

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 200 Longhorn Drive  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Vega State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79092-9802

County Oldham

Telephone (806) 267-2123 Fax (806) 267-2146

Web site/URL https://www.vegalonghorn.com E-mail jodyjohnson@vegalonghorn.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\* Mr. Jody Johnson E-mail jodyjohnson@vegalonghorn.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Vega Independent School District Tel. (806) 267-2123

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The 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

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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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 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	9	7	16
K	9	8	17
1	13	14	27
2	12	14	26
3	12	14	26
4	10	8	18
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	65	65	130

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1.5 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 17.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 78.5 % White
  - 2.3 % 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: 10%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	8
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	13
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	135
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Spanish

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

6 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 25 %

Total number students who qualify: 33

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 18 %  
23 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>0</u> Autism                  | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</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: 13
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	10
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	5
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	1
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 9:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	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 2021.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2015

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

With a shared vision of excellence, Vega Elementary School staff, parents, and community members work together to provide our students the foundation for life-long success.

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

Public Notification of Nondiscrimination in Career and Technical Education Programs

Vega ISD offers career and technical education programs in Business and Industry, Technology, Family and Consumer Science, and Health Careers. Admission to these programs is based on student course request and prerequisites.

It is the policy of Vega ISD not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its employment practices as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Vega ISD will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs. For information about your rights or grievance procedures, contact the Title IX

Coordinator, Jason Porton, at [jason.porton@region16.net](mailto:jason.porton@region16.net), 806-267-2123 and/or the Section 504 Coordinator, Tammie Cook, at [tammie.cook@region16.net](mailto:tammie.cook@region16.net), 806-267-2123.

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**

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Vega Elementary School (VES) is located in Vega, Texas. Vega is a farming, ranching and wind energy community located in the Panhandle of Texas along historic Route 66 with a population of 900. The district is attended by in-district and approved transfer students from neighboring districts. Parents wanting private school standards in a public-school setting choose Vega for their children. The generational tradition and strong family ties to this school conveys high academic expectations and high parent/community involvement.

The Vega Independent School District (VISD) houses pre-kindergarten through 12th grade under one roof with three separate campuses. The elementary campus wing was opened to the freshmen class in 1964. VES has transitioned over the last several years due to growth and is currently a pre-kindergarten through 4th grade campus. Positive youth role models are abundant, visible and interactive with VES students every day. There are district wide activities that inspire and excite our students for athletics such as: Adopt-A-Longhorn, Shorthorn Track Meet, and pep rallies. The VES students benefit from close proximity to the Jr. high and high school students with education and leadership from students in child development classes and National Honor Society mentors.

The main focus of the VISD vision is “Academic Excellence for All Students.” The staff works diligently to ensure this vision is a reality for VES students every day. Professional growth is an essential and vital ingredient for each teacher’s success. Continuous development in facilitating curriculum through research-based strategies, utilizing technology to launch learning, modeling an emotional mindset and adapting to what life hands us is the foundation to our success. VES has an established strong culture for student achievement and success. High expectations are the cornerstone for staff and students. The VES daily schedule safeguards that each student receives time for needed remediation, acceleration and specialized instruction. Special education, English language support, and character education to name a few are taught primarily through inclusion to maintain a least restrictive environment for these students’ overall success. Response to Intervention (RtI) support is individualized and specifically tailored to closing the gaps for each individual student. Students are challenged to achieve “Think Tank” (TT) each nine weeks in our upper grades. Students earn TT with straight A’s, meeting reading goals, good attendance, and behavior. TT students are taken on field trips to enrich and broaden their experiences to such places as: the symphony, a news station to broadcast the weather, a science museum, a local dairy and businesses. Consistently raising and attaining the bar ensures our students are provided a strong foundation for current and future success.

All students are greeted by smiling staff and welcomed into the school at the door each morning and are provided an opportunity to receive a free breakfast: thus, each student receives a positive emotional and physical surety before school even begins. Students in grades first through fourth have a set time each morning to receive inner mindfulness education to support mental health and stress relief. An organization comes once a month to work with students during PE on social and behavioral education. The counselor provides class, small group and individual services to assist with concerns and emotional needs.

The pandemic opened everyone’s eyes and hearts to the wonderful relationship between this campus and the community. Families and staff were struggling with technology, and the enormity of everything at the very beginning of the transition to remote learning; consequently, the campus started with packet pick up and drop off. The teachers were in contact with each family through a meets platform and “taught” throughout the day or evening depending on the needs of the family. There was a large parade organized in May 2020 for all staff to drive around the community in unison letting our students and families know how much we missed them. Seeing them and the excitement on their faces was incredibly heartwarming. VISD returned to in-person classes in August 2020 with 98% of our students. The campus remained closed to visitors and scheduled sanitizing and hand washing became the norm. In August of 2021, the campus opened its doors and school resumed. Parent conferences, music programs, birthday celebrations and events are in-person and valued more than ever.

VES has been honored with the National Blue Ribbon Award previously in 2006 and 2015. Specifically, in 2015, the community celebrated Vega Elementary School with a reception, honored the school at local and

region meetings and took pride in the accolades of our accomplishments based on a partnership in student success. There has been a positive impact on the campus and community with families moving to Vega to provide their children with exceptional education opportunities. Students are taught with innovation; however, our philosophy is very traditional. Exceptional teachers educating and building relationships with our students is the key to our success.

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

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

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

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the state standards for all instruction. The TEKS detail the curriculum requirements for all subjects and align with the state-mandated standardized tests to measure acquisition of specific knowledge and skills at each grade level. The TEKS are required; however, schools may choose what curriculum products, methods, scope and sequence or technology innovations to utilize for instruction purposes.

Vega Elementary School (VES) staff were tasked with developing a grade level scope and sequence for all content areas six years ago. The staff conducted an in-depth study of the curriculum products being used to identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to the required TEKS. This process solidified and validated our previous practices and established a clear guide for instruction each nine-weeks.

The VES master schedule provides daily tiered instructional times. Each teacher has a thirty-minute time slot daily for small group or individual remediation and acceleration. Each class has an additional forty-five-minute daily time slot where students may be pulled out for targeted instructional support in areas such as: fluency and dyslexia. Additionally, students being served through Special Education, 504 or English Language Proficiency receive inclusion or resource instructional supports daily as needed. There is a Learning Lab Time (LLT) at the end of each day for teachers to assist students with homework and corrections. Students are formally tested a minimum of three times a year, observed, and assessed daily by our staff to monitor growth and skill development.

The core philosophy at Vega Elementary School is facilitating instruction with fidelity, integrity, commitment and teamwork. Everyone from the superintendent, principal, secretary, instructional staff, ancillary staff, custodians, and cafeteria staff strive to ensure our students receive our total commitment each day. Everyone takes pride in his or her role in serving our students to success.

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

At Vega Elementary School (VES) staff fully understands the foundation of a good education begins with developing strong readers. In pre-kindergarten, students are immersed in literature to build excitement for reading. The primary teachers place a strong emphasis on daily phonics instruction to build word attack skills, automaticity and fluency.

Authentic literature is utilized in all classrooms during whole and small group instruction to build vocabulary, to model voice, inflection and appreciation, and to promote analysis and comprehension. Students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, take home phonetic readers each day for parents to read with and to their child. This home connection generates additional excitement and a love for reading. In first-grade, students transition to independent reading. These VES upper level students participate in an independent reading incentive program that scaffolds rewards to promote on or above grade level reading with minimum 85% comprehension.

Fiction and non-fiction literature, poetry and periodicals are used to make phonics connections, teach grammar, writing, reading strategies, author's purpose and comprehension. Students learn how authors use punctuation, add details, organize text, express emotion and capture the readers' interest. The older students practice a commonsense philosophy technique to understanding text through independent and buddy reading.

All instruction must align with the state curriculum standards known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). VES staff have flexibility in selecting curriculum resources. Along with the traditional

basal readers, they use teacher created materials, learning songs, research-based online programs and book studies. Student learning is also generated and maintained through purposeful leveled literature in guided reading groups.

All reading and English language arts curriculum approaches reflect best teaching practices and what meets the needs of our community of learners. VES educators are empowered to have a voice in what resources and methods they utilize. The priorities are simple. Instruction must meet all of the TEKS. All students must learn and show growth in mastering the TEKS. Lastly, instructional practices must be vertically aligned.

VES students are screened early to identify phonetic, speech articulation and dyslexia needs that may be hindering them in reading growth. Students are assessed to determine their independent reading level and monitor growth at minimum three times a year in first through fourth-grade. In all grades, students are assessed through standardized tests to determine mastery of grade level skills. VES utilizes differentiated instruction and the tiered instructional process to meet the diverse learning needs of our students. VES staff scheduling maximizes daily instructional and intervention time.

Campus accountability originates in the instructional foundation established in our primary grades. In third grade, state accountability commences. VES is a data-driven instructional campus. Data is collected continuously through formative and summative assessments such as standardized tests, reading inventories, fluency rates, curriculum assessments and benchmarks. The data is disaggregated at all grade levels by TEKS, skill, and sub-population. These results are utilized to provide remediated and accelerated instruction to ensure our students achieve mastery and growth. For VES, accountability is determined by the individual success of each student who attends.

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

Foundational mathematic skills are a priority at Vega Elementary School (VES). There has been a focus in Texas on the utilization of higher order thinking skills and problem analysis in math. Following a textbook adoption a few years ago that reflected the state's focus, The teachers and principal observed a sharp decline in our students' performance. The students were losing skills in number sense, basic numeracy, and number facts. The Vega Independent School Board approved our campus request to purchase a newer version of our old math curriculum, which was not available during the adoption.

The previous curriculum focused on the extension of lessons without developing foundational skills. For example, students could not grasp elapsed time because they did not know how to read an analog clock. VES teachers follow the scope and sequence they developed to align with the TEKS; therefore, they can easily identify where the curriculum must be supplemented with rigorous resources to meet some of the problem-solving Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The spiraling of math foundational skills and objectives in the new curriculum is essential to our students overall achievement and fosters their success.

The data disaggregation of assessments and daily work is a cornerstone to our success. When teachers are able to identify strengths and weaknesses of the class and individual students, they can make informed instructional decisions. Our classes are taught whole group, and guided small group with centers. Each day, the teachers have a set tutorial time to work with individual students or small groups of students to address weaknesses or build on strengths. Students in all grades receive formal testing at minimum three times a year. Starting in third-grade, students take benchmarks and interim assessments to prepare for the state test over mastery of the TEKS in May.

Students begin each math lesson with a target math lesson on an interactive television. The students complete the assignment independently and it is reviewed whole group. Students are taught with and provided manipulatives to reinforce lessons and aid individual practice. Reinforcement and extension for each lesson can be provided with online programs either on the classroom technology or during computers class. Students may also get assigned to work in prescriptive online programs to improve individual skills.

Math journals and TEKS binders are utilized in many classrooms to help support student learning. There is an emphasis on learning grade-level math vocabulary for students to refer to in math vocabulary walls, journals or binders. Teachers model minds-on techniques to inspire students to take more active roles in their learning. Students track their mastery of multiplication skills. VES teachers conference with students about their performance. They discuss strengths, weaknesses and set individual or group academic goals for improvement. For example, all kindergarten students must independently count to one-hundred before the year is over. VES staff are purposeful in the depth, rigor and complexity of our research-based instructional practices to provide the best foundation for student success. VES staff exemplify fidelity and integrity in educating students.

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) utilizes a primary science curriculum resource that provides students unit packets. Throughout each lesson, the curriculum incorporates experiments along with hands-on activities. VES classroom teachers teach science in units following a scope and sequence to vertically align skills and concepts. Students are assessed throughout and at the end of each unit to ensure mastery of required curriculum.

Students receive science instruction in art class half of each nine-weeks through “Agriculture in the Classroom”. Students have the opportunity to visit different Texas farms and ranches virtually. Students are able to learn how pumpkins, peanuts, trees, and hydroponic lettuce are planted, germinated, grown, and harvested. The students learn about each specialized piece of equipment used for each crop and watch them work and operate in the field. Students plant pumpkin and bean seeds to observe germination and sprouting.

In the third-grade classrooms, incubators are set up each year for students to observe the hatching process of chicks. The students are able to candle each egg to check for fertilization. The students then revisit the unit daily and to monitor the eggs throughout the twenty-one-day incubation period. Then, they observe the complete cracking and hatching process.

VES students obtain additional curriculum support through software programs and instruction from current science magazines to reinforce and develop further understanding of concepts. The students receive real world instruction from local county extension agents, guest speakers, and park rangers. VES students are very fortunate to take multiple field trips to museums, science centers, farms, a local news weather station, the zoo, dairies, and a lake in a neighboring state. The students’ learning and understanding of our community and the world around us is deepened with each experience. VES students are very fortunate to live in such a supportive agriculture-based community that supports education

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) integrates the social studies curriculum throughout all content areas. Providing the students cross-curricula exposure enables them to experience history in a fundamental, real-world manner. Students learn social studies through a rich curriculum, field trips, and reading experiences that expose them to the local, state, country and world history. As with all subjects, our instruction must meet and follow the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum guidelines.

VES teachers from kindergarten through fourth-grade utilize our social studies student newspapers weekly as part of our curriculum adoption to facilitate instruction. These newspapers follow a tiered approach so that students build on prior knowledge. Students are also taught from a monthly magazine that reports on current events, like last year’s presidential election. These magazines focus on a wide range of topics exposing and encouraging relevant conversations for students. VES provides additional instructional support and assessment through online vendors that correlates with the lessons.

Our students complete grade-level specific projects that build on the knowledge they learn. For example, in our lower grades, students complete an American symbol group project. Older students must integrate technology to create and present slide shows on presidents and inventors.

VES students learn real-world civic education by taking field trips to the local county courthouse to see how local government works, participating in a Veterans' Day Celebration and having visits from the mayor and county commissioners. Students from VES participate in local nursing home visits, caroling around our town, and assisting with local clean-up when necessary. Our community has a local museum that students visit. This museum is rich in our community heritage.

These educational opportunities provide a strong foundation in regards to social studies for our students to build on for success on state assessments and to serve as model citizens in our community.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

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

The Vega Elementary School (VES) pre-kindergarten program provides a fun, safe and nurturing environment for our students while building a strong foundation for their academic future. The Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines (TPG) are the curriculum utilized for our four-year-old students. The TPG are vertically aligned with the kindergarten Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum, which is required for all K-12th grade students. In the TPG, there are ten skill domains ranging from core subjects, to social and emotional development.

Students have to first learn to be students and peers. Students are taught to remain engaged, take turns, listen and follow directions, and cooperate with peers. VES prekindergarten students learn primarily through modeling from the teacher and paraprofessional.

These young students develop broader language and communication skills by repeating words, demonstrating word meaning, using modeled manners in conversation and using words to describe and predict outcomes.

Emergent literacy is a primary focus for our young students. These students are expected to demonstrate an extensive knowledge of everything from letter recognition, syllabication, rhyming and ultimately understanding how words are used to construct complete sentences.

With emergent writing, students first learn how to build letters using proper formation and work on spatial activities. Through the remaining content areas of mathematics, science and social studies, students learn the basics of shape and number concepts, the value of questioning in exploring the world around them and the role his/her family plays in the community.

Students are encouraged to use art as a form of creative expression and participate in dramatic play. Physical development is monitored for fine and gross motor skills performance. The counselor works with the students monthly about character choices and social/emotional growth. These students are assessed formally three times a year and informally to monitor growth and development to foster kindergarten success.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Vega Elementary School (VES) maintains high standards for success in non-core classes as well. Students are provided extensive opportunities to build diverse learning profiles. VES students attend a technology class, art or music and physical education (PE) daily. These opportunities are unique for a school our size.

Through the art class, students are encouraged to take part in several art contests. One unique contest involves a local community summer celebration. The winning student's artwork is printed on t-shirts to raise funds for and promote the community round-up. The students are tasked each year with creating decorations and gifts for our local Veterans Day program. Students try out to compete in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) academic meet for Art Smart. Half of each nine-weeks art grading period is

devoted to agriculture education and experiences to support and educate our students about their community.

Music provides our students many opportunities to perform and cultivate musical aptitude. The students as a school have three main programs each year for Veterans Day, Christmas and end of year awards. Students learn how to read music and play instruments. Students try out to compete in UIL Music Memory. Students are challenged to participate in a music festival each spring. The students who participate must learn a piece of music and perform in front of a judge for an individual rating. The district has a history of students competing at the state level in band and our students aspire to do the same.

Throughout our daily PE classes high expectations for effort and skill development are evident. The students learn that good sportsmanship, along with a positive attitude and determination, are essential to being a strong player and student. The students receive instruction on health, nutrition, social and behavioral curriculum. These curriculums are approved by our School Health and Advisory Council (SHAC). VES students perform a basketball program during half-time of a varsity game each year. They also compete in a track meet hosted by the high school seniors.

Technology instruction is provided daily for all of our students. Students are specifically taught keyboarding skills, digital citizenship, cyber security and how to use all campus digital platforms and programs independently. Additionally, students work on software programs which provide remediation and acceleration of grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum for core subjects provided in alignment with individual student needs.

VES students receive social and emotional instruction and support. The counselor has long delivered character guidance lessons monthly to classes and in small group or individual settings as needed. Two years ago, following distance learning, VES teachers started including mindfulness meditation each day for student mental health and stress relief. When students returned to in-person instruction, they exhibited more anxiety related symptoms. The students were very excited to be back at school, but the pandemic had upended everything and all of us had to learn a new normal. Mindfulness instruction has been a vital part of how our students process and adapt to change successfully.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Through data disaggregation and classroom performance, Vega Elementary School (VES) teachers identify students in need of intervention. These students fall into one of two groups: bubble or critical care. Bubble students are right on the edge of performing on grade level. The critical care students are really struggling and not able to grasp grade level expectations.

The first intervention step for both at-risk groups is a basic process. First, determine educational opportunity or lack thereof for the student. A review of current and historical educational and behavioral performance is made. Involvement of parents in the learning process is a non-negotiable. Parents receive an invitation to a fall and a spring conference. Additional conferences are required, when a student is struggling. After reviewing the student's performance, parents will meet with the teacher to develop a six to nine-week plan of intervention.

These students receive primary instruction from the classroom teacher with an emphasis on targeted skill and concept development with homework support. Intervention plans can involve the student receiving instructional, emotional or behavioral support from specialized staff in a pull-out or inclusion setting. Most plans include additional skills support through educational software at school and home. Progress monitoring and open communication are continuous. At the end of the intervention period, a determination is made to continue, modify, discontinue or seek further testing after an extended intervention process.

If a student has cycled through interventions and still struggling, the school or parent may request additional testing for dyslexia, special education battery in full or portion, Section 504, or screeners for other health impaired conditions. Whether a student qualifies for specialized services or does not, parents and a campus

committee meet to determine a plan of action to assist the student. VES maintains high expectations for our at-risk students' current and long-term success.

### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Vega Elementary School (VES) extended learning opportunities begins with our staff expectations. Within the first year of hiring, all instructional staff are required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of Gifted and Talented (G/T) training. In addition, all instructional staff must complete a six-hour update annually. VES staff and parents may recommend exceptional or high-achieving students to be tested for G/T. It is not uncommon for these students to excel in one or more subjects while struggling in others. Students identified as G/T complete a portfolio of work each semester based on interest to extend learning in a core subject, fine arts or specialized topic such as experiments, research projects, or paintings. These students are provided time each week within the school day to work on the portfolio with teacher support and progress monitoring.

All students performing at high levels are provided opportunities to extend their learning and experiences. In all grades, classroom teachers extend learning for students that easily demonstrate mastery of a lesson with fun activities or challenges. VES offers Think Tank (TT) in our upper grades. Students earn TT each nine-weeks by earning straight A's, meeting independent reading goals, and exhibiting good behavior. Students in TT enjoy the learning extensions each week, but they are most excited about the field trips. Each nine-weeks, students in TT may go work in a food bank, attend the symphony, view a play, sing carols to nursing home residents, tour museums, do community service, take a guided hike or visit a bee farm to name a few.

Students are challenged in extra-curricular classes. VES students may compete in area art contests. In music, students may try-out for parts in music programs and in instrumental groups for music festivals. VES students are afforded many opportunities to excel as leaders and learners.

### **3c. Special education:**

First and foremost, Vega Elementary School (VES) staff view special education (SPED) as a support system not a destination. Students may be referred for testing by the school or the parent for academic, emotional, health, physical or behavioral concerns. Eligible students are provided services according to the recommendations of the VES instructional staff, administration and parents. The recommendations are finalized into an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is followed for a year until the parents and staff meet again for an Annual Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting unless an earlier meeting is requested.

For VES, our SPED population does not meet the required minimum number of students to be counted as a subgroup on state standardized testing reports. Students in grades three and four are formally tested by the state in the areas of reading/English Language Arts and math. At all grades, all student testing results are individually disaggregated to ensure achievement gaps are being closed and at minimum a year's growth has been achieved. This is especially true for our SPED students.

SPED students at VES are provided instructional support at three levels. Level One students are totally instructed in the classroom and only leave for content mastery support on an as needed basis. Level Two students are taught with inclusion in the primary classroom with SPED staff support. These students can leave the classroom for additional assistance, but the instruction with peers is vital. Level Three students are taught primarily outside of the classroom by SPED staff in a resource setting. These students are typically two or more years below their peers and require very targeted instruction.

VES staff strive to provide instruction to SPED students through inclusion whenever possible even if it is on a limited basis. VES staff exemplifies high standards of achievement to promote success.

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) has very few English Language Learners (ELL). There are not enough students to meet the minimum requirement to obtain a subgroup score on our standardized tests; therefore, a

score comparison is not possible. These students receive exceptional support. First, all core teachers are required to obtain an English as a Second Language certification. With all teachers certified, VES is able to offer a content-based program where students are served all day. In addition, the district employs a teacher that works half of each day as ELL support. This teacher provides scheduled inclusion and pull-out support.

All ELL students are assessed with the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) each year to monitor English acquisition and annual growth. They are assessed in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These students' academic performance is also measured with grade level specific assessments, benchmarks and standardized tests.

ELL students are afforded all remediation and acceleration opportunities as the other students. A district employee serves as a translator for parent conferences and general communication as needed. Parents have her phone number and may utilize it whenever necessary to communicate with the school. Parents receive a parent newsletter in Spanish each month. Our campus works with the local education service center in notifying parents of available educational opportunities. VES offers these parents access to technology and software to support the student and family members in learning to communicate in English.

A committee meets twice yearly to review the progress of each ELL to determine if the current plan is working and if student support needs to be increased or decreased. The ultimate goal is dismissal from the program due to an Advanced High rating on the TELPAS in all four areas and high academic performance in all core subjects.

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) student body has diversity; however, as a rural district it is on a much smaller scale. For testing purposes, three VES subpopulations generally meet minimum size to score: White, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. There has been a significant closing of gaps with our lower income students. The testing outcomes from the last two testing years showed a 10-15% gain at the Approaches Level. VES staff and administration put make it a priority to focus on meeting the diverse needs of our students to close achievement and learning gaps.

VES does have students that are migrant, homeless, and in the foster system. With the close proximity to Vega high school students, our students benefit in multiple ways. One such way is a Longhorn Buddies mentoring program. VES staff make recommendations for a student to receive a mentor. Student volunteers from the high school build one-to-one supportive relationships with select students in grades 1st – 6th. The goal of the program is to improve self-esteem, support academic growth and provide encouragement.

VES is surrounded by a very caring community. Whenever a struggling family/student needs support, churches and community members reach out to provide monetary support, Christmas gifts, clothing, food and transportation. The VES students also benefit from a snack program funded by the community that provides students in need backpacks full of healthy snacks each Friday. Breakfast is provided at no charge to all students every day. This year VES was able to provide each student free lunches as well due to a grant. One gracious community member provides money to the cafeteria for economically disadvantaged students to receive free ice cream at least once a week if wanted.

VES provides encouragement, love and acceptance. Our staff serves as an extended family focusing on our students as children first.

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

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) strives for a positive environment for all students to promote their academic, social, and emotional growth. During the spring semester in 2020, our campus went to remote learning and each VES student was offered a computer. Students were taught engaging lessons with remote learning. Students were expected to submit work, and virtually join lessons daily. Special population students in 504, speech, special education, and English Language Learners were given intense support to ensure their Individual Education Plan goals and accommodations were targeted. VES returned to in-person instruction in August 2020. During this time students who chose to attend remotely were expected to complete all classwork and attend daily virtual meetings.

VES fosters positive emotional growth for all students by providing them a daily program that teaches students to process emotions and feelings that are experienced throughout a day. This program guides students on how to deal with anger, frustration, happiness, and excitement. Our campus is involved in a high-school outreach program. Students are nominated by their teachers and paired with a high school student. These high school students pull their elementary partner each week to work on building strong connections with each other. Each elementary class is taught monthly lessons by our counselor. These lessons focus on the emotional and social well-being of each student.

At VES students are given multiple opportunities throughout the school day to interact with other grade levels. This a benefit to all students, teaching them how to communicate, work through problems and learn patience with students of different ages. Our physical education (PE) classes attend monthly lessons with an outside program that focuses on social interactions, how to process feelings with small and large groups, as well as working together.

Fostering engaging and long-term academic growth is at the forefront of VES. College, Career or Military Readiness (CCMR) is the goal for all Vega High School graduates. The journey begins at VES. VES teachers and administration educate our students on the importance of CCMR, choices, lifelong achievement and accomplishment. Our school strives to ensure all students feel successful and grow academically. Students are given independent academic goals. Our upper elementary students also work towards a quarterly award that includes academic grades, meeting their reading and math goals, and overall behavior. Teachers are supported in trying new things to motivate students in persisting to excel in their strengths and strengthen their weaknesses.

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

The community Vega Elementary School (VES) is a part of promotes family and community involvement that allows all stakeholders to engage in school success. VES works with families, community members, businesses, and local outreach programs. While students benefit from community involvement, they also give back to the community that supports them.

Each year VES offers a supplies drop-off night for students to meet their teachers. At supplies drop-off night, our principal and ancillary staff are available to assist and answer questions that parents and students have. On this night our local parent/teacher association is there to promote parent involvement for our school. The school offers a parent night where teachers review classroom expectations and procedures, as well as the curriculum. Parents are invited to ask questions. Parents are provided access to an on-line communication platform for daily communication. VES provides a translator for our bilingual parents to ensure open communication.

VES has partnerships with local community businesses and organizations. These partnerships include local community social/emotional outreach programs that come to school monthly to work with our students. Our school offers an outreach program around the holidays to help support families in their time of need. Local churches in our community donate to the school for student/family emergencies and offer breakfast

opportunities for students throughout the year. There is a farming and ranching partnership with Farm Bureau. There is a food distribution program that assists students that also allows students to give back by volunteering their time during field trips. All students can be a part of our local 4H program, the 4H program will also come to the school to present lessons. Local community businesses such as the bank, courthouse, museum, library, dairy, feed yards, and seed farms assist our school with giving students field trip opportunities.

During the pandemic, VES strived to keep student and family involvement at the forefront of learning. Students were able to come to the school and pick up their work packets. During this time, they were able to see their teachers, principal, and ancillary staff. The school also arranged two teacher parades. During these teacher parades, the teachers drove around while students and their families stood outside. At the end of the year teachers also drove around to students' homes and delivered end-of-year awards.

The partnership between VES and our parents fosters our students' success and the exceptional support and involvement from our community.

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

The principal serves as the dedicated leader of the campus. The Vega Elementary School (VES) staff is empowered, inspired, valued, supported and trusted stakeholders. The foundation of our school's success is relationships. Working alongside each other helps ease the burden of the ever-growing responsibilities of educators.

The principal works with her staff to review concerns, celebrate successes, and explore student-centered ideas for classroom/school improvement. The principal and staff make professional development decisions that encompass research-based best practices and the targeted needs of our students. The disaggregation of daily classroom academic, emotional, social, or behavioral performance is central to making informed decisions for staff professional growth.

Throughout the school year, teachers are encouraged to attend workshops, complete book studies, continuing education coursework, peer observations, school visits or attend educational conferences. Each staff member is required to attend at least three workshops during the summer that supports his/her professional growth goals. The district technology leader offers classes and support as needed. The majority of professional development is individualized; however, this year the principal and primary teachers are attending multiple state mandated Reading Academies.

When the pandemic hit, the principal met with teachers and devised a plan to meet the needs of students. The principal made sure that the VES staff had all of the resources they needed to educate students from home. The principal was in contact with all teachers throughout the remainder of that semester. The VES staff felt supported by campus and district administration. It was a constant cycle of monitor and adjust and the staff performed exceptionally well. The staff provided each student packets of materials to complete and utilize. Staff volunteered to hand out/collect the packets, technology, library books and student supplies to parents several times in front of the school as parents drove thru. Staff also made home visits when needed.

The VES principal has high expectations for all staff. The Vega Elementary staff is a community of professionals that share, create, and learn together. Positive notes, communication, gestures and thoughtful gifts are examples of how VES staff feel valued by the principal and each other. The principal's open-door practice and campus visibility makes staff feel very comfortable with sharing good news, concerns or asking for assistance with a situation whenever needed. Above all, the staff feels valued and respected by campus and district administration who lead as partners with teachers to promote campus and district success.

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) is part of a great district that promotes positive school leadership through commitment to teachers, students, and community members. Our administration demonstrates leadership by setting and meeting goals. The administration sets high expectations for every part of our school and

meeting them allows us to “raise the bar” again and again. Our leadership gives the tools, support, and encouragement to the staff and students to meet these expectations. The philosophy of the administrators is to show that all stakeholders are valued participants in the success of building our school district.

The leadership at Vega starts at the top with a superintendent that is engaging and puts all relationships at the forefront. The superintendent encourages the principals to manage their campus’. Allowing principals to manage their campus, shows the trust that is given. That trust is then filtered down from the principal to the staff. The principal is a moving, visible piece of the school day. Students are comfortable with the principal being in and out of the classroom. The principal values relationships with the students and visits with them daily. The students know that their principal wants them to be safe, to learn, and to be successful while at school. The principal of VES allows teachers to excel in their classrooms by giving them the tools to implement and support their teaching style. This flexibility allows them to actively engage their students. The leaders are open to new ideas brought to them in regards to technology, curriculum, field trips, and communication.

The principal engages the teachers with walk-throughs, formal observations, and effective communication. The principal is respectful of the teacher's time by communicating throughout the day with email and or quick conversations. Outside of the school, the leadership of Vega values family and honors this by allowing teachers to attend their own children's events. Giving teachers this opportunity makes them feel appreciated. The principal involves the staff in decision-making for the campus, giving opportunities for discussion about important issues. Our leadership has an open-door policy and encourages positive school communication between staff.

Although Vega Elementary is always striving to improve, it is pivotal for the school to continue to follow best practices and educational traditions that benefit the students and encompass the staff. The superintendent and principal both have a servant’s heart and a love for children. Their commitment to our students inspires excellence every day.

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

Vega Elementary School (VES) is located in the rural panhandle of Texas. Like most rural schools there is limited exposure to vast cultural differences for our students. The town that surrounds VES is experiencing a growth in population aiding students to experience a more culturally diverse community. While students are experiencing diverse opportunities outside of school, VES staff is finding ways to expose students to culturally diverse instruction and education. This approach assists in engaging all students, and allows all students and families to feel that they are a part of their school community. At VES, the staff is respectful of all aspects of cultural differences, these differences include but are not limited to race, religion, educational background, and socioeconomic status. VES staff works to provide a classroom full of equality, equity, and respect for the differences shared, to ensure all students feel cultural acceptance.

All staff at VES is English Second Language certified. This certification is required and affords each student more educational support to excel in the classroom. Teachers work to integrate a culturally diverse curriculum across all content areas into the classroom. Teachers are using culturally diverse books from the library and choosing stories that explore other aspects of culture. Students learn about great leaders of our country and the different cultural influences, for example, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Abraham Lincoln and Wilma Rudolph. Students are presented with books that reflect different socioeconomic statuses, such as “Each Kindness” by Jacqueline Woodson, and other diverse literature. At Christmas, many teachers explore Christmas Around the World, which exposes students to the ways different cultures celebrate. VES also uses a weekly magazine that highlights current events in our world. These current events magazines give students the opportunity to engage in relevant conversations about what is happening culturally in the world around them.

Along with native language communication and translators, VES offers support for all students by fostering positive social and emotional support for situations or circumstances that make students feel “different” in any way. The areas that could be addressed are grief, foster care, adoption, and isolation from parents who have to travel for work. Diversity comes in many forms and addressing our diversity at VES is point of

emphasis. By finding new, inventive ways to educate our students in cultural diversity our students are able to feel a part of their community and the world around them.

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

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Vega Elementary School (VES) serves as a model for academic success in public education. Parents often comment on their children receiving a private school education in a public setting at VES. They are referring to how our staff serves as an extended family focusing on our students as children first. The most important academic practice at VES is a purposeful and continuous focus on each student as an individual, a learner and a stakeholder in our school's success.

VES staff and administration encourage and model open communication with families to ensure our students' health needs are met. VES employs a registered nurse to screen students for general health. The nurse works with families to administer medication when needed and provide care for concerns or injuries. The VES counselor provides in school counseling and parents information to outreach services to meet student socio-emotional needs.

Ensuring VES students' physical and emotional needs are met positively impacts our school attendance, which is the first step to academic success. Our students come to school each day ready to learn. Our ability to hire and retain highly qualified teachers is critical to VES learner success. Experienced VES instructional staff maintains high learner expectations for student engagement and academic performance. In order to provide balance for our students, VES staff works together to create a schedule each year that maximizes instruction time and provides brain breaks for students. Our students are very fortunate to have art or music, computers, physical education and even two recesses each day. It is our belief that students need multiple opportunities to just be kids within each school day as well as dedicated learners.

VES students learn how their effort and performance as individuals daily in the classroom impacts them as life-long learners and our school success starting in pre-kindergarten. Students are held to a high standard of accountability and must take an active role in their learning. For example, students are taught to set academic goals for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. VES teachers review assessment and classwork performance with students and work with them to develop plans for remediation or acceleration of curriculum skills and concepts. This process teaches our students how to become and remain active lifelong stakeholders in their education.

The VES practice of focusing on our students... as children, learners and stakeholders has led to exemplary academic success and a prestigious third National Blue Ribbon Award nomination.