

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 Judith Calderon
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

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

School Mailing Address 10801 La Subida
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City El Paso State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79935-3307

County Texas

Telephone (915) 630-3790 Fax (915) 591-9305

Web site/URL https://www.yisd.net/vistahills E-mail lcalderon@yisd.net

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Xavier DeLaTorre E-mail xdelatorre@yisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Ysleta Independent School District Tel. (915) 434-0000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Cruz Ochoa Jr.
(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):
 - 33 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 11 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

54 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 | 9 | 10 | 19 |
| K | 40 | 48 | 88 |
| 1 | 41 | 41 | 82 |
| 2 | 46 | 37 | 83 |
| 3 | 34 | 41 | 75 |
| 4 | 36 | 41 | 77 |
| 5 | 42 | 42 | 84 |
| 6 | 43 | 49 | 92 |
| 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 | 291 | 309 | 600 |

*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):
- 0.1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1.5 % Asian
 - 1.2 % Black or African American
 - 94.3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 % White
 - 0.7 % 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: 9%

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

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

| 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 | 53 |
| (2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year | 5 |
| (3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 58 |
| (4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019 | 650 |
| (5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4) | 0.09 |
| (6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 9 |

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 23 %
136 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 76 %

Total number students who qualify: 454

8. Students receiving special education services: 13 %
79 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>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>19</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>4</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>31</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 5
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. | 41 |
| Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc. | 7 |
| Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students. | 11 |
| Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc. | 7 |

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 15:1

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 | 98% | 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.

| Post-Secondary Status | |
|---|----|
| Graduating class size | 0 |
| Enrolled in a 4-year college or university | 0% |
| Enrolled in a community college | 0% |
| Enrolled in career/technical training program | 0% |
| Found employment | 0% |
| Joined the military or other public service | 0% |
| Other | 0% |

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
 Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

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

Vista Hills is committed to the practice that children can learn. The students will be prepared to exhibit positive citizenship, embrace cultural diversity, demonstrate technological competence, and invite lifelong learning.

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

The current 2021-2021 school year has been a journey. It began with a completely virtual setting. Soon after, face to face options were given to parents and students via a hub setting per feeder pattern. Teachers were also given the option to work from the campus remotely or remotely from home at this time. In January, all teachers and staff returned to work remotely from campus and each campus hosted their own hub. Shortly thereafter, parents were given the option for several learning platforms: face to face, hybrid, or remote. The school is currently in a transition phase of eliminating and terminating the remote learning option for students who are not thriving. The primary focus will be to provide the best quality instructional environment for all students regardless of the setting.

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

Vista Hills Elementary is a Title I school and one of 56 campuses in the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, Texas. The school, which was built in 1977 in far east El Paso, proudly serves students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Originally the home of the Dust Devils, the mascot later changed to the Crusaders to better suit the addition of the new J.M. Hanks High School and the Knights learning community. The school initially served local country-club families; as the years passed, the demography and population changed. The addition of school boundary lines within the growing community made the campus more diverse. It became the home school to several public housing complexes, which changed student demographics. Through the years, Vista Hills has become home to a very diverse socioeconomic population, creating a heterozygous learning community.

Vista Hills is dedicated to the idea that commitment starts in the heart. There is a very personal investment in the students at the campus. It is a district treasure with teachers who enthusiastically bring their children and relatives to attend the school. Vista Hills holds firm to the belief that every child deserves to be given the best quality education possible, regardless of their financial circumstance or ability. Without excuse, each student is given every opportunity to be successful. Since El Paso sits at the frontera—the border between Texas and Mexico—Vista Hills serves high numbers of English as Second Language students (ESL). Many students are first-year immigrants who are just learning what it means to be educated in the United States.

Vista Hills is home to a very unique Professional Learning Community (PLC) system that involves a flipped process, which has been showcased across the district and observed by neighboring districts. During the flipped process, teachers collaborate and share instructional strategies within grade levels. They analyze data and design strong Tier 1 unit lessons. In addition to this process, teachers participate in teacher-to-teacher rounds. These rounds build capacity among teachers, allowing for reflection on their best instructional practices. The instructional team also provides monthly after-school “You Asked For It” professional development (PD) sessions for teachers, which give teachers choices for training. This professional development ensures that Vista Hills educators continue to strengthen their practice and focus on the needs of all students. Furthermore, Vista Hills has monthly grade-level meetings for students in grades 3-6 to celebrate what it means to be a Crusader. During these motivational meetings, the principal meets with students to review their data, offering the opportunity to cheer students on as they collect academic awards and celebrate progress. One of the coveted awards is the Shining Star for top-performing students; a polished apple is given to students who are making academic gains. Vista Hills also has a Golden Ticket program to recognize the pillars of good character in all the students which promotes emotional support. Golden Tickets are given to students by faculty and staff members, and all Golden Tickets are collected in a raffle, drawn, and announced every Friday, with goodie bags for the winners. Student motivation affects all aspects of school life. Using these incentives helps keep student involvement, achievement, and inspiration high. The school also has a Principal’s Advisory Committee (PAC) which is composed of sixth-graders who have attended Vista Hills since kindergarten and have a good understanding of what it means to be a Crusader. The principal provides a lunch for PAC students once a month and they discuss, collaborate and give feedback on campus issues, events, and needs. The campus is home to two volleyball teams that participate in themed games which showcase the physical education program and the well rounded approach to physically motivating the students.

Vista Hills is a campus that celebrates all cultures and families – and being in the border town of El Paso creates the opportunity to celebrate Hispanic heritage with a fiesta! In the fall, the school hosts a food contest featuring food items like salsa, enchiladas, and chile con queso. Students and parents make these delicious dishes, and the faculty and staff vote for the best in each category, with the winners receiving prizes. Vista Hills also has an extracurricular folklorico dance group, a very unique gem in the feeder pattern. Composed of boys and girls in all grade levels, these students learn and perform dances to traditional Mexican folklorico music. The group is taught by staff members, and the performers have been featured in various district events and festivals.

All of these instructional, motivational and extracurricular programs help make Vista Hills a successful

school. The school addresses the whole child, and these programs are a catalyst for student achievement. The beauty of the learning community is that the faculty and staff use their strengths, compassion and commitment to support the success of all.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The 2020 calendar year brought many changes to Vista Hills; however, the passion to serve and meet the needs of each individual child remained constant. Although the format changed in curriculum and instruction, the priority to deliver effective instruction did not. From March 2020, the core curriculum developed and adapted through virtual instruction. The established Professional Learning Communities met weekly to create and design effective virtual lessons that targeted the needs of all students.

Vista Hills prides itself on the flipped PLC process, which calls for highly qualified teachers and curriculum coaches to work collaboratively on collective goals to plan successful and engaging lessons and address the needs of the students. Vista Hills follows the Texas Resource System (TRS) scope and sequence, which is aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in all content areas. Using data and understanding learning barriers helps teachers create lessons aligned with TEKS. Teachers scaffold lessons and provide tools to motivate students to work independently and succeed. General and Special Education (SPED) teachers plan and work collaboratively in the classrooms. Data talks are facilitated within grade levels using formative and summative assessments to guide instructional decisions. This includes addressing the various tiered levels of learners during interventions. Providing targeted small group reteach or spiral review allows each student to achieve success.

General and SPED teachers at Vista Hills work closely as they plan and collaborate in the classrooms. This has been crucial for overcoming barriers for students with special needs. Although remote learning has been particularly difficult for students who struggle academically, Vista Hills has provided appropriate accommodations and scaffolding to support their needs. Identifying and addressing the needs and individual strengths of the students continues to be top priority.

Establishing a literacy community is important at Vista Hills. The literacy practices in place are influential in the students' lives and will carry on into adulthood. The campus has a balanced literacy program in both reading and writing that consists of read-alouds, shared and guided reading, literacy stations, word study, and written composition. Teachers use a universal screener that tracks beginning, middle, and end-of-year progress to assist in grouping for guided reading models, as well as move students along in reading levels. Teachers in grades K-2 develop early literacy skills using a structured, multi-sensory phonics program, daily five, station rotations, hands-on activities, and technology-embedded lessons. Teachers in grades 3-6 develop lessons that build vocabulary, comprehension, written expression, and higher-order thinking, using engaging technology and hands-on lessons. At Vista Hills, the teachers and instructional coaches choose reading material that is cross-curricular and exposes students to a variety of culturally diverse literature within multiple genres. The social studies curriculum is embedded in reading instructional units. All grade levels teach explicit and systematic foundational language skills. The use of formative and informative assessments is used to collect data and inform strong Tier 1 instruction and intervention groups. The school implements the use of high-quality evidence-based content and rich reading instruction that follow TEKS.

Creating critical-thinkers who can apply mathematical skills to the real world is the targeted expectation of Vista Hills learners. From kindergarten through sixth grade, math instruction is based on problem-solving and hands-on learning to support core content, such as basic facts, algebraic reasoning, data analysis, financial literacy, geometry, and numerical reasoning. Students are engaged with manipulatives virtually and hands-on in order to build conceptual understanding. Building a numerical foundation is essential in order to transfer concrete learning into an abstract mathematical application. Teachers create daily formative assessments, such as exit tickets, which allow them to address any misconceptions or misunderstandings. Weekly data is acquired through summative quizzes, which provide opportunities to individualize interventions and strengthen areas of need. Continual progress monitoring and communication with the administration, faculty, and support staff ensures that no child is left behind.

In a world that bases decisions on science, Vista Hills prides itself in promoting inquisition through scientific investigations and problem-based learning (PBL). Incorporating vocabulary into collaborative conversations allows students to connect new concepts and formulate questions for further understanding.

Online learners have been given opportunities to participate in virtual labs and observe scientific inquiries. Students maintain a digital interactive notebook where they record their understanding. Teachers assess understanding through Jamboards, polls, and the use of cooperative learning structures. District assessments allow a data-driven discussion, which targets a reteach or spiral of taught curriculum. In addition to weekly investigations, students are given STEAM challenges throughout the year to complete as a team. Within these challenges, they are given a task and work to complete and revise until they are successful. At the yearly school STEAM fair, they are able to display and communicate their results with the learning community. Furthermore, The Robosaders, the robotics team at Vista Hills, boasts several district-level championships. The students learn to code and build robots to perform various tasks.

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

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

The Vista Hills preschool program provides social and emotional development for 4-year-old students as well as an alignment of K-3 academic standards. The students are taught separation from family members, conflict resolution, sharing space, empathy for others and self-concept and regulation skills. The students learn language and communication skills by building oral language, explaining words and sounds, and expanding vocabulary. The emergent literacy reading and writing program for the preschool students engages them in letter-knowledge activities. The daily comprehension of read-alouds provides higher acquired-language skills and the opportunity to journal-write so connections can be made. Preschool students are given the chance to understand the conventions of writing by providing them with an opportunity to use the writing process. The teacher takes the children from the thought stage to the sharing stage. They practice letter formation daily and contribute to the classroom word wall to learn new vocabulary. The preschool mathematics lessons allow the teacher to use physical objects as manipulatives to help forge concrete connections. Teachers support problem-solving by allowing students to ask thoughtful questions and help recognize problems in their environment. The preschool science lessons incorporate physical, life, earth, and space lessons. They perform hands-on investigations to learn about organisms and the environment. They also conduct experiments as a class and individually at home with parents. For social studies, the teacher selects texts that teach about culture, their community, and important historical figures. The preschool fine arts program helps students observe, organize, and interpret experiences through multiple mediums. Art is integrated throughout the domains, and supports many developmental aspects of the young preschooler. The early childhood program impacts the readiness and success in the primary grades by exposing students to an educational environment and gives them opportunities to develop and grow while also learning skills they will need for the rest of their lives.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Vista Hills offers a plethora of programs to enrich the whole child. Art, music, and technology begin with the youngest of students in pre-kindergarten and continue throughout their elementary years. In order to enrich the curriculum, the Fine Arts department works alongside teachers during PLC to create project-based learning programs that connect and create engaging social studies with music, theater, art, and technology according to the TEKS. These lessons are taught weekly, but embedded daily within the classroom. A highlight for many students is the after-school choir program, which meets once weekly. They perform at the district's Fine Arts Festival and various events throughout the year. With COVID-19, the Fine Arts program embraced the virtual setting with an adapted curriculum.

Meeting the physical needs of pre-kindergarten through sixth grade students is important as well. The TEKS are the basis for developing a strong Physical Education program. Students participate daily in various sports, from flag football to field hockey. Through these activities, the Physical Education (P.E.) department teaches students how to deal with anxiety, depression, anger, and empathy towards others. Students are also able to participate in the schoolwide Fall Carnival hosted by the P.E. program and organized by the sixth-grade students. The P.E. program faced many challenges during COVID-19, but an array of online activities was used to engage the students remotely.

As a campus that serves a large English Language Learner (ELL) population, Vista Hills offers bilingual education classes in pre-K through sixth grade. TEKS based lessons with embedded English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) are part of daily instruction. Through the use of technology programs, multicultural literature, and best practices, students are engaged with written and verbal discourse.

The library at Vista Hills is always bustling with excitement. As a 21st-century learning space, the library offers over 12,000 physical and digital resources. When the pandemic began, the library digitized the space with virtual lessons, e-books, and options for curbside pick-up. The technological competence of the students and teachers has grown through lessons, the use of 1-to-1 devices and IDB boards, and training in every classroom. The Gifted and Talented (GT) students are served through the library program. Children participated in a first-time collaboration program with the University of Texas at El Paso, which offered virtual camps that provided a sophisticated collegiate experience with professors in engineering, art, and code programming.

No school can match the Vista Hills counseling program, which follows the American School Counselor Association model as a comprehensive guidance program that focuses on students' social emotional development. All students participate in monthly guidance lessons. In addition, the counselor meets with individual students for daily and weekly check-ins. Through the counseling department, students are exposed to anti-bullying pledges and Red Ribbon Week celebrations. The counselor also runs the Dove Real Beauty camp for young girls in grades 5-6 to help build self-confidence. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the counseling program continued in virtual platforms. Whether in person or virtually, Vista Hills has continued to provide an enriching curriculum to develop the whole child.

3. Academic Supports:

Vista Hills helps to meet the needs of diverse learners with targeted instruction and interventions. During PLC, teachers are given tools for Tier 1 instruction but dig deep to create meaningful Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention plans for students performing below grade level. If students show initial difficulties through formative and summative data, they are given targeted and personalized support from highly qualified personnel. Students work in small groups with teachers who target their needs with original and creative lessons. The entire learning community flexes their schedule in order to assist. Retired educators work part time to help address the needs of individual children. The leadership team never hesitates to use their skills with students in any content area.

Students that have qualified and demonstrate learning disabilities have extended support with an incredibly talented special education department. All these students are included within the general population and serviced within the classroom. Instructional aides and teachers collaborate with the classroom teachers during PLC in order to support all learners. The students are able to thrive within a regular classroom setting and feel successful since they have extra assistance. This learning model not only provides immediate feedback for the special population, but for all students.

When assessing diverse learners, Vista Hills follows individualized education and academic plans to ensure they are given the opportunity to be successful.

The students that perform above grade level are also provided targeted instruction to meet their needs by offering student agency with differentiated instruction and lessons. GT students have opportunities to develop skills outside the classroom. They meet with the librarian weekly for enrichment activities which extend their critical thinking, permit collaborative teamwork, and allow extended inquisition activities. They develop their social emotional learning skills and real-world preparedness through project-based learning.

Since El Paso is a diverse community, Vista Hills consists of second language learners. As a result,

the school provides strong bilingual programs in grades pre-k through sixth grade. Students are given opportunities to develop competency in both languages. Teachers are trained and utilize various technology programs which assist the students with creating and enhancing their language skills. Opportunities to develop biliteracy and celebrate diversity are established with literature, school celebrations, and parent engagement. Children are able to exit the program with abilities to read, write, speak, and listen to both Spanish and English.

The campus is also home to two specialized units which serve students in the special education program. One of the units enrolls students at age three and another is a kindergarten collaborative. Students who need extra assistance with learning and behavioral challenges attend these classes. The teachers and instructional aides create a comfortable learning environment where students are welcomed and encouraged to learn. In fact, students are able to earn points as an incentive to shop in the classroom store. Their parents are continually informed and play an essential role in their child's learning. With engagement of all stakeholders, the students have all the support they need to be successful learners.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Vista Hills thrives on engaging its students on many levels. The students are valued and recognized for their efforts, contributions, and successes. The administration makes every effort to greet each child as they enter the school. With a friendly and encouraging greeting, children enter the school with a sense of love and belonging. Administrators also create more student connections with “shark” sightings. When the principal visits a class, she acknowledges those who are going after their learning and are engaged with the lesson like sharks. Students also look forward to attending monthly grade level meetings that used to be held in person, which students now join virtually. With music and enthusiasm, the principal eagerly shares attendance and test data, encourages students to be active with their learning, and acknowledges shining stars and polished apples from each classroom for students who are showing growth and success. Additional awards are given to those who meet various support programs minutes or lessons passed. Each week Golden Tickets are awarded to students who demonstrate the six pillars of character, like responsibility or motivation, within the classroom. Since awards are given to all learners, a drop-off zone is available after school for parents and students to collect their earnings. Not only do they win a prize, they get congratulations from the entire leadership team who distributes the treats. Vista Hills values the opportunity to involve parents and community members with an annual career fair. They share their job roles and educational experiences as they encourage all students to reach for their goals. Now more than ever, the students need to internalize the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards. This component supports the needs of all children. Within the classroom, lessons are taught and implemented throughout the day. The counselor guides and nurtures all students to be socially and emotionally strong. Virtual learning has not stopped the student engagement activities. In fact, teachers have built in blocks of their day to address needs and concerns for the students’ well-being. During this time, they provide whole group SEL discussions, time to share concerns, and breakout rooms for socialization. Students have a need and desire for making connections, and the teachers are facilitating through technological avenues. Vista Hills is a home for students to feel safe, secure, and loved. With their needs met, it is no wonder that the school can celebrate so many individual and group victories together.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Families are groups of people who move through the world together. The team understands that families have different home structures. Vista Hills faculty and staff work together to build a strong community of learners. Parent and community involvement events are planned throughout each school year. Unfortunately, most events usually planned could not be held with the restrictions and safety measures in place due to Covid 19. The campus hosts a father-daughter and mother-son dance. This promotes a night of interaction between students and parents that extends beyond the campus. The school also holds a grandparent’s day celebration. Students are able to eat breakfast with their loved ones and share songs and stories. This is a great way to build social connections and relationships. In addition, the Crusader family contributes to building a shared literacy community. A literacy night is held in the fall where families are encouraged to participate and engage in hands-on activities that tie to literature. During the Covid 19 pandemic, the students were able to participate in literacy night virtually. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Science (STEAM) fair is another great way to get the parents and community involved. It is a wonderful opportunity for families to collaborate and create projects tied to mathematics and science. Vista Hills also gives parents the opportunity to coach extracurricular activities such as chess club, volleyball, and Folklorico. The community and parents also help every year with the Hanks High school homecoming parade. Junior achievement is a way that elementary students interact with high school students. The school promotes a Hanks giving where families and community members come together to collect canned goods that are used to create Thanksgiving baskets given to needy families in the feeder pattern. Another great way the school involves the community is by inviting neighboring businesses to participate in a career day event. The community is given the opportunity to present their professions and businesses with students. The Excalibur Club contributes to the school and community with service projects. These boys and girls serve from the heart. These students participate along with their families in blanket and toy drives in the winter, box tops fundraisers for education and recycling for Earth day. Every year, Vista Hills partners with a local

church to provide coats, uniforms, and supplies for needy families. Overall Vista Hills believes that collaborating with families develops strong relationships between school, home, and community.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Personal growth, staff well-being, and student achievement is predominant at Vista Hills. The leadership team develops and prepares teachers to impact students with the highest level of professionalism. Curriculum coaches meet weekly with all grade levels and special education staff to support planning and prepare high quality lessons that follow the district's scope and sequence. Daily lesson plans and unit planning are created using an organized process that includes scaffolding, foreseeing misconceptions, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) barriers, academic vocabulary, and differentiated instruction. Teachers work collaboratively to share ideas and create high engaging activities for tiered instruction. Teachers work closely with Special education teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities as well as English language learners. The crusader family is celebrated throughout the school year for their efforts and hard work. Each week faculty and staff are recognized in a newsletter called the Crusader Chronicles. Within it, a "Speak Life" initiative is written with words of encouragement to the faculty to help motivate them. In addition, grade levels are celebrated weekly for collaboration and teamwork. The teachers are visited by administration with treats and incentives. The principal hosts many activities to motivate teachers such as burrito Fridays, candlelight pizza meals, and Tenth Caller Giveaways where teachers and staff can win gift cards. The leadership team helps build capacity by hosting teacher to teacher rounds throughout the school year. For instance, teachers are able to visit other teachers' classrooms from different grade levels. Teachers then meet with curriculum coaches to discuss classroom culture, best practices that were observed, and to share ideas about areas of improvement. Due to the COVID pandemic in March of 2020, all teachers and staff embarked into a new way of teaching. Students had to be completely switched to remote learning and teachers had to teach virtually from their homes. This was a challenge that Vista Hills faculty and staff had to adapt to in a short amount of time. With the help of leadership, professional development was hosted through virtual meetings. Teachers were trained and prepared for full online learning. They were navigating new learning platforms, creating technology-based lessons, and mentally preparing themselves for all the obstacles that would naturally come. With resilience and motivation teachers continued to teach from the heart. The Hanks learning community came together for the greater good of all students. Teachers were given the tools and resources to help achieve students' success.

4. School Leadership:

The Vista Hills Leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, and all support service stakeholders. The stakeholders include the Counselor, Librarian, Reading Interventionist, Fine Arts teacher, Technology teacher, and the Math and Science Coaches. With such a diverse group leading the campus, whatever the need may be, there is always someone equipped to handle the situation. The collaboration amongst all the members of leadership also contributes to the success of the campus. The leadership team meets weekly to discuss the campus' needs and upcoming events. They also meet to discuss the weekly focus of support. The leadership's philosophy is to have a servant's heart and to lead by example. By doing these two things, the team ensures teachers feel empowered because they are heard and taken care of in and outside the classroom. The communication lines are always open across the campus because the team sees the teachers the way a coach sees its players. The teachers are an integral part of the team, and the leadership at Vista Hills recognizes this as a critical component. The main focus of the leadership team is to ensure the campus is successful by helping hone individual teacher growth and the talents of seasoned master teachers. These teachers become mentors and models for the more novice teachers. In addition to being members of a strong team, each member is tasked with running their individual programs and maintaining the responsibilities within each. Instructional support is the priority for all members. The COVID pandemic took the leadership team into uncharted waters. However, the call to take charge as a leadership team remained the focus. The master schedule was re-worked while providing technology support and the tools necessary to continue the learning from home. The leadership team executed a distribution plan for all the necessary resources to the students' families through the school's drop off zone during the pandemic. The team had to revisit all campus systems and ensure that all CDC guidelines were taken into consideration. In addition to all the guidelines, the leadership team rapid tests all the students on campus every Monday morning. By supporting this process, academic learning is provided by teachers in a safe environment, and

the learning loss deficits can be made up. The leadership team at Vista Hills is a very unique and talented group. They work hard to make sure Vista Hills is meeting and exceeding all the campus expectations.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Vista Hills is a diverse and inclusive community that meets the needs of all learners. Opportunities to share rich cultural literature and traditions with the students are welcome. Celebrating Hispanic Heritage month with parental engagement is an exciting time as recipes and ethnic foods are shared. The Folklorico dance group colors stages at school, central office, and within the city with lively performances. The library welcomes authors to read and share bilingual books which allows students to be exposed to the rich, beautiful language of Spanish. The authors educate the students with cultural understanding and appreciation for all people. The counselor invites professionals of diverse backgrounds to share career and personal backgrounds which encourage and motivate the students to succeed. During PLC, the instructional coach works alongside the teachers to provide culturally sensitive literature within the classroom. The library also provides diverse materials which meet the needs of the student population. The librarian also meets with all stakeholders and researches to ensure the library is a diverse avenue of resources for the community. Every year, the school provides events such as Read across America and Holiday on the Hills. This year was no exception. The leadership team provided a daily multicultural read aloud with a hands-on activity. Students picked up materials in the drop-off zone which allowed them the opportunity to participate with their family on social media. Not only were students exposed to award winning books, but they were making connections to their personal and community heritage. Vista Hills has been home to many incredible teachers. Many retired professionals return to campus to provide supplemental academic support. With a large percentage of special education students and second language learners, the campus is able to offer small group support. The leadership team dives into classrooms to reach every student, support each teacher, and provide necessary materials. After school, Saturdays, and within the day, students are able to receive additional individualized instruction. The campus collaborates to assist all learners no matter the grade, class, or level. Students utilize manipulatives, technology, and learning structures which promote student discourse and movement. With online instruction, strategies have been adapted to continue cooperative learning and student accountability. Learners in the bilingual education program are given additional support with acquiring a second language through tutoring, small group instruction, hands-on activities, engagement strategies, and the integration of technology. All learners are supported and valued at Vista Hills Elementary.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The game changer at Vista Hills is the Flipped PLC process. Although Covid-19 changed the educational environment, the PLC process at Vista Hills only increased in strength. The main focus of PLC is collaboration and professional development amongst colleagues. Not only does it engage the classroom teacher, it involves the Special education support personnel as well. The instructional coaches facilitate the process as they guide and help build the teachers' toolbox. All stakeholders are in a comfortable environment that allows for transparency and growth. The magic of the process is in the professional conversations that are shared. Teachers know that their PLC time is a time to plan and get the support they need to design effective lessons. They share practices and commit to a common success criterion that produces the learning goal.

The flipped PLC process includes dissecting the Student Expectations (SE) and planning a unit that focuses on understanding it. The unit expectations are broken down into various components. Teachers take responsibility for one of the four components of the flip. They study, do research and come to PLC ready to share their portion. Vocabulary is one of the components. During this part, the teachers identify essential vocabulary and decide the best ways to introduce it within the unit. Another component is the scaffolding. The scaffold is a map of the background knowledge the students come into the grade level with. The scaffold also sets the level or rigor necessary for the current grade level and gives the teacher insight for future learning. The third component is a bank of questions where the teachers focus on a question stem and implement these stems in their lesson delivery, formative, and summative portions of the unit. The teachers also pay particular attention to cultural bias and words that ELL students may need support with. The last component is the instructional focus document. It provides a complete breakdown of all the SE's involved in the unit. The instructional coaches can also offer support during this time if a teacher feels that they are wanting to try a new practice, ask questions or get clarification. At this time, all of the pieces come together to create a clear picture of the unit at hand. Once these components are collected and recorded, they are placed in a graphic organizer and posted in the PLC room. The PLC planning room is vibrantly decked with these flipped graphic organizers for each grade level to refer to.