievable goals while improving strength, endurance and flexibility. The onset of Covid provided opportunities for teachers to become more creative in the use of space, materials and technology, while the importance of health and hygiene tied directly to real world circumstances allowing students to make stronger connections.

In the music classroom, K-3 students engage in singing activities which include sight singing by note. Tactile activities such as clapping, finger snapping, and body movements provide a kinesthetic connection to

new learning. Music learning experiences include singing, moving, listening, performing, composing/improvising, and reading/writing (literacy) music. Improvising a new song requires applying the concepts of meter and rhythm, synthesizing information previously learned. Students are also given the opportunity to apply many cross-curricular learning such as math, social studies, and science into the lessons. Covid significantly impacted the ability to perform and share music with parents and the community. To circumvent this, student performances were recorded and sent home to parents, or posted online so that the entire school community could view and enjoy.

Technology is incorporated throughout the school day in all subject areas; however, the specific learning of new technology related to Texas standards is delivered in a technology applications course for K-3 students. Students use creative thinking and innovation to develop digital products that solve real world problems. They use technology to communicate and collaborate while practicing safe behavior and digital citizenship. Proper keyboarding techniques and research skills are practiced so that students are able to navigate technological applications and hardware with fluency. To support core curriculum areas, both the technology class and the library embedded grade level content standards into research lessons throughout the year to support classroom learning.

Navarro Elementary implements a strong character education program that focuses on monthly themes that relate to student life. Students apply these monthly character skills through class discussions, activities and crafts, and participation in interactive bulletin boards around the school. Staff members collaborate to develop positive coping strategies for times when students have difficulty adjusting to the new social distancing protocols. Examples of this include the use of social stories, counseling lessons, morning meetings, visual aids and positive reinforcers.

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

The individualized methods used by teachers and staff translate into growth and progress for all students regardless of their achievement levels. Formal and informal assessments given throughout the year allow teachers to have a very in-depth understanding of the strengths and challenges of each student. Differentiated instruction, whether in whole-group, small-group or centers, allows the teacher to tailor instruction and fill gaps as early as possible. Intervention time, built into the master schedule, gives staff the opportunity to provide additional support to those students who are struggling, while also providing enrichment time for those already achieving mastery.

RtI systems on the campus are consistently reviewed to ensure effective interventions and tracking are taking place. RTI meetings focus on teachers and support staff looking at multiple points of data when discussing student achievement and recommendations for remediation. Recurring training occurs to assist teachers with selecting prescriptive, research-based interventions to target specific areas of instruction. The focus for each year is better instruction at Tier1 to reduce the number of students at Tier 2 and 3; and to bolster movement of student success to the "Masters" level. To support the RtI Process, Navarro Elementary uses several software programs that differentiate based upon student abilities, as well as several key support staff that push into classrooms to work with children and pull-out students into specific intervention or enrichment groups.

To support students above grade level, teachers incorporate choice boards, menus and differentiated station work into daily lessons. These activities build upon grade level skills to increase rigor and require students to apply knowledge to solve real-world problems. Students often have the option of using technology applications to conduct research or build presentations and share learned information with peers. A key to working with students above grade level is to appeal to their interests when planning to assure that they also make growth during the school year. Differentiation is necessary in both the academic program, as well as the social and emotional supports that the school offers.

Campus and district specialists provide intense support and monitoring for specific populations of students such as LEP, GT, Dyslexic, Special Education and At-Risk students. The ESL Specialist, assisted by a paraprofessional, coordinates with teachers to push into classrooms during times of instructional difficulty, and also pulls out select students who are needing additional support in foundational English acquisition. The GT teacher pulls groups of students for enrichment time, but also supports classroom teachers with ideas for non-identified students through activities, resources and the incorporation of technology into classroom lessons. Dyslexia and Special Education teachers collaborate consistently with teachers to address multi-sensory teaching approaches that will support all learners. Their instruction, aligned with classroom standards, assists students in making significant progress towards core content mastery as well as IEP goals. In addition, close contact with parents ensures that school to home transfer is made and reinforced. Services have also been offered via zoom for remote students, and summer programs are in development to help fill gaps in growth for those students who did not grow as expected during remote learning. Navarro Elementary teachers and staff take ownership of all students and all staff members are responsible for the outcomes and progress of students. They are vulnerable with their data and ask for support from other teachers to build their own capacity. They are always open to new ideas and are flexible in their approach.

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

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

As a Title I school, Navarro Elementary students have limited exposure, outside of school, to explore various careers—especially in STEM fields. College and career preparation starts early, and by engaging students in conversations about their future, their path to success is paved. The school vision not only focuses on developing a sense of family, but also encourages problem solving to work through challenges as students move towards the future. At a primary campus, these challenges arise in many ways.

Socially, students are building and trying to maintain positive relationships. This involves understanding different viewpoints, sharing, taking turns, and understanding right from wrong. Students are directly taught these skills through teacher modeling, with gradual release to more independence. Teachers are trained to incorporate pro-social language and use restorative practices to help students communicate with each other, problem solve and understand what is socially acceptable. Some younger students also struggle with controlling impulsive behavior, as well as identifying and managing emotions. As students try to fit in with peers they develop a sense of self-esteem and sometimes need help with communicating through challenges. Resiliency is nurtured by teachers encouraging students to take healthy risks, set short and long term goals, and navigate stressful situations. This is where strong relationships with students and families is crucial in modeling coping strategies and offering support.

The success of Navarro Elementary comes from a combination of long-lasting relationships, knowing student backgrounds, and prescriptive instruction to meet individual needs. The positive language shared across the campus sets the tone for crucial conversations, modeling behavior and high expectations. The pandemic brought many challenges during remote learning, and the school rallied to keep students motivated and successfully engaged behind the computer. Surveys were sent out, all stakeholders provided feedback, and teachers worked collaboratively in grade level teams to make the online platform user-friendly and interactive. Navarro Elementary created a sense of normalcy with live morning announcements incorporating student submitted jokes of the day, adding pictures of whole classes participating in ZOOM and showing video clips of student engagement during lessons. To decrease absenteeism with remote learners, issues were identified quickly and concerns were addressed head on. Teams developed expectations for remote learning and extra emphasis was placed on frequent communication so that the school could stay ahead of questions and ensure students were given the opportunity to be prepared for school each day with the support needed to ensure success.

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

In any partnership, the key to success is open communication as well as a desire from both sides to meet an end goal. At Navarro Elementary, families and community members are dedicated to working with the school to create a team whose purpose is to see students succeed. The school makes a commitment to parents to include them in regular communication such as conferences, newsletters, Facebook updates and social media posts. The community comes together with campus events such as Literacy Night, Fall Festival, music performances and the Valentines Dance. Donations are given from local grocery stores, hardware stores, home and construction companies, and even parents who are self-employed. With the help of the community, the school is able to provide additional support to local families in need through programs like Panthers Feeding Panthers, or through local charities.

Panther families and community members are eager to participate in the success of the school. The Parent Teacher Organization consistently draws parents to assist with campus events, fundraising and campus outreach. The Watch Dogs program offers parents the opportunity to assist with the safety and security of the campus while providing positive role models in the hallways and classrooms for students to interact with. Numerous volunteers work in the library and classrooms such as the RSVP organization, which schedules retired teachers to tutor and mentor students in the school on a regular basis. Parents also participate in Site Based meetings, the School Health Advisory Council, field trips and daily classroom projects.

The impact of Covid on the school's ability to open doors for visitors and volunteers has been tremendous. Because of group size limitations and social distancing requirements, parents were able to help with the Jingle Bell Run and Panther Run outdoors but could not be as involved with indoor events. Parents assisted with the annual 3rd grade Gingerbread House project, by making icing at home and sending it to school. Grandparent's day lunch had to be postponed but students still sent home notes and poems. Literacy night this year was held outdoors, along with the Valentine Raffle Basket fundraiser by the PTO, but the dance was cancelled. The entire school community has been affected by the onset of Covid and the restrictions in place to keep everyone safe but staying connected in other ways remains a priority.

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

Teachers play a crucial role in engaging students academically, socially and emotionally. Before this can happen effectively, teachers must feel valued, supported and empowered to grow. With the onset of Covid, teacher in-service included social-emotional components for staff, allowing them time to reflect, discuss their level of anxiety with teammates and practice self-care strategies such as meditation. Staff also looked at the impact of traumatic events on students and families, and what signs to look for in order to better identify needs and assist themselves as well as the families served. Throughout the year, staff are shown that they are appreciated with luncheons, special treat days from the office, First Friday Snacks hosted by the PTO, shout outs, and intentional group activities designed to focus on the positive attributes of each staff member. Time is also allotted to teachers for additional planning, observation of peers, off-site training and collaboration.

The collective leadership approach of the school has created a paradigm shift in regard to learning and Navarro Elementary teachers and leaders are encouraged to grow from within the organization. This results in a positive school culture and teacher ownership of professional development. During flipped faculty meetings, teachers lead professional learning sessions focused on positive behavior strategies, RTI interventions, effective Tier 2 instruction, LEP strategies, teaching small group guided reading and guided math, differentiated ELA/math stations, and upping engagement to name a few. Even the office staff participate through book studies, conversations in customer service and crucial conversations.

Peer walk-throughs and the use of a professional growth opportunity board in the main hallway supports forward thinking and a growth mindset, even in the midst of a pandemic. In addition, a few simple steps have increased the capacity of teachers and staff to maintain focus on student achievement. The administrative team sends out a Culture and Climate & Professional Development survey for all staff members each semester. Using the survey data, teachers and staff help to identify needed changes to school processes, desired learning opportunities, content area adjustments needed and ways to offer support with students. New learning was required of all staff members this year, and listening to concerns, making quick decisions to shift and providing encouragement helped the school to rise above uncertainty. The pandemic created an opportunity for creative problem solving, and a challenge for the school to maintain student growth while sometimes reinventing instructional delivery.

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

Navarro Elementary leadership teams are built upon the idea that collective efficacy is what makes the school stronger. Aside from the traditional administrative team, each teacher on campus is assigned a role to share responsibility and leadership. The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) is made up of grade level leaders in the area of instruction and intervention. The expectation for these members is to help provide professional learning during staff development sessions and team planning/PLC meetings. They are the team's contact for questions about curriculum, scope and sequence and vertical alignment and they help guide the team in collaborative decision making. A portion of ILT meetings is spent on reflection and sharing about how to navigate group dynamics, interpersonal communication and dealing with change.

The Operational Leadership Team takes on the role of developing systems such as materials check-out, literacy library procedures, duties, and campus behavior expectations. This group of individuals works closely with the assistant principal to fine tune emergency operation plans, field trip procedures, student

celebrations and budgeting protocols. Because this team takes on some of the details related to daily operations, the goal is that the Instructional Leadership Team can prioritize student learning outcomes and remain more focused on core instruction.

To establish cohesion between grade levels and departments, the Technology and Communication Team enhances the Navarro Elementary community by improving communication between teachers as well as from home and school. They ensure consistent communication to parents through grade level newsletters, Facebook posts, postings on the campus website and local newspaper submissions. They collaborate to infuse technology and media tools across the curriculum, and also to maximize productivity to support teachers.

Behind the scenes of the school, the PAWS (Positive Actions with Staff) committee focuses on supporting the social and emotional health of staff in an effort to increase organizational health and improve overall campus culture and climate. They promote and celebrate staff accomplishments, enhance and encourage positive interactions, and they plan activities that build cohesion. If staff members are working through challenging life events, the PAWS committee is there to assist with staff needs, which sometimes include meal trains, and donations.

The structure of the organizational leadership committees begins and ends with student success at the forefront. Shared responsibility helps empower each staff member to have buy-in with the programs and policies in place. Frequent communication and sharing of information help all staff understand the “why” behind decisions made and gives them an opportunity for input. With the onset of Covid, administrative roles shifted significantly to develop protocols for eating, transitioning, remote learning, attendance, grading policies and health procedures. Leadership committees adjusted based upon new regulations but remained student-centered at the core.

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

Culturally responsive teaching and learning at a PreK-3rd grade campus involves direct instruction and coaching of students in prosocial behaviors, empathy and character building while maintaining high expectations for learning and achievement. Student demographics vary widely across Navarro ISD. Socioeconomic status is evident in the background experiences that students bring with them to school. As teachers design lessons, students need to see the relevance between their own lives and what they are learning at school. Communication styles during instruction as well as visuals should be relatable so that each student is empowered to take ownership of their learning. Students should feel respected, heard, safe and included no matter their social or cultural backgrounds.

To ensure equity and cultural awareness in the classroom, teachers build meaningful relationships to discover more about their student’s interests, cultural norms, their families’ viewpoint towards education, and the hardships that each student may be facing at home. Understanding a baseline of their experiences helps teachers to fill gaps, recognize student strengths that may have been overlooked and provide them with authentic engagement and affirmation. Once relationships are established, teachers are better equipped to push students to achieve at optimal levels and utilize their assets to build upon the student-centered learning experience.

The ESL Specialist provides training to staff about culturally responsive teaching through workshops such as, “Understanding Bilingualism vs. Biliteracy” and “Scaffolding Worksheets and Assessments for English Language Learners.” The goal with these training sessions is to encourage teachers to create an environment in the classroom where the school is not detracting from student’s cultural experiences. In addition to the ESL Specialist participating in teacher conferences, RTI meetings and campus events, she also helps with translation of outgoing communication and program guidance for ESLs.

Support is also available to other groups of students on campus, as well as their families. Panthers feeding panthers provides food backpacks for students in need to take home on weekends. Families are adopted at Christmas time to help with providing clothing and gifts for children. Food services and transportation often coordinate to find viable solutions for those facing hardship. Summer programs, such as PreK reading programs, STEM enrichment camps and summer remediation programs are available to assist those students with additional gaps, or those who may need further challenge. School tours are also available for incoming transfer students. Through Covid, staff visited families at home to navigate instructional technology, and the school provided drive through lunch options for those families who were in need because of job loss. While current events and social movements have impacted many students, staff and their families, it is important that staff model inclusivity, language and problem solving that supports all types of learners.

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

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Looking back at the last year of education during the Covid pandemic, overwhelming challenges occurred at the district and campus levels. Quickly implementing remote learning and distributing 1:1 technology to students was just the beginning. Adapting teaching styles and lesson plans to fit a hybrid model of instruction, allowing the fluid movement of students in and out of the physical classroom created numerous instances of staff and students feeling overwhelmed and unsure. New methods of operation to ensure hygiene and safety standards created additional pressure on resources and time.

Faculty and staff members spent considerable time reflecting on the district vision and how that translates into the campus vision and the school's actions. Staff identified multiple areas of success, while developing plans for continued improvement. Regardless of the role of the staff member, a unified strength was identified above all others for the campus. Strong relationships are what set Navarro Elementary apart from any other school. Teachers and staff provided endless examples of moments where they had supported one another during a difficult time or where staff had gone above and beyond to form a close relationship with a challenging student in order to help them be more successful. Low teacher turnover on the campus results in teachers who have a long-lasting history with local families and the community. There is often an outside connection that links teachers and families together because of the longevity of the relationships that have been formed over the years. These extended personal connections, as well as frequent teacher check-ins, help establish trust and reliability beyond the school walls. Students who come to Navarro Elementary become part of the fold. Student success becomes a collective goal that each of staff members strives to achieve. While the impact of Covid has temporarily changed the look of school, the importance of reaching the whole child has not changed. When students walk into the front doors of the school, they can feel assured that every adult on campus has their individual needs and interests at heart, and that a pandemic will not get in the way of their success. This feeling, that many students and families cannot articulate or describe with words, is part of the Navarro tradition, and a key factor to the success and continued growth of the school.