

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

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

School Mailing Address 101 W. Fannin Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City DeKalb State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75559-1614

County Bowie County

Telephone (903) 667-2328 Fax (903) 667-5151

Web site/URL https://www.dekalbisd.net E-mail melinda.hodgson@dekalbisd.net

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Chris Galloway E-mail Chris.galloway@dekalbisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name DeKalb Independent School District Tel. (903) 667-2566

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. Kyle Dooley
(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)
 - 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	35	26	61
K	16	24	40
1	25	24	49
2	21	21	42
3	25	22	47
4	28	24	52
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
Total Students	150	141	291

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 16 % Black or African American
 - 14 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 62 % White
 - 6 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 13%

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

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	291
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 67 %

Total number students who qualify: 194

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 21 %
60 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>6</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>1</u> Developmental Delay | <u>19</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 16:1

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	96%	99%	96%	96%	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.

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.

DeKalb Elementary will develop and implement engaging, innovative, and rigorous curriculum and instruction that will optimize learning. The school will adopt a system-wide approach to prepare students for college, careers, and beyond academics.

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

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/201?filename=FB\(LOCAL\).pdf](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/201?filename=FB(LOCAL).pdf)

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

DeKalb, Texas, is located 25 miles East of Texarkana in the far North-East corner of Texas. Legend has it that Davy Crockett named the town on his way to defend the Alamo. While visiting the town, he inquired about the name. After residents told him there was no name, Crockett suggested the town be named after the Revolutionary War general Baron de Kalb. Primarily an agricultural community, the city of DeKalb was founded in the early 1830s. The community was put on the map by a land grant issued by the Texas Congress to establish DeKalb College. The school provided an educational institution to local farmers. By the 1870s, the small town became a stop on the Texas and Pacific Railroad, resulting in the population doubling from 500 to just over 1,000 people. The city of DeKalb flourished from jobs provided by the Red River Army Depot and two nearby prisons. By the late 1980s, the town grew to nearly 2,300 citizens, but there was a sharp decline in the 1990s. Today, the DeKalb population has remained steady at approximately 1,600 citizens.

DeKalb, Texas, is a community with a rich history and traditions like its annual Oktoberfest celebration, which attracts numerous visitors each year. In the DeKalb area, fourteen churches reflect the importance of faith in the community. Many of the citizens of DeKalb graduated from the school district. Therefore, community engagement is high. On any given night, residents can be found at a church-sponsored event or a school-related activity. Faith and family are the pillars of DeKalb.

The town and people of DeKalb have experienced tragedy in its history. The DeKalb Independent School District (DISD) and community have persevered through two fires and a tornado that destroyed much of the town, including the DeKalb Elementary and DeKalb High School buildings in 1999. DeKalb residents joined forces to rebuild, more robust and better than ever before. DeKalb is home to several farms and small business owners. The school is an extension of families that make up this rural community, in which many of the staff members are DISD high school graduates.

DeKalb Elementary School (DES) is a part of DISD. The district is the heartbeat of the DeKalb, Texas community, founded on tradition, resilience, and Bear Pride. The district was first established in 1831, and in 1871 students were first taught tuition-free. Today the elementary campus serves 303 students in grades prekindergarten 3 (pre-k 3) to 4th grade. The campus has had periods of great success and times of disappointment regarding student achievement. In 1991-1992 DES was named a Partnership School, one of 83 campuses in the state to be selected for this honor. During the 1993-1994 school year, the campus was named a mentor school and site for the Early Childhood/Texas Elementary Network. In 2015-2016 and 2018-2019, the campus received unacceptable ratings that required the campus to go through the process of school improvement. With a large economically disadvantaged population, DES students struggled to meet federal targets for white and economically disadvantaged students. Since 2019, the campus has improved its data culture, filled English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) curricular needs, and worked to align instructional best practices for student success. With these key components in place, the campus made exceptional gap-closing gains, as reflected in the 2021 Texas state summative assessment results. The elementary campuses' ability to close gaps in math and reading for students during the middle of a national pandemic when state scores across the state dropped significantly, is a testament to the staff's ability to band together, reflect on instructional practices, determine needs, and work hard to increase student achievement. The campus has enhanced the curriculum offered to students needing reading intervention and teacher training on researched-based best practices for instruction. Student progress monitoring and reflecting on unit assessment data with teachers have been beneficial to student achievement at DES.

Each year the school adds to the list of student activity offerings to help each student find their reason to love school. The district applies for grants frequently to offer a greater variety of programming and innovative activities for students, such as the 21st Century Grant and the Blended Learning Grant funded by the Charles Butt Foundation. The district has also received several grants from the Texas Education Agency for technology innovation initiatives. Each of these district-level initiatives has impacted DES, achievement, student agency, and overall student well-being. The district aims to meet as many individual student needs as possible: academic, emotional, physical, and cultural.

DISD takes pride in providing the best education possible to students, as many of them are the children and grandchildren of neighbors and coworkers; they are the future of the city of DeKalb and the hope for a continually thriving community.

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:

At DES, the staff believes all students can learn and grow into the best version of themselves. Each teacher strives to provide a connected sequence of instruction while working to meet each student's needs. DISD executes the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) learning standards adopted and approved by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for all core curricular areas. Core subject area teachers utilize a TEKS-aligned resources system as their foundation for the district curriculum. The resource system provides teachers with a scope and sequence for their content area, unit pacing guides, information regarding the depth and intensity in which concepts should be taught, and vertical alignment documents for each grade level and content area. This provides teachers with an efficient planning tool to prepare for their daily lessons. Student mastery is determined by end-of-unit assessments, local benchmarks, and teacher-created tests. Three growth assessments for both math and reading during the school year are administered for first-fourth grade students and at least by monthly fluency probes. Teachers display student data, by way of anonymous numbers, to students so that students can set individual goals and track their progress over time in each subject area. Teachers maintain data spreadsheets so that, at a glance, they can view student assessment results linearly to determine trends in individual student progress. Teachers, administrators, and intervention staff utilize these data points to determine if the current plan for student Tier services, special education services, accommodations, and supports positively affects the student's level of mastery. Students have forward-facing data trackers so that they can frequently reflect on their progress and develop action steps to help move forward towards mastery. Many of these practices are relatively new to the campus and are used to drive the belief that each student can learn and grow.

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

DES has shifted instructional practices for teaching reading over the last three years. The campus fell into school improvement during the 2018-2019 school year primarily due to students' performance in reading. Most grade levels at DES had more than half of the students showing a need for intensive reading intervention. This overwhelming need required the campus to look at the reading curriculum and the instructional practices being used. After analyzing student data, it was discovered that the campus needed to change its scope and sequence for phonics instruction. DES shifted to using a highly researched phonics program that explicitly teaches alphabetic knowledge and decoding and has an overall multi-sensory approach to reading. Students could call the words on an assessment; however, they could not decode new words or nonsense words when the context clues were limited. Students needed additional opportunities to learn and apply the phonetic rules of the English language. Teachers received training in this program, and the campus was able to align instructional practice for phonics. This program utilized a blending board and letter/sound cards to have students routinely blend sounds to make new words of increasing difficulty. Spelling words at DES are words in which students test students' ability to use the letter/sound patterns taught to spell words. During this time, teachers reviewed and aligned their sight word lists and how sight words are introduced and taught in each grade level. Teachers set sight word goals for kindergarten and first grade students, and the campus celebrates students after meeting a goal.

Grades two through four set reading goals around unit assessments, reading fluency, comprehension assessment points earned, and books read. Students are recognized for goal achievement by sharing their accomplishments with their parents and families on the district's social media, earning currency to spend in the school store, and other prizes and incentives. In addition, each student in grades one through four has a data folder for reading, which houses all of their reading assessment information.

Students in grades K-4 currently receive two eighty-five-minute blocks of reading and ELAR instruction each day. Students in grades 1-3 are monitored using a Texas state-approved reading instrument three times per year. The campus conducts screenings for dyslexia in kindergarten and first grade. This practice has

helped the campus to identify students with characteristics of dyslexia and to provide early intervention services to these students. Every one to two weeks, all students are administered a reading fluency assessment to monitor progress. Students previously identified for Tier 2 reading instruction receive specialized instruction and are progress monitored every ten days. This Tier 2 reading intervention is provided to students during the What I Need (WIN) time for the grade level. Students enter and exit Tier 2 services according to progress made or academic needs. Students not receiving dyslexia or Tier 2 reading services during WIN time stay with the classroom teachers for other prescribed activities such as phonics instruction, independent reading time, or practice acquired skills using various technology subscriptions.

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

In mathematics, DES teachers help students understand numeracy, place value, patterns, and measurement to build a solid foundation. Emphasis is placed on vertical alignment from one grade level to the next, concrete and explicit instruction, aligned vocabulary, and rigorous practice. Students utilize hands-on experiences to develop conceptual understanding, then move to pictorial representations, then to written expressions and word problems to solve that have multi-step requirements to determine answers. Teachers utilized multiple resources to expose students to different types of questioning. Students are taught that mathematical problems can be solved using various strategies and that each student may choose to use different methods to arrive at a solution. At DES, students are challenged to think critically in order to analyze what the problems are asking them to solve. Collaboration is encouraged among students, and teachers work to help students make connections between the process of problem-solving and their everyday experiences. Teachers begin each new unit of instruction with some form of student engagement. Conceptual videos are often used to capture students' attention, introduce new concepts, pre-teach vocabulary, and scaffold background knowledge. Then teachers utilize the gradual release of responsibility, "I do, you do, we do," in math classrooms to scaffold students' ability to solve increasingly complex problems. DES is a School-Wide Title I Campus; multiple practice opportunities and repeated success are necessary for students to feel confident in their mathematical abilities. Fact fluency is highly focused on at DES; students need fact fluency to solve problems efficiently and with increased difficulty levels. Teachers utilize incentives and learning strategies to encourage students to learn their math facts.

In addition to readiness and supporting standards, math teachers teach metacognition daily. A student's ability to use metacognition to be able to talk themselves through challenging problems is a good predictor of their success on tasks that differ from problems that they are asked to solve that are complex and do not look familiar. The process standards taught in math, such as evaluating the problem-solving process and the reasonableness of the solution, require students to think at high levels. At DES, students have many opportunities to practice math concepts and build towards mastery. Students' levels of understanding and TEKS mastery are measured by end-of-unit assessments, beginning, middle, and end-of-year growth assessments, and benchmark data. Students not meeting grade-level expectations are provided additional Tier 2 instruction during math tutorial time. In the Spring, students who need extra support to help meet their expected levels of growth in math are offered after-school tutorials. These tutorials are data-driven lessons on specific TEKS in a small group setting for thirty minutes two times per week for approximately eight weeks. Data analyzed after these tutorials show that students benefit greatly. During this time, students develop closer relationships and gain additional encouragement from their teachers—students' confidence in their ability to achieve at high levels on rigorous problems increases. DES students are equipped with the tools they need to be successful.

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

The Science curriculum at the elementary level contains concepts such as science safety, scientific investigation, reasoning, force, matter and energy, earth and space, organisms and environments.

Many of these TEKS students are taught through interdisciplinary cross-curricular texts and hands-on investigations. Whenever possible, teachers have students read books and articles about science content in the ELAR classroom. At the beginning of each school year, students review science safety standards and protocols to ensure students remain safe during scientific investigations. In addition, teachers have access to scientific tools and supplies that are shared throughout the campus. During the pandemic, teachers also

learned of high-quality online science experiments that could be used if they did not have access to certain supplies or if classroom space for conducting science experiments was limited. Teachers continue to utilize these online resources to benefit their students even after students return to in-person instruction.

According to the TEKS for elementary science in Texas, students learn to use critical thinking and scientific problem solving to help make informed decisions. DES students learn to use various tools, materials, equipment, and models to conduct science inquiry. Students learn that matter has measurable physical properties that can be classified, changed, and used. Cycles, patterns, and systems of energy exist in many observable forms. The study of organisms and environments teaches students how the flow of energy through food webs, beginning with the Sun, and to predict how changes in the ecosystem affect the food web. The students learn that the natural world consists of resources, including renewable and nonrenewable, and their responsibility to conserve the natural resources for future generations.

In science, students learn to observe, describe, investigate, explore, explain, identify, classify, and analyze to better understand the world around them. These skills serve students well as they begin to process the reason things happen and analyze problems and determine solutions.

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

Social studies instruction in elementary school focuses on eight primary strands: history, geography, government, economics, citizenship, science, technology, and society. In history, students learn to identify customs, cultural holidays, and celebrations and identify the contributions of historical figures such as George Washington, Martin Luther King Jr., and Abraham Lincoln. In geography, students learn cardinal directions and what country, state, and city they live in. Students learn the geographical characteristics of places such as landforms, bodies of water, Earth's resources, and weather. In economics, students learn that people work to have the income to meet basic human needs. They learn in government to determine the purpose of rules and laws in schools and communities and the roles and responsibilities of authority figures and public officials. Students learn the characteristics of good citizenship as exemplified by historical figures and how symbols, customs, and celebrations represent American beliefs and principles that contribute to the national identity. DES students learn the importance of family and community beliefs, language, and traditions of different cultures. In the science, technology, and society strand, students identify individuals who created or invented new technology and begin to understand how technology affects daily life, past and present. Students study individual inventors such as Amelia Earhart, George Washington Carver, Louis Pasteur, and others with significant contributions.

In addition to these eight strands, teachers teach general social studies skills. Students apply critical thinking, use information from valid sources, including technology, create timelines, use social studies terminology correctly, and express ideas orally based on knowledge and experiences.

Teachers incorporate social studies content into reading instruction, interdisciplinary units, and through classroom discussion to the extent possible. Other concepts in which explicit instruction is needed become different social studies lessons for students. Teachers at DES assess students' knowledge formatively to determine levels of understanding and additional student needs.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

DES has offered three and four-year-old pre-K classes for students for many years. Students are taught ELAR, math, science, social studies, and social-emotional content through an adopted pre-K resource that aligns with the pre-K Guidelines for Texas. This resource promotes learning through the organization of routines and materials and opportunities for self-discovery and social interaction. DES pre-K classrooms reinforce social-emotional development and promote independence, decision making, cooperation, problem-solving, and creativity. Pre-K instruction provides informed experiences and activities based on students'

developmental levels and current abilities.

Students in pre-K 4 are assessed using a Texas-approved Early Childhood Instrument at the beginning, middle, and at the end of the school year. This data is used to inform the teacher's instruction, classroom grouping, and parents of their child's current levels of performance. Informal student observations also assist teachers and guide their instruction from day to day. Pre-K 3 and pre-K 4 have developed report cards to monitor student progress formally and notify parents of a student's progress. The pre-K 3 and 4 report cards are based on the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines for each age group. DES provides a paraprofessional to assist each pre-K classroom teacher with additional support. During learning station time, it is particularly beneficial to have this paraprofessional in the classroom to assist with managing the students while the teacher is conducting small group lessons. Professional development is provided to teachers on providing academic support for students, behavioral de-escalation strategies, early literacy skill development, and students' social-emotional development. Pre-K 4 teachers collaborate with kindergarten teachers to monitor their students' readiness and make recommendations as needed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DES did see a drop in pre-K enrollment; however, during the 2021-2022 school year, enrollment has increased as parents see the benefit of early education and improved kindergarten readiness.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

DES offers a robust gift and talented program that provides students with complex challenges to be solved that require creativity and teamwork. This is in addition to enrichment provided by their regular classroom teachers. Each team of students selects a challenge that their team is interested in solving: structural, improvisational, technical, engineering, service learning, and fine arts. Teams are taken to contests to compete with other schools in solving the same challenge. Teams are graded against each other by utilizing a rubric that accounts for out-of-the-box thinking, creativity, and complex problem-solving. Teams are given time limits for their performance, write their scripts, design and create their costumes, and the adults are only allowed to facilitate group work among teams. DES teams have been highly successful in this competition, ranking high among the other teams at the state level of competition.

Students participate in physical education (PE) daily for thirty minutes. During this time, students learn to exercise, jog for increasingly extended periods of time, and learn about healthy choices and physical fitness. One day per week, students have a lesson on health and safety. In PE, students learn the basics of athletic sports like volleyball, tennis, softball/baseball, basketball, and others. In addition, students participate in organized games that they particularly enjoy.

Each day elementary students are offered special courses of instruction that consist of a library, technology, and art/music classes. Students attend each class every third day. Students experience books read aloud during library time, choose books that meet their interests, have quiet time for reading, or participate in maker-space enrichment activities. Students learn keyboarding skills and make Google documents, slide shows, coding, and discover other technology-based applications in technology. Students have music/art classes in which they do various multimedia art projects and learn musicals to perform for their parents. Students have opportunities to enter their artwork in the community art show, and many DES students place in the contest annually. The district has been a leader in the field of technology for many years, hosting technology professional development for teachers in the region. Students have access to 1:1 devices from second grade up, and pre-K through first-grade classes have at least 6-8 tablets per classroom.

Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, the district was awarded a grant from the Texas Education Agency to fund the After School Centers on Education (ACE) program. All elementary students are offered opportunities to attend the ACE afterschool program. ACE provides one hour in the morning before school and two hours in the afternoon for students to get enrichment, academic instruction, and homework assistance. Students attending ACE are also provided dinner in conjunction with this grant program. Enrichment activities such as archery, culinary, Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics Education (STEM), and learning American Sign Language are available to students.

At DES, students are offered a well-rounded education that consists of more than just the core areas of

instruction. Course offerings and enrichment programs are continually evaluated, added, or removed based on effectiveness and student interest.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Teachers and staff at DES utilize individualized methods that translate into growth and progress for all students regardless of their previous levels of achievement. Each student receives a prescribed education, especially in the areas of math and reading, that inclusively addresses all its special populations on campus, such as economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, special education, and students qualifying for specialized services under Section 504. Both formal and informal assessments are administered to students throughout the school year in order for teachers to have an in-depth understanding of each student's strengths and challenges. WIN time is built into the master schedule for reading; this time allows staff to provide additional support to students in need and reading or math enrichment to those already meeting grade-level expectations. DES then offers prescribed instruction to students with adaptive or prescribed software or during small group instruction and centers. Students performing below grade level in reading receive intensive small group instruction and intervention using research-based materials during WIN time for 45 minutes per day. These tier 2 students are monitored to determine progress every ten days, and their instruction is adjusted based on these results. Also, during WIN time, students identified as dyslexic receive dyslexia services in a small group setting. A math tutorial time for students not meeting grade-level standards is also built into the master schedule daily. This additional math tutorial time offers students TEKS-specific instruction at a rigorous level with their regular classroom teacher providing scaffolded support as needed to students. In the spring semester, after-school tutorials are provided to give students additional time for reading and math instruction and academic support. Students receiving tier 2 instruction that are not making expected progress for a specified period of time are referred for a special education for further evaluation.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

Students performing above grade level are offered enrichment opportunities whenever possible. For example, teachers at DES often work with students in stations and provide small-group extensions to the lesson or academic extensions for advanced students. During this small group time, teachers often take the skill or concept being taught and allow students to apply the information in a new way or encourage them to think more critically.

DES classrooms are equipped with adequate technology such as tablets and class sets of laptop computers so that teachers can leverage technology to help meet the needs of more advanced students. For example, on reading and math growth assessments, teachers look at which TEKS students have already mastered and what grade level they are functioning. Teachers can then use this information with adaptive software subscriptions to give students instruction on a more advanced level.

Teachers at DES also provide challenges to all students, which is particularly important to motivate students to perform above grade level. Students set their own goals for unit and major assessments in all core classes, second grade and up. For each assessment, students can score at "approaches," "meets," "masters," or "working hard to move up" according to Texas assessment and grade-level standards. The "masters" category is where advanced students aim to be. This is the first year for all core classes to use this type of data tracking with students. Math teachers piloted it last school year and saw student achievement go up. Students are beginning to take ownership of their learning and hold themselves accountable intrinsically. Advanced students, in particular, are holding themselves accountable for scoring at the "masters" level routinely. Students are beginning to understand their data and how their behavior and work ethic in the classroom relates to their academic achievement.

3c. Special education:

DES offers a variety of services and instructional arrangements based on the needs of each student. The majority of DES students with special needs are mainstreamed with the general population of students and supported with individualized accommodations and supports. Upon referral for a special education evaluation, the student receives a complete and individual evaluation. Students who need a modified curriculum receive instruction from a certified special education teacher. The district is a part of a special education cooperative that helps small rural districts, like DeKalb, to provide the most appropriate educational setting and support to students with rare or severe disabilities, a life-skills/self-contained educational setting to gain skills needed for success. This cooperative assists the district in being able to accommodate students in need of specialized transportation or instruction for students with visual impairments, deafness, or blindness for example.

General education and special education teachers meet routinely to discuss their student's progress, areas of strength, needed growth, and determine progress toward academic, functional, or behavioral goals. The members of the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee, which includes specialists and parents, make recommendations for instructional arrangement changes, update student goals, and review accommodations and supports at least annually. Students can be dismissed from the program at any time in which they no longer need the special education services or accommodations to support their learning.

Special education teachers complete training on best practices to provide the most effective instruction for their students, learn how to document student progress, and be able to write appropriate goals for students. Students with special needs are offered the same array of services provided to all other students, such as access to the ACE program, after-school tutorials, and other interventions deemed appropriate by the ARD committee.

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

DES has a small English Language Learners (ELL) population with Spanish as their first and primary language. During the 2020-2021 school year, no special programs or interventions were available to support ELL students. However, in the 2021-2022 school year, DISD saw an increase in students enrolling with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and in response to the need, an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher was added to provide small-group instruction to students.

Multiple times per year, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) meets to determine the appropriate accommodations and support needed for ELL students based on their performance in listening, speaking, reading, writing, ESL placement tests, classroom performance, and other relevant points of data. Identified students can access content and language support in the classroom and on state assessments. In addition, students who need intensive support receive instruction to learn English from the ESL teacher using an interactive and engaging curriculum with opportunities to use and practice English. These small groups meet daily, and the ESL teacher can work closely with the general education teachers to ensure students have the support they need to make progress and access grade-level content.

Classroom teachers support students that are learning English by creating a positive and welcoming environment, Maintaining a consistent classroom schedule and routine, labeling common objects with the English word for the object, using pictorial cues, predictable signals for getting students' attention, transitions, and lining up, predictable procedures for passing out and collecting materials, and providing comfortable opportunities for students to interact with the teacher and with their peers. Technology is also leveraged to support students' ability to learn English. For example, teachers utilize technology to provide students with translation and educational applications to learn English. In addition, DES aims to incorporate books and texts from other cultural contexts to which ELL students may be able to relate.

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

The campus has no other special populations for which special programs or interventions are offered.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Staff at DES understand that in order for the students to be successful and reach their full academic potential, they must be engaged and have a vested interest in the lives of each student. Every child is different, learns differently, and needs a variety of opportunities for success. By focusing on individual students, teachers can create relationships with students so that educational success is a standard practice for all students.

Research has shown that involving students in the learning process can increase and provide more meaningful learning experiences. Staff and teachers aim for learning to be as meaningful as possible during classroom activities because it creates worth and value in what they are doing. The expectation is high in all areas, behaviorally and academically. DES sets a standard of high expectations that students strive to reach throughout the year. Teachers instill respect among the students, with each student understanding they are a valued member of the school family. All staff share the responsibility and are invested in student success. Teachers and staff across the campus teach tutorials, WIN time small group learning, 1:1 reading help, and offer assistance in any other way needed in any grade level assigned. Because of this, every child is important to the staff, and feel as if they “matter” because there is a personal connection between the children and adults on campus.

Students understand they are part of a school community and family. DES implements programs that involve high school early childhood development students providing class time and playtime with the younger students. This bridge between the campuses provides connections across the school district. In addition, DES has a career day where the students can explain the career they are interested in and dress the part to help explain the job. Another way DES helps promote the continuation and furthering of education is to encourage students to wear their favorite college shirt on Thursday and staff to wear their aluminum apparel.

This year DES installed a campus “bell.” Achievement and progress toward individualized student goals are announced on the intercom. Students have names put up in areas around their room or the hallway, and they “RING” the bell at the principal’s office. Students are continuously reminded that progress is important. Student success and growth are a process, and students are celebrated for small accomplishments throughout their journey.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The goal is to ensure that DES is a beacon in the community. A place where students and families can come to feel safe, receive a meal, and be educated. DES achieves this by providing stakeholders with consistent and transparent communication regarding events and the resources available to families.

The school utilizes the district and campus website, social media, and digital communication tools to provide stakeholders with information about DES events, the calendar, and campus policies and procedures. For example, guardians have access to an online portal to obtain information on lunch accounts, attendance, and grades. Additionally, DES uses a folder system for communication and sharing information regarding the child’s progress and special events on campus.

Family engagement is vital to DES decision-making. Therefore, DES ensures parents have representation and a voice on campus committees. To ensure that every parent has an opportunity to voice their opinions, a survey system is utilized to gather feedback and host multiple community question and answer sessions regarding decision making. School records these sessions and uploads them to social media so community members can access the information without being physically present.

At DES, family involvement in their child’s education is critical to higher student achievement. Community members are invited to participate in student showcases that highlight student work and accomplishments. In

addition, there are always many family members who attend the STEM and fine arts program nights. The school has a very successful daily after-school program for struggling students that provides them with academic intervention, dinner, and enrichment activities. The teachers who teach in the after-school program have participated in a community Trunk or Treat event where they passed out several hundred books, a Bring Your Parent Night, and a STEM Game Night. Each event was well attended by many of the underrepresented students.

One of the critical components of success is with community partners. Several DeKalb businesses, churches, and organizations play a vital role in the education of students. One partnership DISD has is with the local volunteer fire department. Each year they educate the students during fire prevention week. After attending one of the events, an elementary student went home and convinced his family to put smoke detectors in their home. A few weeks later, they had a fire that destroyed their home. The parents said that those smoke detectors saved their lives.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

DES has developed a culture of professional collaboration among staff. Teachers review student data together and share teaching strategies that are effective in the classroom. DES has a robust professional learning community among the staff. Those same practices have been passed down to the student level as each one tracks their student achievement data and then collaborates with their classmates to identify where they need to focus their learning efforts. As a result, student ownership of their learning coupled with strong data-driven instructional practices brought DES out of school improvement.

Throughout each school year, DES teachers have opportunities to attend professional development that is prescriptive to the needs of their students or their personal growth. Leaders are intentional in developing the professional development plan to ensure that teachers' time is not wasted on unnecessary learning. Additionally, DISD provides teachers with ample time to review their state standards and student data and create their lesson plans. DISD leadership believes that teachers who are well prepared will be at their best in front of their students. Professional planning and preparation lead to success for students.

The DES administrative team takes pride in the coaching support provided to teachers. Each week administration conducts walkthroughs and offers valuable feedback on their teaching. Frequent collaboration between administration and teachers has created a growth mindset culture. Teachers have the freedom to take risks in the classroom, and failure is encouraged. DES believes that teachers can only grow and learn by taking risks and accepting failure as a learning opportunity. Additionally, DES utilizes retired teachers to provide support to new and struggling teachers. Consistent support for classroom teachers has transformed the campus from a common perception that evaluations are an "I got you" to a purposeful culture of professional growth.

Transparent communication and the encouragement to be vulnerable have been critical to the cultural shift at DES. It begins with the campus leadership team, which encourages a two-way system of feedback communication and modeling for staff that vulnerability is required to grow. This has opened the door to innovation and fruitful conversations that directly and positively impact the students. Developing and maintaining a professional culture requires a consistent effort and intentional relationship building that has a trickle-down effect from the principal to the students. Once established, that same culture spills from the campus walls out into the community.

4. School Leadership:

Leadership at DES is not defined by one person but by collaboration and partnership among staff and administration. The superintendent sets the tone for the district, and the DES principal and leadership team follow with specific implications for the elementary campus. Both administration and teachers take a holistic approach to education with the whole child in mind, including their social, emotional, and overall well-being. At DES, developing relationships with the families of the children, staff, and the community is of utmost importance. The principal believes that relationships are vital in the development of children and a key to student success at school. The staff meets as grade-level teams and as an entire faculty to discuss and

make decisions on what is best to meet the needs of the students.

During the implementation of data-driven instruction, the principal has fostered student ownership of personal goal setting, met with each student individually for conferences following their benchmarks, and had goal meetings with entire grade levels. Student encouragement and responsibility for their learning and academic achievement have been at the forefront of change throughout this process. DES staff believe in all students and their ability to succeed.

Teachers and staff are teaching for the love of the students and the campus. All staff have the students' best interest at heart during their time on campus and throughout their educational careers. The staff collaborates to help establish best practices for the students in order for them to have the best educational experience possible, learn life lessons, and provide them with a love for learning. These practices, led by the campus principal, will continue to enhance students' lives.

During COVID, the campus and district learned to help each other in a greater way than ever before, became stronger, and soon realized and adopted the motto "BETTER TOGETHER". A campus does not run without the students, and working together for the students was always the primary focus. When virtual was the only option during the shutdown, all staff and teachers rose above and beyond for the students to help them maintain their educational development. The staff demonstrated their interest in the whole child by making videos, sending mail, making pictures, hanging signs, and several other projects to continue to build relationships with their students and create some sense of normalcy during the times students were out of school.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At DES, the teachers are culturally aware and responsive to the students. Teachers are intentional about selecting reading materials that reflect diverse authors and topics so that all students are able to either learn about different cultures or relate to the content being taught. By teaching material that students find interesting and relatable, the students are more engaged and successful in mastering the content.

Additionally, diversity is celebrated at DES on special holidays and months like Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month. Each morning on the school-wide announcements, biographies are often read during these special times of the year highlighting successful members of the culture being celebrated. In addition, the librarian showcases books that represent that month's celebration. Teachers are purposeful in designing lessons that reflect the celebrated culture, highlight their achievements, and provide positive images or role models for students from diverse backgrounds. These lessons or activities are often recorded or photographed to be shared with the community on the district website and the social school's media pages.

DES teachers are very mindful that the student make-up is diverse, and they all come from various backgrounds. Some of the students live with grandparents, relatives, or friends. Additionally, with a high number of working families in the community, teachers are careful when assigning work outside of the classroom that may become a burden on families or difficult for students without internet access. Classroom teachers work closely with the after-school program to ensure that students that struggle receive support. At DES, ensure that all students have every opportunity to complete their work and reach academic success.

At DES, the staff works collaboratively with parents who contribute to a culturally responsive learning environment by volunteering to share their experiences with students. Having staff and volunteers on the campus that reflect the diverse student population is critical to their learning and mentorship. DES consistently discusses diversity issues and how they impact teaching and learning at DES. Each year DISD provides professional development on trauma-informed care, bullying, sex trafficking, and many other topics that can have a detrimental effect on the students. Weekly, the teachers share with students character-building activities which have contributed to the overall social-emotional well-being of students. DES has worked hard to build a culture that provides the students with a safe environment where they can grow individually and as a diverse community.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

DES is proud of so many things, but the one best practice that is believed to have been the most instrumental in the students' success is the staff's ability to help build relationships that empower students to take ownership of their learning. With all stakeholders vested in students, the relationships built with students and parents help create a collaborative effort with each person striving toward student growth and success. DES students want to be at school because they know that the staff at DES cares about them from the moment they are greeted at their cars or buses until they are helped in the cars and buses at the end of the day. As a result of the collaborative efforts of everyone involved in the life of the child, opportunities are provided for everyone to be actively engaged in the educational success of each child.

Relationships are built on trust, a solid foundation, and school traditions that are all shared between the community and the school family. Working with the students daily to help them become comfortable at school, finding ways to help them identify and connect with staff, and making meaningful connections between real-world experience and school creates a bond between staff and students. These efforts create an environment where students feel safe and know the adults in their life at school are both reliable and trustworthy. As a result of the dedication to the students, they are happy, well-rounded, and self-driven students. Mistakes and failures are viewed as opportunities for growth, and all students are encouraged to tackle learning with a growth mindset.

The dedication to the students is a source of pride and has changed the climate of the campus over the past few years. The campus thrives on celebrating every student and the progress they achieve, whether it be a minor or significant accomplishment. As a campus, successes are celebrated, and students understand that teachers believe in them, their ability to be the best they can be and that they are "enough" just as they are. From an early age, school pride and a sense of community are ingrained in students so that each child knows they are a valued part of the school family and community. In turn, this has created an atmosphere where students are confident and strive to succeed both academically and socially.