

U.S. Department of Education
2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Gale Ranch Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6400 Main Branch Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City San Ramon State CA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 94582-5825

County Contra Costa County

Telephone (925) 479-1500 Fax (925) 479-1595

Web site/URL https://grms.srvusd.net/ E-mail jtorres@srvusd.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. John Malloy E-mail jmalloy@srvusd.net

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name San Ramon Valley Unified School District Tel. (925) 552-5500

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. Ken Mintz
(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 signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 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 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	171	163	334
7	201	136	337
8	190	166	356
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	562	465	1027

*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
 - 76.5 % Asian
 - 2.9 % Black or African American
 - 5.1 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 9.7 % White
 - 5.6 % 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 2020 - 2021 school year: 3%

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, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	22
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	1141
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.03
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
- Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Cantonese, Chaozhou (Chiuchow), Farsi (Persian), Filipino (Pilipino), Tagalog), French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Kannada, Korean, Mandarin (Putonghua), Marathi, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Rumanian, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
46 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 9 %
 Total number students who qualify: 94

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 6 %
64 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 with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>12</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>41</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>39</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>11</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: 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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	45
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 32:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	99%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

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.

Gale Ranch Middle School is a diverse community whose mission is to provide an inclusive, safe, compassionate environment which enables our students to be holistically prepared to become lifelong learners and successful human beings.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

<http://www.gamutonline.net/district/sanramonvalleyusd/DisplayPolicy/1050895/>

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

PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Gale Ranch Middle School (GRMS) is a special place where we believe what we are doing in our classrooms today will make us a more unified, diverse, and equitable community and country in the decades to come.

We are located in the dynamic city of San Ramon, California. Although the area was first settled in the 1850s, it was only in the last fifteen years our region of the Dougherty Valley was developed, essentially doubling the size of the city to more than 85,000 residents. This dramatic increase was fueled by the fact that San Ramon Valley Unified School District is known for its dedication to academic excellence, and because of remarkable technological and financial success of Silicon Valley. A major satellite office of Oracle is located in nearby Pleasanton as well as Zoho Systems, while the massive Google headquarters in Mountain View is only twenty-six miles away.

Silicon Valley has drawn in the most technologically talented individuals in the world, who have found in Northern California, their American dream. In any single classroom at Gale Ranch you might find students who speak one of more than twenty languages at home, in addition to English, such as Hindi, Egyptian, Korean, Tamil, Spanish, Japanese, Punjabi, Hebrew, Tagalog, Mandarin, Persian, Arabic, Russian, German, Czech, or Pashto.

One of the factors that connect all these groups together is a strong commitment to family, demonstrated by the large number of three-generation households in the area. It is a common sight to see grandparents walk their grandchildren to and from school. These groups are also united by a strong commitment to education. In many respects this serves our students well, as parents and caregivers surround their students with the needed support to thrive and succeed. Yet at times, it also presents challenges to our educators. In many of the countries from which our students hail, conformity and the “right answer” are valued more highly than an innovative or creative answer. One of our goals continues to be bringing our District Strategic Directions to life, by teaching our students to own their learning so they find purpose, meaning and joy in their education, and helping them understand that their failures are often the first steps in innovation.

Gale Ranch Middle School (GRMS) opened on August 25, 2008 with the mission of preparing students to excel in all areas. The dedication plaque at the front of our school is a quote from President Kennedy, which reads, “Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into a benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.” Our school motto is “Learning today. Leading tomorrow.”

When GRMS was originally built in 2008 it was comprised of 34 classrooms, one gym, one multi-purpose room/cafeteria, one library, and one staff lounge. Due to the explosive growth of the Dougherty Valley region, and the designation in news articles identifying SRVUSD as a "destination district" for parents who want the best for their children's education, we have added eleven portable classrooms to accommodate our growing student body.

We constantly monitor and gauge our effectiveness in multiple ways, and adjust when necessary. We firmly believe we learn from our mistakes and our multiple programs and curriculum combine to provide a safe environment for students to learn, fail, persevere, and succeed. Our efforts have not gone unnoticed. In the 2012/2013 school year we received the honor of being a California Distinguished School and in the 14/15 school year we were named a California Golden Ribbon school.

And yet, while we demand the highest of standards from our students, we are also actively engaged in working with our socio-economically disadvantaged students, comprising 9% of our population. We are a Title I school with many students living in government supported Section 8 housing. 6% of our students are identified as students with disabilities and obtain instruction through resource or special day classes. 4% of our students are English Language Learners, and are dealing with both the challenge of learning a new language, as well as adjusting to a new and unfamiliar culture.

This means approximately 19% of our students require some form of modified instruction or assistance. Our staff, students, and parent community work hard, using the latest educational tools and resources available to achieve not only academic excellence, but to create well-informed citizens with the strong critical thinking skills necessary to navigate an often confusing and changing world.

Students who are competitive academically can find an outlet through GRMS competitive math and science programs. We participate in MathCounts, MathLeague, Math Olympiad, and Science Bowl competitions, as well as the AMC 8. Some students are invited to participate in the AIMEE based on their performance in other events. The competitive math teams are mentored by our high school math club, which is mostly made up of former GRMS students. It's a nice continuity between the middle and high school math communities.

While the COVID-19 crisis affected some testing categories, the most recent data from 2020-2021 shows 84.1% of our students met or exceeded the CAASPP standards for English Language Acquisition while 89.7% met or exceeded the CAASPP standards for math. We believe this is consistent with our observation that the foreign-born parents of our students tend to work in the tech industry, where math and science skills are highly valued. Also in the 2020-2021 school year the chronic absenteeism rate was 1.1%.

We strongly believe that Gale Ranch Middle School, with its unique mix of students from different nations and backgrounds combine with the programs and philosophies we embrace, create a dynamic model of civic culture which will effectively address the challenges our country will face in the future.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:

Gale Ranch focuses on educating the “whole student,” demanding high academic standards, while at the same time addressing their unique social and emotional needs. We believe this focus on our unique civic culture is especially important because so many of our students have come to us from other countries as their parents have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by nearby Silicon Valley.

Sixth graders take a three period core class in language arts, reading, and social studies; a rotational exploratory block (courses include: art, digital photography, digital citizenship, visual and performing arts, living skills, tech); science, mathematics; and physical education. Instrumental music is also a choice for sixth graders.

In seventh and eighth grade students continue studies in required classes of language arts, social studies, mathematics, science and physical education. Our expansive elective program allows students to select from a variety of courses. The elective program includes courses in world languages (French, Chinese, and Spanish), foods, instrumental music, drama, art, digital photography, speech and debate, forensic science, robotics, video production, leadership, yearbook, and computer tech. These diverse course offerings provide students with the opportunity to develop practical, hands-on and collaboration skills, all with opportunities for deep learning and innovation.

A large number of our students sign-up for special electives that require extra time, hard work, and performing activities outside of school. Our music courses have strong participation, with 30% of our students currently enrolled. Students in band perform twice a year in an evening concert and at various community events. We also have a thriving drama department, with multiple productions a year. Our leadership class is also extremely popular, and these student leaders reflect upon their own leadership, engage in community service projects, and organize school activities and events. Leadership students present weekly announcements to the student body and teach lessons to their peers around character education.

1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

As part of our focus on meeting students where they are at the moment, Gale Ranch utilizes the Reading and Writing Project, Teachers College - Columbia University, developed by Lucy Calkins in 1981.

This innovative program boosts student learning by: letting them choose their own reading material; then the teacher models for the student how they approach different texts; the questions the teacher might ask of the text; then how teacher tries to understand the background of the character or author; then finally an opinion is reached on what the reading is trying to say. In essence, we are trying to teach the students how to think, not necessarily what to think. This program has also been highly praised for its efforts to address social issues by allowing students to approach materials from different perspectives.

We believe this empowers the student to utilize their own background and experiences, helping them become a powerful thinker and communicator. Additionally, we believe this generates empathy as the student can reflect on both the different experiences encompassed in the readings, as well as the different perspectives expressed by other students. The student is not encouraged to have the teacher’s perspective, but to develop their own authentic voice in a community of fellow truth-seekers.

The writing portion of this program is intensive as it asks them to incorporate their own personal passions, perspectives, and experiences into their work. In the writing work undertaken by students they use existing texts as a window into contemporary social issues, such as systemic racism, gender issues, the influence of

large corporations on our government, while also bringing their own experiences and perspectives to the work.

In finding their own voice, students can reflect more deeply on the experiences of others as they navigate our changing world. What we value most at Gale Ranch is a sense of empathy for others by their work, the creation of a community knit together by common values and a focus on the social emotional well-being of all members of our community.

We are looking for meaningful work from the students, which is why we have implemented standards-based-grading. In standards-based grading we are looking for specific skills, such as using facts presented as a way to support or dispute current opinions.

Our library, run by our exceptional Teacher Librarian, is also a center of academic life at Gale Ranch. More than 200 students a day use our library. The collection of materials in our library focuses on diversity and equity, and reflects the cultural makeup of our school, with many books focusing on South Asian stories, as well as African-American, and Native American stories. We attempt to foster independence by allowing students to read what interests them. Our library website also links to several California databases for science and history, as well as teaching them how to properly cite their work, and what images they can legally use to accompany their reports, all of which prepares them to be successful in their post-high school endeavors. Our librarian also sponsors several events, clubs, contests, and also hosts one of two Innovation Centers for district staff to check out technology that they can use with their students. The GRMS Library also makes a large collection of E-books and podcasts on areas of interest available to our students.

1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

GRMS Mathematics is completely standards based. We work with CCSS in Course 1, 2, 3 (grade level 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes), and challenge over 60% of our students with above-grade level classes. (We currently have over 130 students in high school Geometry, and over 250 students in high school Algebra 1.)

We've found that when students clearly understand what they are expected to master, and they see different ways they can show content mastery, they are better able to organize their time and energy and reduce stress. Students are able to work together, and formative assessments along the way to final mastery give good feedback on levels of student understanding. Final assessments tend to be summative, although students are able to sign up for relearning and retaking any Standards during our weekly tutorial intervention time. Any student can retake any math standard from August through May, as their understanding changes and grows throughout the school year. Students are able to self-pace through District summer bridge programs that allow for jumping a year further ahead each summer.

We make use of manipulatives, drawings and constructions, and different learning styles to keep students thinking and motivated. This was particularly challenging during remote learning with Covid during the 2020/2021 year. In Algebra, for instance, the two course teachers made videos and posted linked notes for some of the more difficult ideas. Now that we are fully in-person, we are continuing to link notes online for students who are quarantining or struggling.

We use Desmos programs as online experiences for students. We use MathShell and MARS tasks as interactive group activities and constructions. And we use YouCubed warmups and activities to deepen conceptual understanding at all levels of GRMS math.

Some students volunteer for making tutoring content with videos, guided practice, and even one-on-one help with struggling math students. It's a nice way to bring together different subgroups on campus, and helps when freshman get to high school and can see some familiar faces.

As students are able to handle more individual responsibility, there are partner and small group assessments used as formative feedback.

When students were in 8th grade for Algebra 1, math and science teachers were able to align their content so

that students collected data in science and then worked on data display and the statistical interpretation of data in math classes. This has adjusted since our algebra classes are now half 7th and half 8th graders.

One of the characteristics which distinguishes Gale Ranch students is their competitive nature, and yet at the same time, their support for each other shines through every day. One math teacher described an experience where students were coming back to her class from a spelling competition. The teacher informed the class to be respectful, as those who were coming back were those eliminated from the competition. One student came back, sat down at her chair, and softly started crying. Another student, seeing this unfold, simply walked over, and sat next to the student, no words being exchanged, simply letting the student know she was there for her.

1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

It is said “necessity is the mother of invention,” and there may be no better example of that in the past few years than the science department. Our district has struggled for several years to decide on an approved curriculum for middle school science, which has often left teachers frustrated as to how to best serve our students. During those years our department has done an exemplary job, utilizing materials developed by leading science educators such as the Exploratorium or Stanford University and developed a veritable “buffet” of science labs and activities.

With the approval of a curriculum linked to “Next Generation Science Standards,” Gale Ranch has adopted the McGraw Hill Inspire Integrated Science Curriculum, which has been an enormous help in planning. We believe in direct, hands-on experiments as a way to understand scientific concepts, then for students to express that understanding in a claim, evidence, reasoning format, in which they state what they believe, provide three to five pieces of data or evidence from their experiment, then connect to a scientific concept.

Another area in which student skills are developed is in the gathering of their information in a well-designed data table, then displaying that information in a graph. We understand many of our high achieving students may do well in this format, while others are more visual learners. For this reason, we also include modeling in our assessment of whether they understand challenging scientific concepts.

Probably nothing expresses the philosophy of the science department better than the saying, “failure is often the first step on the road to success.” With our student culture there’s often great emphasis placed on being correct the first time, which often leads students to undervalue the importance of persistent effort. Students are given ample opportunities to fail in experiments they often design, then figure out a better way of performing the experiment.

1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:

The philosophy of the social studies department is most accurately expressed by the belief that “The best teachers are those who tell you where to look, but not what to see.” In order to illuminate the differences between different historical time periods and groups of people, social studies relies on the four levels of the Depth of Knowledge rubric.

The first level may generally be referred to as “recall” in which students recall elements and details of story structure, the sequence of events, character, plot, and setting. In addition, students may be asked to describe the features of a place, a group of people, or a certain geographical area.

The second level is called “skills/concepts,” where students summarize the events and people about whom they’ve learned. This may include describing the causes of a particular event, patterns of behavior or events, and they may be called upon to illustrate or write about such events, as if they were an educator providing the information to somebody unfamiliar with the material.

The third level is “strategic thinking,” and it is where we often see the greatest growth in students. Students may be required to develop a logical argument, supporting their ideas with details and examples or generate research questions for further study.

The fourth level is “extended thinking,” in which students may develop a research question, do the necessary investigation, then report their findings. They may also be required to analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources or illustrate common themes found across texts from different cultures.

This may be shown in the classroom by historical themes, such as “Chinese Innovation and the Growth of the Medieval World,” or “The Effect of Religion and Belief on Cultures,” rather than a rigid focus on names, dates, or events, which students will not long remember.

1f. For secondary schools:

As a middle school in a community which greatly values education we need to constantly demonstrate to our parents that their children are on a path to a great future. Our leadership program, boasting more than 100 students, helps students develop skills and understanding of community needs.

In allowing students to assess their skills compared to students at other middle schools, we sponsor Math Counts, Math League, Math Olympiad, Science Bowl Competitions, in addition to the American Mathematics Competition. The school also has a Speech and Debate class, and this year inaugurated an after school Speech and Debate Club.

As our local community is tech-oriented, we know that math plays a strong role in any future success for our students. It is why we look with pride upon the fact that more than 60% of our students take above-grade level classes. More than 250 students are currently enrolled in high school Algebra 1, and more than 130 are taking high school geometry.

We understand that early exposure to technology promises a bright future, so students at Gale Ranch have the opportunity to take a number of Advanced tech classes which can both expose them to a wide variety of current and emerging technologies, or choose to work on a project of interest to them and more deeply explore a subject area.

Our robotics class allows students to work in a hands-on manner, working through activities which teach programming, behaviors, systems, control sensors, and using feedback, culminating in a “Battle of the Bots” competition near the end of the class. These classes develop skills of individual thinking, as well as the ability to work in teams to accomplish a common goal.

The ability of talented individuals to work together in collaborative teams is a highly sought after skill in the tech industry, and our students are well-prepared by these experiences.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

We have an active and enthusiastic arts department, allowing students the opportunity to develop many creative projects. In our drama department students work together to collectively create complex characters, develop well-structured storylines, augment their acting skills, and give dramatic expression to original ideas. Eventually, this leads to the process of playwriting and advanced character development, as the students create and perform their original dramatic work to the student body and the local community.

Music forms an integral part of the life of many students at Gale Ranch, with approximately 30% of our school population involved in playing a musical instrument. Our long-time music director has developed an exceptional musical education program, starting sixth graders off in a cadet band, for those new to music. Seventh and eighth grade involves their participants in a “concert band” which performs two concerts a year for both the student body and the wider community, as well as participating in local music festivals. Depending on the student’s interest, they can specialize in a specific instrument, or perform in a separate

jazz, orchestra, or symphonic band.

The physical education program at Gale Ranch is a comprehensive, inclusive, and sequential physical education system that prepares students for a lifelong commitment to physical activity, health, and well-being. It promotes an active lifestyle, improved motor skills development and better cognitive performance.

We offer seventh-and eighth-graders the option to participate in daily instruction in Spanish, French or Mandarin, in a robust two-year sequence equivalent to Level 1, aligned with California's World Languages Standards. Learning, reflection and assessment focus on what novice students can do in the target language, for example, "I can ask and answer questions about daily activities, express preferences, and compare my daily activities with those of the target culture." Students engage in project-based learning to practice language and develop cross-cultural perspectives. The supportive partnerships they form in our world language classrooms foster the collaboration skills, confidence and collegiality they will need to thrive in a global community.

Our tech and robotics classes have developed their own subculture on our campus, with students interested in exploring new technologies, and building and programming robots to perform specific tasks. Students also explore the promise of artificial intelligence as a way to solve real-world problems, as well as investigate the promise of 3D printers.

Our culinary classes provide important life skills for students. They learn the basic food groups, terminology, cooking and baking methods and techniques, nutritional choices, sanitation, etiquette, budgeting, care and use of kitchen equipment, and laundry. The program encourages teamwork and self-evaluation as kitchen teams are involved in practical cooking experiences. As the students take more advanced classes, they learn how to prepare entire meals, advanced cooking techniques, as well as baking and dessert preparation.

At Gale Ranch we strive to create a positive community that allows students to learn life-long skills that can be brought to the real world. Whether it's cooking, programming, robots or planning activities for the campus, Gale Ranch offers a multitude of leadership opportunities for students to master. From budgeting, community service, backwards planning, developing communication skills and everything in between, our staff provides students with the ability to handle whatever life throws their way.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Gale Ranch uses a number of strategies to identify struggling students, and then provide them with the resources and professionals to assist them in success.

ELA-Running Records are conducted by teachers for all students at the beginning of the school year. Students who perform below grade level at the beginning of the year are recommended for a reading intervention class. Sixth and seventh grade students have the opportunity to participate in our Before/After School Intervention (BASI) program.

This support consists of small-group instruction conducted by a certificated teacher. Seventh and eighth graders also have the opportunity to attend a reading intervention course, which takes place during the school day. Progress monitoring includes additional running records and FastBridge screenings conducted mid-year and at the end of the school year.

The FastBridge screener for math is conducted three times per school year. Sixth grade students who perform below grade level are given the opportunity to participate in our BASI program. Additionally, we are staffed with a math paraprofessional who pushes into 6th, 7th, and 8th grade math classes where students have been identified as benefitting from instructional support.

There are several levels of support for students who are performing below grade level. Teachers are

consistently aware of how students are performing, checking in regularly with the tutorial program, and seek to intervene. From that point, counselors are aware of students who are performing below grade level, often suggesting struggling students be tested to determine whether there might be learning difficulties.

Once areas for support are identified, then the Student Success Team swings into action and determines next steps. There may be after-school tutoring, the assistance of Resource and Special Education, or any number of other professionals and strategies to help the student.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Gale Ranch participates in the Academic Talent Program (ATP) which seeks to serve highly gifted students with unique needs by placing them with other students with similar abilities and interests in a challenging academic environment. The program is literature and non-fiction based in which their written projects can be either narrative, argumentative, or informational in nature.

The emphasis in the program is that students possess an interest in rigorous problem-solving, develop a keen power of abstraction, as well as critical thinking skills. The social studies based program focuses on creativity and originality, and communicating these ideas to others in an easily understandable manner. We find this program to be highly desirable to many of our students who need a faster-paced, more demanding classroom, and might otherwise find themselves unmotivated in the speed of a traditional classroom.

In math, our district provides opportunities for students who excel in mathematics to advance in course levels. Because of the high academic background of the majority of the parents of our students, and the desire of many of our students to one day attend a prestigious university, math is one of the most popular subjects at our school. Through the Math Accelerated Program, students can complete a course exam and/or summer course to accelerate their math instruction. At GRMS, we offer these accelerated, high school level mathematics courses on site.

Our mathematics program challenges over 60% of our students with above-grade level classes. We currently have over 130 students in high school Geometry, and over 250 students in high school Algebra 1. We strive to make the experience of every student at Gale Ranch one in which they can succeed, and offer support systems to those who need it. In addition to their academic skills, that they have the time and support to develop the social and emotional skills necessary to prosper in the adult world.

3c. Special education:

Gale Ranch has approximately 70 special education students and their needs are addressed in a variety of ways, such as Resource and Mild Special Day Class.

Resource classes are offered to students identified as needing special education services through push-in (where a resource specialist attends general education classes as support to resource students) or pull-out (a separate class used as a tutorial period) support.

Mild Special Day Class offers small group instructions of course content in the four basic academic areas (reading, writing, social studies, and math) and incorporate study and basic skills using general education curriculum content, as well as objectives outlined in a student's IEP.

Gale Ranch Middle School's special education team supports students with a wide variety of disabilities. Accommodations and modifications are determined based on students' individual needs and the IEP. Services on site range from resource support with both push in and pull out models. Gale Ranch also has a mild SDC class to support students who need a modified curriculum. Gale Ranch's staff goals are to mainstream students as much as possible in order to create a diverse and supportive learning community for all students on campus. Support services on site include counseling with school psychologists, speech and language services as well as occupational therapy services.

In addition, Gale Ranch provides many opportunities for continuing education for our staff as to the

struggles faced by special education students. For example, in one activity for teachers, they must struggle to write with their non-dominant hand, and attempt to read academic writing with many letters missing or jumbled, in much the way a student with dyslexia might experience.

At Gale Ranch, we don't view special education as something separate, but an integrated and integral part of our community. Inevitably, the strategies we employ to assist our special education students often make the material more accessible for all students, demonstrating we are all in this together. Our Resource and Mild SDC students are some of our most popular students on campus and we are so proud to see all of our students develop meaningful friendships and spend time together at lunch and after school.

3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:

Gale Ranch is a magnet school in our area for Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) with approximately forty-six students enrolled in these programs. As practiced at Gale Ranch, our teachers utilize the best practices of content area teaching and language acquisition to meet the needs of our students with limited academic English skills. Gale Ranch specializes in having extremely small classes, with students slotted into Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced SDAIE classes, prior to graduating into the general student population.

At Gale Ranch we place special emphasis on making sure we provide students with: 1) scaffolded ways for understanding the highlighted content, 2) using easily understandable academic language acquired through various modeling and practice activities, as well as, 3) ongoing feedback as to how well the student is learning the highlighted content and language.

Gale Ranch teachers use a variety of strategies to assist with English language acquisition. They might model language, along with appropriate cultural gestures to accompany the language. They might use visuals and objects to "paint a thousand words," and make the verbal or written academic language more comprehensible. Teachers will also front-load academic reading, providing vocabulary, concepts and themes, on their own, so that when the reading is attempted, students can better grasp the ideas.

Educators will also often incorporate differentiated instruction into their classes, as students are likely to be at varying levels of skill in language acquisition. Another strategy involves the use of movement and drama, art, and other intelligences to reinforce the concepts and the understanding of academic language.

All of this is done with the express intention of building habits of reading comprehension, academic thinking, test-taking, and studying, so that students may use these skills for success as they move through their academic career and enter post-high school endeavors.

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

At Gale Ranch, we provide education services in order to help ensure that homeless and at-risk youth receive the full benefits of a free and appropriate public education that all students are entitled to, including preschool programs. We work in collaboration with all 35 schools in our District, Contra Costa County Office of Education, the Contra Costa County Department of Social Services, Contra Costa County Probation, and other community based agencies, to fully implement federal laws which govern and protect the educational rights of homeless and at risk youth.

Gale Ranch is adjacent to Section 8 Housing units and is a Title 1 school due to the number of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program.

Homeless youth and those with socio-economic challenges often experience numerous changes in placement and living situations which cause interruptions in their educational settings. The emotional adjustments of these changes combined with the sense of falling behind can be overwhelming for these students. It is estimated that for each mid-year school placement change, a student will fall behind academically by six months. Graduation rates for homeless youth are 20% to 30% below the national average of their peers. At Gale Ranch we will often have anywhere from one or two students who are designated as being "homeless."

Gale Ranch is dedicated to students struggling with socio-economic challenges.

We assist these students and their families by helping with:

Counseling if needed; Immediate enrollment in school (even though he/she may not have school records, immunizations, proof of residence or guardianship paperwork); Assistance with school services to maintain educational stability; Timely transfer of educational records; Waiving participating fees etc. for clubs and organizations run by our school district; Referral to community resources and linkage to supports for post-high school endeavors, whether that be financial aid for universities, community colleges or vocational programs; Access to free lunch

Transportation to and from school (a homeless student can receive transportation to their school of origin if they choose to remain there even though it may be in a different school district); and Help coordinating graduation using AB 1806 (which reduces the number of high school credits needed for graduation).

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

One of the greatest challenges for any educational institution is developing a working philosophy as to how to effectively run its programs to support all students in a manner that is equitable. In its simplest formulation, what do we value and how do we live those values on a daily basis?

At Gale Ranch, we are student-focused. The decision was made several years ago that we were going to focus on building connections, not just between students and staff, but amongst all groups which interact on our campus. When an issue is identified, Gale Ranch teachers and administrators don't run away from the problem, they run towards it. When there is a student who is having some difficulty, either acting out in class, not performing at the level they want, or who appears to be friendless, we move towards that problem.

We are not interested in punishing students who misbehave, but use restorative justice practices and work to find out what is going on in their lives that is preventing them from being a part of the amazing experience that life can be. We do our very best to try to get to the root of the problem, rather than simply extinguishing the problematic behavior. From what comes back to us from students, we feel that we are usually successful with this approach.

When a teacher feels that a subject they're teaching isn't quite capturing the imagination of the students, they'll often consult with other teachers, look for ideas on-line, or just ponder the problem in their off-hours until something comes to mind. If there is any trait which typifies a Gale Ranch teacher, it's their student-centered attitude and fearlessness in embracing new ways to engage students.

Leadership has been instrumental in organizing lunchtime activities, mix-it-up days, and cultural awareness through weekly video broadcasts. This has brought our student body closer together to focus on academic and social goals and to celebrate our variety of cultures. Leadership has also been instrumental in putting together dances, lunch-time activities, and working with the video department to craft messages of unity for our weekly Gryphon News broadcasts. All of these activities are student-centered and student-created and led.

In our classrooms, the administration and teachers have emphasized group work as a way to create a sense of community, while at the same time allowing the very best ideas to be generated by the group. While middle school can be an emotionally difficult time under even the best of circumstances, the school's constant use of the principles of social and emotional learning smooths much of the difficulties of this time in a student's life.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

More than anything, Gale Ranch believes in developing connections with our education partners in the community. As has been stated in other parts of this application, Gale Ranch has a specific cultural mix of parents and students who like to be deeply involved in the lives of their students and we welcome that involvement.

It has been noted in many publications that one of the most important elements for success in the life of a student is that there is at least one adult around that student who encourages them on the road to excellence. At Gale Ranch we are often blessed to have a multitude of concerned adults in the lives of our children, from parents to grandparents, siblings, and others, who expect our students to reach their full potential. Students are surrounded by elders and high-achieving siblings, and yet this can often present its own problems.

Probably nothing better exemplifies the importance of the personal connections we seek to create among all groups than the line Gale Ranch walks between high achievement and the personal happiness of our students. While on the one hand, high expectations can be a positive for a student, it can also introduce an

unnecessary element of stress. We like to keep things upbeat at our school, embracing a “growth” mindset, which tells the student that what they want to achieve, can be done if they take the right steps. “Failure is often the first step on the road to success,” is a common refrain at Gale Ranch, but it is a concept which often takes a while for many of our students a while to accept.

Among the many ways in which we communicate with our local community is through Site Council, PTA, the Education Fund, and our principal often sends weekly emails to the community, as well as often sending out a survey to determine if any issues have arisen with which we might not be aware. We also work in collaboration with the English Language Advisory Committee to ensure that we’re meeting the needs of the newest members of our country.

Not only does Gale Ranch participate in a myriad of community outreach activities, but we are also engaged listeners, working to make sure all voices are heard and appropriate actions are taken.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

At Gale Ranch, we believe that change comes from the ranks of our teachers, not from administrators dropping their wisdom from on high. A problem of many schools is administrators believing that more meetings with the staff are the answer to creating a more professional culture, when all that does is create an “us and them” view of the school hierarchy.

Drawing on the work of Richard DuFour, Becky DuFour, Eaker, Many, and Mattos, to develop effective Professional Learning Communities, Gale Ranch has undertaken a number of initiatives to schedule time for teachers to collaborate with other teachers in their area of expertise, engage in deep philosophical discussions about our role as educators, while at the same time, offering practical suggestions for what might be done in the classroom to improve student learning.

When we began this journey several years ago, we were told it might take three years for educators to genuinely feel comfortable around each other. Many scoffed at the time needed to build those deep connections, but the predictions were about right. In the first year it seemed as if teachers were simply sharing what they did in the classroom. During the second year there would be more glimpses into the deeper feelings of teachers and their fears as to whether they were genuinely meeting the needs of students. By the time the third year rolled around, many departments were expressing the feeling that genuine trust had been built among teachers and they could talk without fear of being judged.

This effort, while struggling at first, has yielded some enormous dividends in the departments. Recently, the departments were tasked with coming up with a small, but realistic set of “essential standards,” and the departments were quickly able to come up with that list. Another initiative by the administration has been monthly “choice collaboration,” where departments may decide to take a walk together, play volleyball, or talk about grading policies. Another piece of evidence as to the success of this effort was a recent staff survey which found broad agreement that teachers were open to discussing issues as they arose.

Many of our teachers are also mentors to our new teachers. Mentor teachers develop a place of trust where new teachers can explore their passions, build their craft, explore new teaching methods, and reflect on data. Mentors also support our first and second year teachers by attending district workshops with them, visiting model classrooms within our school district, and gathering a panel to share progress at the end of each year. Not only do they build a support system but the program also helps new teachers clear their credentials in house.

It’s said that if a marriage has ten minutes of genuine conversation a day it will be able to weather even the greatest of challenges. At Gale Ranch we strive to create an environment in which our teachers have that quality time together to simply bond with their fellow professionals, discuss student challenges, and even try to solve the most challenging of problems.

4. School Leadership:

There's probably no subject more difficult to discuss than school leadership, often because the best practices are the ones which can most easily escape our notice. Gale Ranch is

genuinely blessed by the attitudes and philosophies of our administrators.

Some administrators like to make themselves the center of attention, often sharing their thoughts without genuinely understanding the situation. This philosophy often trickles down to the students, which is why so few students ever think it's a good idea to end up in an administrator's office. That can only be a bad thing, whether you are a student, or a teacher.

As has been stated several times in this application, Gale Ranch exists in a community of high achievement and high stress. We have made a conscious effort to lower that stress and focus on social emotional well-being, not just among our students, but among our staff as well. The administration has emphasized a positive, upbeat school culture, and it is often why students and their families choose to be here.

At Gale Ranch, we have taken to heart the "growth mindset" philosophy of Stanford University Professor, Carol Dweck. Dweck looked at highly successful people, such as Thomas Edison, and came to the conclusion that their success could usually be traced to a willingness to try new approaches, assessing results, then modifying or changing how one goes about trying to solve the task.

In contrast to the "growth" mindset, is the "fixed" mindset, an idea that students often carry in our community, that a person is either "talented" or "not talented." In a fixed mindset, your ultimate success comes down to many factors which are supposedly beyond your control, such as intelligence, physical ability, or social status.

We believe that every person will face obstacles and challenges in their lives, but the way you respond to them can mean the difference between success and failure. If those failures only confirm your low opinion of yourself, there will be no movement. Yet if you look at those failures as signals, simply telling you what isn't currently working, and how another approach might work out more favorably, you are already a success.

The administrators of Gale Ranch do not so much offer solutions, as much as they ask questions about how things might be made better. There is a light, almost gentle touch from the administrators, encouraging and guiding, rather than issuing edicts to our staff, which allows them to come up with their own best solutions.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

We have been deeply affected by the work of Cornelius Minor, and his book, WE GOT THIS: Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us To Be. In this brilliant, but simple book, Minor tells us that our greatest superpower is not our big brains bursting with facts, but our ears and our ability to listen to students. Although it can be difficult to answer this question, and identify what works in all situations, we can start with one question: What is it that directly confronts us in our school?

Many teachers make the comment that teaching at Gale Ranch is "like being at Disneyland." We have a diverse, well-educated population, and one of our most common problems is telling students they don't need to run to class, and that if they don't have a 100% in a subject they will still have incredible options and choices after graduation.

But just because the surface is apparently calm, doesn't mean there aren't troubles. We deal with students who miss the culture of their home countries, and wonder about fitting in. We also have students whose families have been in America a long time and yet still don't feel like they are fully embraced. We have students who deal with emotional problems and feelings of social isolation.

How do we become culturally responsive? By being curious. By asking questions. By acknowledging who our students are, and what they value. Another excellent part of WE GOT THIS, is breaking down all the various lenses through which our students will see the world. On the one hand, they may see us through the

lens of gender or race. Yet we must understand they may also look at us simply through the lens of age. As teachers, we may eternally be “the old people” to them, no matter how cool or with it we try to be.

And that’s okay, because we are the adults. They look to us to be their guides, to do the best we know how. And that may mean they understand we are genuinely trying to understand what they live with on a daily basis. What is it that makes them happy? What makes them sad? What are their fears? What are their dreams?

Maybe the best thing we can do is let people know they are heard, valued, and know we are trying to create the best possible world for all of us. On any given day at Gale Ranch, one can observe student backgrounds and voices being valued, learning being applied to modern-day situations, literature and content being reflective of our student body, and relationships being formed through discussions, clubs, and activities.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of the greatest challenges to any academic institution is how to find time during the week to deal with any challenges which might conceivably arise. In other words, is there time set aside in the week to deal with the unexpected?

If there's one practice employed by Gale Ranch which we believe sets it apart from other schools, it's the use of "tutorial." Tutorial is dedicated time during the week (two forty-seven minute periods on Wednesday and Thursday), which teachers can use with students in any way they determine most useful. It can be a quiet study hall or silent reading, or the teacher may teach something which might interest the student or review skills. Many teachers will use this time to teach concepts important to them, often connected to social emotional wellness, such as mindfulness, how to deal with stress, or be happy, or to be resilient in the face of difficult challenges.

Tutorial uses a revolving series of "priority" weeks, for such subjects as math, science, core, PE, in which those departments will dedicate that time to meet with students who are not performing at grade level and determine how to effectively solve this challenge. This help can take the form of reviewing concepts those students may not have fully understood, or providing them with additional copies of work they may not have done (or lost) then providing the adequate support so that they may catch up to their peers.

Many teachers have reported great success, often starting the week with ten to fifteen students behind on their work, but by the end of their tutorial week having whittled that number down to three to five students. This has the added benefit of allowing teachers to more accurately identify struggling students who may have genuine problems which may need to be addressed and supported, from those who may simply be avoiding work.

An additional benefit is that the administration can also utilize this time to present issues to the entire school, such as digital citizenship, No Place for Hate, the meaning behind Constitution Week, suicide prevention, social and emotional learning, or questions of diversity and inclusion. Administrators have found this time exceptionally helpful as it is dedicated time in which the "culture of compassion" we wish to create, can be modeled and discussed by the students. Our typical structure is that a presentation is made, then materials are provided to teachers so they can continue the discussion in their own classrooms. All of our programs and strategies are focused on supporting students to help achieve academic success while ensuring their social emotional wellness at the same time.