

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 13254 Nursery Drive
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Victoria State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77904-5714

County Victoria County

Telephone (361) 575-6882 Fax (361) 576-9212

Web site/URL https://www.nurseryisd.org E-mail lgajewsky@nurseryisd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Larry Gajewsky E-mail lgajewsky@nurseryisd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Nursery Independent School District Tel. (361) 575-6882

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. Neal Stevenson
(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):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 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	3	12
K	11	13	24
1	10	12	22
2	7	10	17
3	10	9	19
4	6	10	16
5	11	14	25
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	64	71	135

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 0.7 % Black or African American
 - 36.3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 59.3 % White
 - 3.7 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 24%

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

NES has a mobility rate above 15% due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Families relocated to areas in which they could obtain employment.

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	21
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	141
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.24
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	24

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

Spanish

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

5 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 26 %

Total number students who qualify: 35

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 21 %
28 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>9</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>7</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: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	2
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
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 10:1

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	97%	97%	96%	96%	96%
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.

Nursery ISD is committed to improving outcomes for all students through a collaborative effort on the part of the Board of Trustees, administration, professional and paraprofessional staff, parents, and Community members. We believe that all kids can learn.

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

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/1193?filename=FFH\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/1193?filename=FFH(LOCAL).pdf)

Nondiscrimination Statement

Nursery ISD does not discriminate on the basis of sex, disability, race, color, age or national origin in its educational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504, Title VI, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

El distrito escolar independiente de Nursery su programa educacional de carrera y tecnología no discrimina a base de sexo, incapacidad, raza, color, edad u origen nacional en sus programas educativos, actividades, o empleo como lo requiere el Título IX, Sección 504, Título VI, la Ley sobre Estadounidenses con Discapacidades, y la Ley de Discriminación por Edad.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Jennifer Southern, Assistant Principal

13254 Nursery Drive, Victoria, TX 77904

jsouthern@nurseryisd.org

(361) 575-6882

La persona designada para resolver preguntas sobre las regulaciones de no discriminación es:

Jennifer Southern, Assistant Principal

13254 Nursery Drive, Victoria, TX 77904

jsouthern@nurseryisd.org

(361) 575-6882

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

Nursery Elementary School (NES) is a small, rural school located in Victoria County, 7 miles north of Victoria, Texas on Highway 87. The community has a small post office and a convenience store, but most of the land that makes up the district is large plots of land used for agriculture. The Nursery Independent School District (NISD) is unique in that it is a one-campus district that serves pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. Also unique is NISD's school board, composed of only three members as opposed to the traditional seven. Students that attend NES are taught from arrival in the district that they are important and expected to perform in a manner that will put them in a position for success. The staff at NES know each child's name and story, and they use this to help them excel. The community values the mission and vision of the school and are key to the longstanding overall success of NISD.

One of the key strategies that foster a culture of excellence in the students is that success is expected and excellence is the minimum standard for all who attend NES, exemplified by the mission statement "We believe that all children can learn." The collective transformational leadership that has taken place at NES makes this mission a reality. When students exhibit academic or behavioral concerns, staff provides immediate support to assist in goal attainment. They are committed to serving each child and finding the currency that motivates them to do their very best, a commitment rooted in the genuine love of students. One of the core guiding philosophies from the administrative team is "Love our Kids!" Building relationships is a cultural norm that promotes student growth, and the authentic love and support each student receives is the foundation upon which everything else is built.

Several unique characteristics set NES apart from other schools and help students excel. Administration protects the technical core of teaching and learning, and the most valuable intangible resource in that core at NES is time. The school only has 17 professional staff members, so everyone works as a team to support students. When teachers are inundated with menial tasks, this takes away from their time serving students and their ability to refine their craft of instructional delivery. The time spent avoiding these tasks helps the staff at NES attain true mastery in their curriculum. This mastery leads to greater student engagement, and it is a cultural norm that students are engaged in meaningful instruction from the time they arrive at school until the moment they leave. Every minute at NES is important and you will not observe a classroom that is not authentically engaged in standards-based learning, as every minute matters in the classroom and the lesson delivery is most useful when it is well planned and purposeful.

As students experience academic success, they are more likely to become willing participants in the cultural norms that help define NES. One pivotal characteristic that sets NES apart from most schools is each student's accountability to self, which creates a lack of discipline issues. Even the earliest of NES students, the 3-year-olds in pre-K, are well-behaved and mindful of their responsibility to the Cougar Family. The expectation of "Yes ma'am" or "No sir" begins at home and the staff promotes these outstanding values every day. The students are quick to identify behaviors that are counterproductive to success, and on the rare occasion that a student deviates, these cases are reported immediately. The students are not only accountable to themselves, but they also hold each other accountable. In this way, the students help protect the heart of the school. This culture of accountability allows the majority of time in class to be spent on lesson delivery, small group instruction, one-on-one intervention, and student assessment, which leads to increases in student mastery and overall learning. The Cougar Family is truly that, a family that protects the organization to ensure success.

The Cougar Family is a term that is far-reaching and includes the community that makes up NISD. The traditions that define organizational success are largely attributed to a supportive community. Like all Texas schools, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted NES as a whole. NES has provided opportunities for parents to participate in school activities with their children to make up for lost social milestones that define these early years. Early during the pandemic, the staff conducted a community drive through parade. Students and staff longed for the connectedness that defines NES. Also, during remote learning, the teachers conducted virtual hang outs so the class could socialize. As the county COVID-19 numbers began to decline, the school started hosting outside award ceremonies for student achievements. Ultimately, NES strived to include parents where applicable, but also placed safety first.

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:

The staff and administration of NES, in collaboration with the board of trustees, parents, and community members at large, are committed to improving outcomes for all students. NISD's overarching philosophy is that all students can learn. Teachers and administration work to build strong trusting relationships with all students. Teachers work one on one and in small groups with students to assess needs, both academic and emotional. Once these needs are established, teachers and administration work together to create individualized plans for each student. Formative and summative assessments are used to make adjustments as needed to ensure that individualized plans evolve to address changing needs.

NES has largely abandoned the whole group instructional model in all subject areas. The administration and teachers understand the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of individual students. Once students are assessed for current levels of performance, instructional groups are formed in the classroom based on established needs. Teachers meet with all students daily using targeted instruction. Student growth is documented and tracked through data collection. Groups are adjusted as needed and students are never made to feel left behind.

When it is identified that students need additional instructional support, interventionists are available to assist. Classroom teachers and interventionists work together to target skills that need to be addressed. Intervention groups are fluid and adjusted frequently as skills are mastered. Interventionists use evidence-based instructional materials with small groups. When an emotional intervention is required, NES has a counselor to assist any student in need.

The largest adjustment that has been made since March of 2020 is the expansion of available technological resources. NES is a one-to-one campus with a device provided for each student. Additional curriculum has been added to assist students with keyboarding and other important skills needed to navigate emerging technology.

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

To effectively close the literacy achievement gap, the NES teachers chose a comprehensive, systematic literacy program to improve fluency, phonics skills, encoding, and decoding. This research-based literacy program continues to build a strong early foundation with diverse books that engage and excite students of different cultural backgrounds. These resources, along with effective Tier One instruction, have been proven to enhance the literacy achievement of NES students.

Interactive read-alouds are modeled daily to introduce vocabulary, provide a model of expressive and fluent reading, and give background knowledge. These read-alouds develop the child's cognitive abilities to promote language, literacy skills, and social-emotional growth. To bridge the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) into the authentic learning of students, teachers purposefully ask STAAR stem questions and use heightened academic vocabulary throughout learning so students gain familiarity and apply it in their responses. After the interactive read-aloud and subsequent student-led discussion, students write a daily reflection stating the genre of the book, author's purpose, characters, setting, theme, plot, and other literary elements while utilizing their text-based evidence and academic language.

Conducting guided reading daily is key to helping students establish fundamental skills, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension necessary for proficient reading. It also allows teachers to informally assess the strengths and weaknesses of students. Optimal learning for students transpires during this small group interaction, with teachers able to differentiate instruction, re-teach skills, work on fluency, and provide guidance to meet the needs of all students. As a small group of students sits around the teacher with their

individual books, the teacher considers the strengths and needs of the group and the demands of the text to craft meaningful instruction. Grouping can be homogeneous or heterogeneous, depending on student needs. As students read, the teacher can guide and model for students. Listening to students read is an ideal opportunity to help them use flexible methods to attack and solve new words. Students discuss and revisit the text after the reading to share their responses to the teacher's questions and each other's thinking. The teacher coaches the students to key understandings and overall meaning within the text.

Phonics instruction requires the teacher to systematically and explicitly teach students the relationships between letters and sounds. It is important for students to have many hands-on activities, so many opportunities allow students to manipulate picture cards, magnetic letters, tiles, and other word work materials. Improving phonics skills can be achieved by teaching spelling rules using anchor charts, songs, and games. Reading doesn't just "happen," therefore students must be taught explicit, effective strategies when they encounter a problem when reading or writing.

Assessments are used to inform instruction. Establishing a student baseline is the first step in implementing effective reading instruction. This baseline provides teachers with the necessary information to develop relevant lessons and enhance instruction for all students. Identifying unlearned skills is a chance to fill in gaps before they become larger. Teachers monitor to collect a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to get a well-rounded assessment of each student.

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

The math curriculum at NES utilizes various resources and practices to best meet the needs of their students. Teachers on campus begin their lessons daily with a deep practice question. These questions are meant to help familiarize students with the rigor and vocabulary often found on the STAAR Assessments. Teachers review these questions with students, demonstrating and modeling appropriate strategies and skills used to answer different types of questions. Students also complete spiral reviews daily in math. These reviews are used to constantly review the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) previously taught throughout the school year. Spiral reviewing involves questions ranging from simple rote skill practice to rigorous questions students will see on STAAR and unit tests. Spiral reviews allow teachers to quickly assess students and see how they are performing. This process helps students gain mastery, while also continuing to utilize those math skills that have been implemented in the classroom.

Teachers on campus also use different math curriculums and strategies when providing instruction in the classroom, allowing teachers the opportunity to meet the individual needs of each student in the classroom. The use of differentiated math strategies is vital because it allows students the opportunity to take ownership of their way of solving problems and finding success in math. Teachers also use varied math manipulatives during instruction. Manipulatives are extremely important tools for helping students think and reason in math. Students are given experiences with varied manipulatives to help them move from concrete to abstract reasoning. Opportunities to collaborate, solve problems, test, and confirm reasoning are all provided in the classroom. Teachers and students also create math journals, full of notes and practice problems. Students are encouraged to use these resources when working independently and to take them home to study nightly. Even the most skilled mathematical thinkers are known to have a variety of problem-solving strategies that they can use efficiently and effectively. NES wants all students to believe that they are capable of success in math.

Teachers at NES also use data folders to provide students with an opportunity to track their progress in math. Students are always provided with opportunities that allow them to take ownership of their learning, and data folders provide students with a visual representation of their progress. These folders also provide discussion opportunities between the student and teacher allowing students to set goals for themselves. Teachers on campus also utilized differentiated folders in the classroom to provide students the support they need without lumping them all into one large group. Each student is provided a folder with practice skills based on his or her individual learning needs. Students are encouraged to work on these folders after lessons and during tutorial time to develop struggling skills. They will not move forward until they have mastered these customized standards-based exercises

NES strives to provide the best possible math education for all students. Every teacher on campus develops math lessons that encourage reasoning and provide academic rigor every day.

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

Science at NES is taught and assessed through varied methods and sourced from diverse curricula to reach all types of learners. For engaging background information and to help establish new content vocabulary, students eagerly engage in a program that was created with help from the National Science Teachers Association. Lessons are designed to integrate all the standards in the TEKS so that students progress to the next grade with a solid foundation to build upon. Science is taught daily in kindergarten through 5th grade.

Instruction at NES is planned and implemented to engage with as many different learning styles as possible. Hands-on labs or investigations are done every week, and projects replace labs when content restricts or limits hands-on activities. A variety of assignments and comprehension assessments are taken from a multitude of content resources so students can apply the skills learned and mastered. These assignments include open-ended discussion questions, think-pair-share activities, checks for understanding, labs, and vocabulary activities that engage the students with vocabulary in context, rather than isolated terms. Hands-on, independent, or group projects allow students to take ownership of their learning and understanding while also being able to show their knowledge in more creative ways. This also fosters the ability to implement math and writing into their projects, when applicable.

Assessing students is conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively, with the goal being a big-picture idea. Generally, teachers use a variety of methods to assess students which include think-pair-share, discussion activities, list activities, journaling, practice sheets, labs, projects, writing prompts, and formal assessments. Mastery is determined when the students can articulate their thinking and understanding of the concept. The walls at NES showcase the learning that takes place and authentic works help others visualize science concepts.

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

NES's course content for social studies is based primarily on a weekly newspaper that covers the historical events appropriate for each grade level. This research-based curriculum is aligned with the TEKS and provides culturally relevant content that includes interactive, hands-on activities, articles, videos, graphic organizers, charts, timelines, maps, and games. Features include Lexile level articles and vocabulary that focus on English Language Arts and reading skills, as well as STAAR stem assessment questions. Teachers modify sequences and add technology to maximize the delivery of content to the depth and group size required. This curriculum was chosen as it provides students with opportunities to learn by reading, writing, listening, evaluating, and discussing social studies topics through explicit instruction and multiple activities and opportunities for ongoing education.

There are many ways teachers enrich the learning process, including our weekly study newspaper. Question Formulation Technique charts are formulated by students, requiring them to prepare open-ended questions to discuss as a group. Students made their history and community come alive by creating a museum of artifacts celebrating cultural heritage and by creating a Veteran's Day parade where students made flags, discussed relevant events, sang "America the Beautiful", and even brought in community members to participate. To further interact with the community, students visited with the local Fire Department to learn what it meant to be a Volunteer Firefighter. In this vein, NES also had a Career Day composed of student family members speaking. NES Social Studies also organized the Random Acts of Kindness Campaign complete with Celebration Citations (noted random acts of kindness performed by students) with a focus of ongoing discussions involving respect, kindness, leadership, and responsibility celebrated every nine weeks with an award ceremony and snow cones. Through these sorts of activities, NES prepares students to be active, involved members of their community.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

NES offers pre-kindergarten (pre-K) for three and four-year-old students in the community. The pre-kindergarten guidelines are derived from a tear-free curriculum and are used at NES to align with the TEKS set forth by the Texas Education Agency for kindergarten through High School. The curriculum is sequential to ensure that students are developing in the domains of social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy reading, emergent literacy writing, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical development, and technology. This approach helps the pre-kindergarten students prepare to transition to kindergarten with the necessary academic and social skills to achieve success in the primary grades, as well as in their subsequent secondary years. NES students in kindergarten through fifth grade work on keyboarding from a tear-free keyboarding curriculum and the pre-kindergarten curriculum has the handwriting components built into the curriculum through hands-on activities that foster the appropriate developmental lessons to learn the letter names, sounds, and letter formation needed to begin keyboarding in kindergarten with fluency so that they can be successful in an advancing, technology-based workplace.

The pre-kindergarten program at NES is a high-quality pre-kindergarten program that uses an evidence-based progress monitoring system for pre-K to assess and collect data at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. This data guides instruction for small group interventions targeting areas of need for each student. Early childhood education impacts school readiness and success in the primary grades at NES. The pre-K classroom teaches students beginning academic skills such as alphabetic principles, phonological awareness, math concepts, science inquiry, and social studies. More than just these beginning academic skills, these young learners develop cognitive, social, and emotional skills that lay the foundation for entering kindergarten with the necessary readiness to be successful in navigating the rigorous curriculum that lies before them.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

NES provides physical education for all students with cognitive content and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors for physical activity and physical fitness. All students are provided with physical education classes daily that incorporate variety, fun, and excitement to establish the importance of a healthy lifestyle from a young age. The students at NES also receive one day a week of health and nutrition classes. Students learn that physical health contributes to living a longer, healthier, higher-quality life. Physical activity is vital for promoting long-term health and implementing a healthy lifestyle at the elementary level will assist students in making better life choices. Students will also be educated about the positive correlation between physical health and mental health. They learn that physical education teaches them to possess improved self-discipline that they can implement in all aspects of their life, from better controlling their emotions to being more self-motivated with their studies. Students will take the confidence gained through physical education and carry it forward in their extracurricular and academic lives, in secondary school and beyond.

Fine Arts play a collaborative role in the school's achievement, coordinating with the core subjects. The administrators understand how valuable the arts are, especially with the low socioeconomic level of the population, and completely support the program. All students, pre-K through fifth, receive a creative break three days a week while working in harmony with the core curriculum. Music activities the students participate in improve memory, enhance vocabulary, and boost coordination. Art projects give the students an artistic outlet to manifest themselves while also tuning fine motor skills. Also, art allows the students to practice concentration and a sense of accomplishment after observing the finished work. Additionally, Fine Arts play an important role in the recovery of the negative impact produced by the pandemic. The students engage with positive, uplifting music and emotionally-enriching art projects that boost self-confidence, generate healthy expression, and create a beautiful experience for each student. Fine Arts challenge the students at any intellectual stage while reiterating the love of learning and preparing them for their secondary education.

The library plays a fundamental part at NES by working simultaneously with all subjects and providing for the literacy needs of all staff. The bookshelves are stocked with eye-catching, updated books to keep the

students enthusiastic about reading. All students, pre-K through fifth, have one to two library periods each week to check out books, engage in storytelling or independent reading, or participate in an activity based on the literature presented. The library encourages the importance of reading by using the Reading Is Fundamental program, which encourages the students to reach their accelerated reading goals and rewards them for their hard work. In addition, the library helps slow the summer learning loss by opening its doors throughout the break, offering the students a way to continue reading, and (being a rural school) granting the students access to literature in a welcoming and comfortable environment right down the road.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

NES provides tailored instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the diverse and individual needs of the students performing below grade level by providing tutoring, reading interventions, math interventions, and extra support through the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) program. These programs not only help close the achievement gap but also motivate and build confidence in the students.

The teachers at NES provide several opportunities for students who are performing below grade level to attend tutoring. Tutoring is offered in a small group setting. Between three and six students meet with the teacher two or three times a week, before or after school or during school tutorials/specials. These tutoring opportunities are available in all academic subjects and to all students from kindergarten to 5th grade. These groups are fluid, allowing for any student struggling with concepts to attend as needed. Once mastery of a concept is observed, students move out of the tutoring group and may attend again if another need arises. Some students are involved in tutoring in addition to reading and/or math interventions.

Interventions are also provided for students that demonstrate a more significant need. There are two interventionists on the NES campus for reading and math. Both interventionists pull students that are working below grade level and provide additional support in either reading, math, or both. Some students, for example, are pulled for thirty minutes daily for math intervention, and other students are pulled for forty-five minutes two or three times a week for reading intervention to help close the achievement gap and build their confidence. At NES, monitoring student progress in tutoring and interventions is a priority and can lead to further progress monitoring through the MTSS program. The MTSS committee meets regularly to review progress and determine what additional steps need to be taken to meet individual students' needs.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Approximately 8% of NES students compose the Gifted and Talented (GT) population. These students significantly affect metrics regarding students performing at or above grade level academically. All teachers at NES have been trained in how to work with and challenge students that are in the Gifted and Talented Program, or who exhibit above-average skills, though all students are challenged to do their very best at all times.

Students in the GT Program are challenged in the classroom academically and, since this rigor can create stress in a students' academic and non-academic life, they are also monitored outside the classroom to check their emotional state. Students in the GT Program are instructed in social and emotional lessons. Curriculum and personnel from the Region 3 Service Center aid NES and the GT Advisor in delivering social and emotional lessons to the students. During lunch, twice every 9 weeks, the Gifted and Talented Advisor meets with students in the GT Program to monitor their emotional states and academic concerns. Throughout the school year, the Gifted and Talented Advisor uses relevant books, media, and other tools to bring light to topics of interest to the students in the GT Program, such as bullying, acceptance, equality, and self-talk. During these social and emotional lessons, students are reminded about skills and strategies needed to manage stress, conflict, and other problems that could arise inside and outside of the classroom. The GT Advisor also meets with identified students to work on and complete their Texas Performance Standards Project during the second semester of the school year, a project that allows students, after selecting a topic based on their interests, to research, plan, create, and present to their peers, parents, and school community as a culminating activity.

3c. Special education:

NES meets the diverse and individual needs of the students who qualify for special education (SPED) by creating safe and encouraging classroom environments where students with disabilities can flourish alongside their peers. Staff follows the accommodations and modifications stated in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and both in-class support as well as pull-out resource time are provided based on the student's instructional schedule. All staff at NES are dedicated to meeting the needs of all students.

Students who qualify for SPED spend most of their instructional time in the general education classroom where the teachers provide a safe and encouraging environment where they are learning alongside their peers, taking risks, building strengths in all academic areas. Teachers are also provided with the students' IEP information which includes their classroom accommodations and modifications.

The SPED teacher works together with the general education teachers making sure all students who have accommodations and modifications are receiving them and that the accommodations are appropriate and helpful to student success. Accommodations such as oral administration, extra time, reminders to stay on task, and supplemental aids such as 100s charts, multiplication charts, and place value tables are available. For other students, modifications to the curriculum are implemented with the guidance of the SPED teacher to meet the instructional level of the student. Along with a student's accommodations, their IEP also includes their instructional schedule.

Some students with disabilities receive only in-class support in certain subjects while other students receive pull-out resource time to meet their academic needs. The SPED teacher provides in-class support such as small group/individual oral administration, one-on-one reteach opportunities and direct/specific feedback. In the resource classroom, students work either in small groups or one-on-one with the SPED teacher on specific academic areas of concern, as well as their IEP goals.

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

NES offers English Learners (EL) support through a Content-Based Language Instruction Program. Through this program, EL receives all content area instruction in the regular general education classroom by an ESL (English as a Second Language) certified teacher. NES is dedicated to the success of all English Learners. NES requires all eligible teachers to obtain ESL certification within the first year of employment. Currently, 85% of eligible certified teachers are ESL certified, with the remaining teachers expected to be certified by June 2022. Teachers receive a yearly stipend when they are ESL certified.

The affective needs of NES's students are met by things as simple as administration greeting the students each morning to teachers using techniques from evidence-based programs to build strong relationships. These strong relationships with adults on campus help meet the social and emotional needs of EL students. The linguistics needs of EL students are met by the teachers' implementation of the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). Teachers allow extensive opportunities for speaking during classroom activities. Presentations, plays, and opportunities for collaborative assignments allow EL additional practice with oral language. The cognitive needs of the EL students are being met through the implementation of the TEKS, small group instruction, and guided reading. All teachers receive training from the Region 3 Service Center on topics including ESL review and culturally and linguistically relevant training. NES also establishes close relationships with EL families. These close home school connections offer further support to the EL students.

NES's use of small group targeted instruction provides additional support to EL. During small group instruction, academic vocabulary and additional reinforcement of difficult concepts help all students but are particularly important for EL. Guided reading and writing activities in a small group encourage EL students to participate and reduce any apprehension that they may have.

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

Another population at NES are students who have physical or academic disabilities. Students who have a physical or academic disability may be eligible to qualify and receive services under their 504 plan. When a parent or teacher notifies the 504 Coordinator, data is collected on the student's academic and family history. A meeting is held with the 504 Committee, which consists of faculty members and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student, to discuss the needs of the student for them to be successful. If the student qualifies for 504 services as decided by the recommendation of the 504 Committee, accommodations are discussed. If accommodations are needed, the committee considers and discusses which accommodations might be beneficial for the student. Once the parent approves of the services they are set in place for the classroom. At any time, if teachers or students feel there is a need for another 504 meeting, one is set to reevaluate the student's progress.

Faculty and administration also closely monitor students' attendance and behavior. If students are struggling in their attendance or with proper school behavior, parents are notified and the administration may conduct a home visit. Students are counseled by staff and administration promptly to seek closure to the counterproductive behavior. Parents, teachers, and administration conferences are conducted to discuss if help is needed to lead the student to success. NES believes that positive relationships with students and parents are an important part of the success of students. In the case of students in this population, this relationship is even more fundamental to student success at the primary level, and yet still more in the secondary grades that follow. These students, more than any other, need special attention to make all transitions between grades successful.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

NES offers students an engaging and motivational curriculum and provides a positive environment that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth. Teachers have a positive attitude and create relationships with students, providing an environment in which students feel safe and learning can take place. Students become actively involved inside and outside the classroom because they feel more connected with their school and community. Every student, from pre-K to fifth grade, is encouraged and challenged daily to support academic, social, and emotional growth in all school activities.

The students at NES are also motivated to collaborate with their peers in meaningful discussions throughout the day to foster independence and the potential to develop academic and social proficiency. As students move around the classroom during workshops and stations, they demonstrate how cooperative learning and peer tutoring serve as an effective tool for learning to communicate with others. Peer collaboration helps to grow learners to be more self-confident, organized, and responsible for their materials, assignments, and learning.

Participation is very important as students take an active part in their learning. To promote increased participation in the classroom students must feel safe and free of skepticism and sarcasm, which must be practiced daily. Having students respond cordially to one another helps to positively reinforce classroom contributions and facilitate conversations where connections are made. Teachers must instruct students how to properly participate by coaching them and giving them both positive and corrective feedback. A classroom environment needs to have one hundred percent of its students involved, engaged, sharing, and contributing. Students at NES give affirmation to each other throughout the day as they share and contribute in the classroom. Success is celebrated at every level for both small and large accomplishments.

As students advance to the next grade level each year, they must first demonstrate mastery of the standards, knowledge, and skills of their previous grade. Problem-solving and critical thinking skills are taught at NES and give students the ability to analyze, predict, and think outside the box when finding solutions to difficult situations or issues. NES has hosted several Career Fairs in which citizens of the community spoke to the students about different career opportunities and the education, training, or qualifications needed to enter various fields. Students exit NES prepared for success in their next educational goals, and have developed college and career readiness skills to be prepared for the future.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The success and traditions that help promote student and organizational success at NES are largely attributed to a supportive community and family involvement. The Cougar Family is a term that is far-reaching and includes the community and surrounding area of NISD. Parental support has never lacked at NES. NES administration invites parental and community input and typically holds one-on-one interviews with parents during the summer months. At this time, information regarding campus improvements or concerns are discussed and feedback is welcomed. Based on the feedback received, administration can then create initiatives or plans for campus needs. Conducting the conferences in person also helps foster trust among the families NES serves.

The parents and community want to participate and to see their children perform and succeed. The best way to build support is to create opportunities for parents to participate actively in these processes. Without fail, any school production that is performed will be standing room only. This year, NES was fortunate and was able to perform the Christmas play in person. Each performance had an audience that equaled the student body count. The Christmas plays are such a hit that the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) auctions off front row seats for the next year's performance in the spring.

Based on the community feedback from the summer interviews, NES started holding more frequent award ceremonies, with one every nine weeks. These events were placed on hold due to safety, but this year, all the

academic and character award ceremonies for each grade level are held outside so parents may attend safely. The business partners that sponsor NES were also invited and provided incentives for the students at NES. A portion of their proceeds goes to the student activity account to support extracurricular student initiatives.

Each year, NES hosts two community events which include Trunk or Treat and Spring Fling. Trunk or Treat was started to allow local businesses and community members an opportunity to set up a booth and pass out candy for the kids of the NES Community. The annual Spring Fling has been a longstanding tradition hosted by the NES PTO, which raises large sums of money each year at this all-day event. These funds are then given back to the students and staff at NES. Last year, the PTO purchased an awning for the Little Cougars in grades pre-K through 1st grade.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

NES creates a welcoming professional culture in many ways. Teachers and administrators work together to improve the learning outcomes of the students through professional learning and development. NES teachers and administration learn together as a community dedicated to improving the lives and futures of students. This environment is created by teachers working together in a professional learning community (PLC) to support students in academic attainment. Teachers have a block schedule so that they can meet regularly and collaborate in lesson planning and student interventions. Within their PLCs, teachers work together, sharing ideas and giving feedback to one another, with the common goal of educating the students and going above and beyond to ensure their learning atmosphere is the best it can be. For the teachers, being able to participate in the PLC process is a very powerful tool. The PLC is impactful for all stakeholders because all staff at NES work together collaboratively and share the same goal, which centers around student success and growth.

Administration at NES creates an atmosphere for open, honest, and clear communication. Without this element, the NES team would not be successful. Administrators provide meaningful feedback to their staff and expect high academic performance. Administration provides teachers with the guidance and support from outside experts, including those from the regional service center, to help teachers grow professionally. The administrators provide funds so that teachers and staff can continue their professional development, be that through workshops or conferences. Administrators also ensure teachers are given time throughout the day to pursue their professional learning during PLC time. NES is committed to providing the students with the best educational opportunity, and 92% of the teachers are participating in the Reading Academy program. This program focuses on the science of teaching reading as NES places emphasis on a strong balanced literacy program.

During the pandemic, professional development was still a priority. Instead of meeting in person, virtual meetings were the new normal. All staff meetings were conducted through virtual meeting software. Administration was available at all times throughout the day, even by personal cell phone. NES has now taken a few professional development days to learn about ways of destressing so that the pandemic does not get the best of the teachers as well as the students.

The goal at NES is to make sure all students are successful. The professional environment created by the administration has ensured just that.

4. School Leadership:

NES's leadership philosophy is led by the principal/superintendent, who sees himself as a servant leader. His primary focus is to empower everyone to lead with their hearts and do all that is necessary for the students. His five rules of engagement are 1) love our kids, 2) be positive, 3) work hard, play hard, 4) keep open, honest lines of communication, and 5) be flexible.

He stresses high expectations and standards while managing small class sizes for personal instruction. He knows every student's name, successes, and struggles, both socially and academically, as well as their family dynamics. He picks up students to bring them to class, greets students at drop off and pick up, and visits classrooms and lunch periods daily. He hired a counselor to address emotional needs and support

student and teacher success. He empowers teachers with the resources they need and has provided Chromebooks for every student. He has funded continued education, interventionists, GT programs, and tutoring. The principal's door is always open, and teachers know he supports them. He has organized numerous improvements to the campus and has goals to expand educational ideologies to the eighth grade. His goal is to genuinely love, serve and lead with his whole heart for teachers, staff, students, and families. As superintendent, he provides the instructional mission, research-based curriculum and resources, instructional pedagogy methods, behavior standards, philosophies, and manages the financial resources for the district.

The assistant principal is involved in all the mechanics of day-to-day business. Her duties include coordinating, managing resources and materials, scheduling meetings and training, overseeing procedures, maintaining compliance, meeting student needs, and requirements, and facilitating meetings and communications with staff, parents, and the community. She is constantly supporting staff and students and is visible daily. Her objective is to support student academic and personal growth. She knows every student. She is compassionate to staff and families alike. To connect campus and community she has coordinated various community events mentioned previously.

The greatest adaptation that has been made involved assigning new roles during the COVID pandemic. The nurse became certified to test for COVID and made home visits as needed. Additional day and evening custodians have been employed to sanitize during the day and evenings. Chromebooks and hot spots were acquired for each student. Teachers were instructed and supported with the logistics of virtual learning. The principal held virtual meetings for the community to go over procedures, concerns, and guidelines.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

NES addresses the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff in a variety of ways. The school ensures equity, cultural awareness, and respect, as well as addresses current events and/or social movements that may have a direct impact on students, their families, and the community.

At NES, all students are given an equal opportunity, all students can learn. A comprehensive, systematic literacy program was chosen by the teachers and the principal at NES that builds a strong early foundation with diverse books that engage and excite students of different cultural backgrounds. For example, during certain units, such as folktales, our students can hear stories from places like India, Indonesia, Brazil, Africa, the Philippines, and the Native American culture. Those resources have proven to escalate the literacy achievement of struggling ESL students at NES as well as others. Extensive discussions erupt from these interactive read-aloud and cultural awareness takes place as students observe the similarities and the differences among themselves. This is further established using projects where students are creating and performing individual and/or dramas.

NES also offers several opportunities for family and community members to be involved with school activities throughout the school year. Monthly PTO meetings are held, as well as fundraiser events and field trips. Off-campus field trips are an incredible opportunity for students and families from diverse backgrounds. During the Thanksgiving holiday, NES offers a Thanksgiving Feast, which includes the traditional Thanksgiving lunch, to all family members. In addition to the feast, school families provide items for a fun school-wide family bake sale.

Another way NES addresses current events and/or social movements that may have a direct impact on students and families is by providing an on-campus counselor who is dedicated to the health and wellbeing of all students, families, and staff. COVID, for example, is just one of the many current events that have changed daily routines and activities throughout the school day and at home. Students, families, and staff alike have all been affected, and by having a counselor on campus these impacts have been minimal.

Finally, the numerous committees, both mandated and advisory in nature, are diverse and reflect the cultural makeup of the community at large. By having a diverse committee, shared values are integrated into the natural school environment. This creates a sense of belongingness and trust among the stakeholders who attend and support NES.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one practice in NES that ensures student academic attainment is the creation of authentic relationships that promote learning. Students internalize their belonging and have a true desire to rise above any external challenge they may face. The teachers are their champions for academic attainment. When kids are motivated to learn, engage and behave, they can accomplish anything. The mutual respect that evolves over time allows the school to build hope and opportunity for all who attend. Ultimately, when motivated, everyone wants to excel. When the relationship piece is in place and fully authentic, then and only then, can the real work of educating students begin. NES does this flawlessly. One of the nonnegotiables of NES is to love our kids and all staff members adhere to this philosophy willingly.

When the relationship piece is solidified, this allows the teachers to spend the necessary time on assessment and the exact instructional fit each child needs. From the earliest grades, assessments are instrumental to student success because all academic and emotional needs are addressed early and consistently. For example, in the early grades students participate in basic academic screeners and interventions happen immediately. All students in grades kindergarten through 5th grade are given reading fluency assessments at the beginning, middle, and the end of the year to determine their reading level, as well as grade-level expectations. This data is used for specific and purposeful instruction to grow all learners. This data is utilized from year to year so the teachers know exactly where to begin.

For example, in pre-K, screeners are used to assess the basic skills of the students. NES works with the parents to provide information about students because they are a valuable resource in the learning process. These assessments are used to form small groups to develop the skills that students need. As a campus, NES utilizes the assessment data to work collaboratively with the kindergarten teacher to track students' progress.

The analogy regarding the chicken or the egg is fitting for this final question. In reality, student performance will never flourish without a staff that is emotionally connected to the needs of students. The genuine relationships that the teachers and staff embrace set the stage for students to excel. Of the five expectations set and expected by campus leadership, "Love our Kids" is the most critical for student success.