

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

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address 201 S. Chism P. O. Box 488  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Devers State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77538-0488

County Liberty County

Telephone (936) 549-7591 Fax (936) 549-7595

Web site/URL https://www.deversisd.net E-mail eharris@deversisd.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\* Mrs. Elizabeth Harris E-mail eharris@deversisd.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Devers Independent School District Tel. (936) 549-7591

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 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	10	9	19
K	10	11	21
1	13	10	23
2	6	13	19
3	10	11	21
4	10	12	22
5	14	13	27
6	10	11	21
7	14	12	26
8	9	7	16
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	106	109	215

\*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
  - 5 % Black or African American
  - 26 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 67 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 10%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	216
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

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

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %  
22 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %

Total number students who qualify: 58

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 20 %  
42 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>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>14</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>16</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>2</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
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.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 18:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes  No

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

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

It is the mission of Devers ISD to provide a learning environment that allows relationships to be built, provides daily opportunities for learning, empowers students with self confidence, promotes citizenship, and develops an appreciation of our common American heritage. Education is the difference maker in a student's life.

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

Policy FFA Local -

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/815?filename=FFH\(LOCAL\).html&title=STUDENT%20WELFARE &subtile=FREEDOM%20FROM%20DISCRIMINATION,%20HARASSMENT,%20AND%20RETRALIATION](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/815?filename=FFH(LOCAL).html&title=STUDENT%20WELFARE%20AND%20FREEDOM%20FROM%20DISCRIMINATION,%20HARASSMENT,%20AND%20RETRALIATION)

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

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Devers Independent School District (ISD) is the heart of a very small, unique community with a population of about 500. It is located 25 miles west of Beaumont and 60 miles east of Houston on Highway 90. Its racial makeup includes Hispanic, African American, Caucasian, and Asian families. The ethnicity of the school has changed over the years, but the school has managed to maintain academic success year after year.

Devers ISD began as a first through twelfth grade campus until the closure of the high school in the 1949-1950 school year. Devers ISD remains a pre-K through eighth grade district. Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade have one teacher per grade level. Sixth through eighth have four core subject teachers plus technology. Upon graduation from the eighth grade, students may choose to attend the high school of their choice. The majority of our students go to Liberty or Hull-Daisetta High School.

Devers has historically been an agricultural community offering numerous jobs in the rice, soybean, and cattle industry. Due to its proximity to several large refineries, many Devers citizens are employed by oil and gas companies.

Many people have stepped into the Devers gym and remarked on how much it reminds them of the gym in Hoosiers. This is fitting because the trophies and banners abound attesting to the fact that Devers ISD has a rich tradition of competing in cross country, volleyball, basketball and track. However, it is not simply athletics that make Devers ISD stand out, but academics. From pre-K to eighth grade, the faculty and staff have high expectations for all students. Our school board has made student success a priority.

Devers ISD maintains a legacy of traditions and milestones. A favorite long-standing tradition is the annual eighth grade trip. Each year, the eighth grade class takes a weekend long trip to Austin and San Antonio. This trip includes a guided tour of the Texas State Capitol where they have the opportunity to meet with our District 18 legislative representative. While in San Antonio, the students tour the Alamo. This affords many of our students an opportunity they would not experience otherwise.

Our eighth graders have a full graduation ceremony complete with cap and gown. Every year the speaker is a former Devers ISD graduate that is successful in their chosen career and is an exemplary role model for the graduates. The valedictorian and salutatorian each give a commencement address. Prior to graduation, all former Devers ISD students who are graduating from high school are invited to come for the Parade of Graduates. This is when they arrive in their respective caps and gowns to walk the halls where they are greeted and applauded by teachers and students.

Other traditions shared by students include See You at the Pole, Etiquette Luncheon, Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, Grandparents for Lunch, Tiger Brown Bag Food Drive for local food pantries, Jump Rope for Heart, Relay for Life, Fall Field Day, Earth Day Celebration, Tiger Water Park, and Flags for Veterans.

There is no 'one size fits all' when making curriculum choices. A wide variety of instructional materials are used by teachers to address key concepts. Key strategies used within the school to encourage all students' development are many. The curriculum used in the district follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Teachers and support staff set high expectations for all students with additional programs and incentives that allow the students to work up to a grade level ahead. There is significant emphasis on reading comprehension and math. Our technology department and library are vital in facilitating the overall success of our students. The library here is a 'revolving door' for all students as they are allowed constant access.

In 2019, Devers ISD introduced a 3-year pilot plan for a 4-day school week supported by parents, students, staff and the school board. We have seen benefits academically, better attendance for students and staff, and financial savings for the district. According to Schooldigger.com, we are currently ranked the 5th District in the State of Texas.

Essential to our student success is our support staff. This includes the bus drivers, campus secretary,

cafeteria staff, custodial staff, maintenance, business manager, tax assessor-collector, and clinic assistant. These individuals are part of the Devers ISD family and provide indispensable assistance when caring for our students, staff and facility.

The teachers in our district offer expertise in their respective fields. Average years of service is 16. They are very protective and nurturing to their students. The class sizes they maintain enable them to address the needs academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally of all students. The small class size allows the opportunity for teachers and students to develop relationships and bonds. This is extremely beneficial to the overall success of our students.

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

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

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

Devers ISD builds its course content, scope, and sequence in an effort to achieve mastery of the TEKS as well as the state mandated State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing requirements. Each teacher is given the freedom to cover those skills in any order and pace that best serves the students in the classroom. This flexibility allows the instructor to spend more time than allowed on the scope and sequence if any unexpected challenges to mastery should arise. Teachers at all levels have time scheduled each day to conduct tutorials for students needing extra support. This includes small groups as well as one-on-one instruction. In addition, Devers ISD institutes weekly challenge classes with emphasis on problem-based learning for high achieving students. These challenges are product driven. A product is created to successfully and efficiently serve a function. Every effort is made in all grade levels to accommodate differentiated instructional methods and technology based assignments. All learning modalities are considered when planning instruction. Instructional staff constantly use meaningful assessments to check for mastery of all skills. This can be both oral and written assessments. Assessments can also be done with a formal grading rubric or an informal individual assessment to check for understanding. These include, but are not limited, to unit tests and benchmark exams. When our district shifted our instructional calendar to a four-day school week, all staff were able to adapt the curriculum accordingly. At that time, we also transitioned to nine week grading periods instead of 6 week periods. This gives more time for intervention in a grading period. With careful consideration by teachers and administration, the transition was seamless. Our staff and students continued to meet and exceed the high expectations held by all Devers ISD teachers, students, and parents.

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

Reading is an extremely highly-valued skill throughout the district. Through Accelerated Reader (AR), the students are exposed to different levels of vocabulary, literary devices and genres. The students understand that their Accelerated Reading goal is not optional. The AR program is used in K-8th grade, so the joy of reading is learned at an early age. In addition to providing sustained silent reading (SSR) time, novels are read with the entire class, and higher level questioning and projects are incorporated into these units throughout the year.

Additionally, instructional, subject specific magazines provide connections to real-world happenings, which assists the students in gaining an understanding of life outside of the school setting. In 8th grade, the students take a field trip to the Houston Holocaust Museum, after learning about the Holocaust. This trip is valuable to reinforce the point that racism has no place in the students' lives. They also learn tolerance of others, which is in great need for the outside world.

Fortunately, each student has access to technology. The use of Chromebooks is beneficial in many ways. Through purchased, and complimentary subscriptions to various educational programs, students are able to be challenged at their own individual level, and work at their own speed. This greatly aids in differentiating instruction for those who are in need. Technology is used every day in one way or another. Lesson Farm is a great program that allows students to work on their own level, and win games once they accomplish the skill. It is TEKS coordinated, so that it can be used to reinforce a lesson and give extra practice. The students enjoy the reward that is immediately offered after the assignment is completed. This program is also accessible on all devices.

Communication between teachers across the grade levels is an integral aspect of the success of the curriculum. Devers ISD teachers consult one another on their particular subject, as well as suggested techniques to reach students. With all teachers, primarily, using the same educational tools, online and consumable materials, the students are familiar with the expectations in the classroom. Therefore, a lot of

time does not have to be spent on directions, but can focus on the learning objectives. The program, CommonLit, which is free to use, has been extremely beneficial in language arts classes. The students read interesting passages, poems and short stories and then answer through an online educational platform. Both of these programs are great for virtual use, as well as in the classroom.

Most importantly, the small number of students per grade/classroom enables the ability to move at a faster pace than larger districts. We have also shifted our school year to four days a week, instead of the typical five days. This change has reduced our absences in a tremendous way. Therefore, students are not having to get caught up on work that they missed while not in school. Also, most importantly, both the teachers and students, have a fresh attitude towards school and work.

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

The math curriculum is addressed with an initial focus on grade appropriate computations, algorithms, and numerical reasoning. The curriculum also includes skills related to geometry, spatial reasoning, measurement and financial literacy with an emphasis on problem solving and real world applications of those skills. We choose to approach our math instruction in this way because problem solving and logical reasoning in daily math instruction requires students to employ higher order thinking skills which can improve academic achievement in all core subjects. Foundational skills are acquired individually according to the scope and sequence, while previous skills are spiraled continuously through independent warm-up assignments, cooperative learning games, puzzles, and projects. Student engagement and civil learning are addressed by a classroom economy, positive reinforcement, and classroom management system. Elementary students are given online bank accounts and a monthly classroom job. They earn income by completing their job duties and can earn bonuses for academic achievement and good behavior. In addition, they are required to pay monthly expenses while trying to accumulate and save money. They constantly monitor their account ledger knowing that they will be able to use their savings to purchase items at the end of the year auction.

At the junior high level, several different types of curriculum are utilized to aid the students in understanding each skill required for them to be successful. A combination of different online programs foster positive competition while also reinforcing the state guidelines. Each week students must get 60 questions correct in order to get a mark for the week in the online math program. At the end of the nine-week period, there is a drawing for students that completed the assignment, and the winner is awarded a prize. Our online math curriculum is also supplemented with a workbook. Specific assignments are generated and created for students based on daily performance. The combination of the online site and workbook ensures comprehension and understanding. After the benchmark math exam is completed, an individual plan for each student is created, according to the specific questions missed. A generated list of skills is compiled from the questions and then used to find corresponding practice using an online program centered on learning core subjects. This method is to ensure that students have mastered each skill before the end of the year. The students retain the same teacher for all three years in junior high; therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of each student are consistently evaluated, assessed and modified. Our school's differentiated approach leads to success.

Individual skills are assessed for mastery with classroom assessments from multiple sources. In addition, we give a mock STAAR test six weeks before the state mandated assessment in May. The results of these assessments allow us to determine the students in need of intervention, and the skills that have not yet been mastered. These students are then scheduled for tutorials before, during, and after school. These skills will also be reinforced through targeted instruction with immediate feedback on online programs.

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

The science curriculum is vertically aligned and in accordance with the TEKS. We seek to create a challenging learning environment that encourages high expectations for success through differentiated instruction that is developmentally appropriate. In lieu of one curriculum, our approach is to incorporate multiple methods of teaching and/or strategies to promote high standards of learning and academic excellence for all students. For example, we incorporate the Edusmart video program to introduce science concepts that integrate a connection to real-world experiences and continue with Stemscores as the primary

instructional component. The incorporation of the 5 E model to promote collaborative, differentiated, active learning and critical thinking to investigate and understand new concepts is essential to understanding. Hands-on learning and small group interaction is the key to mastering complex science concepts; therefore, inquiry-based learning that nurtures student curiosity is the key to success. For English Language Learners (ELL) students, incorporating visual vocabulary with identifiable and relatable meaning is essential. Throughout the year, formative assessments are given and data is accumulated to monitor and assess student understanding. To ensure student achievement, we closely evaluate student progress both informally and formally, adjust to students' needs, and provide additional support. The online personalized program assists in the support of additional assistance of struggling students by providing personalized learning goals. In order to foster career readiness, we implement projects and challenges that are student-directed in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of multidisciplinary concepts. We encourage problem-solving among peers and encourage communication with peers that will lead to deeper conversations that will develop skills that will be required in college/careers. Lastly, the 'village mentality' of learning is vital to the success of students. Devers ISD works cohesively to promote and maintain success in and out of the class.

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

At Devers ISD, the social studies focus is how we got to where we are today. We use cause and effect to explain to students the course of events from our past history. Textbooks and online pieces help students understand critical concepts about World History, Texas History and U.S. History. The curriculum is closely aligned with the TEKS for every lesson, activity, video, etc. We discuss the U.S. Constitution, civic values and responsibilities, our heritage, our beliefs, and the political process that runs our country. Every four years, we have a mock presidential election that the students participate in, starting by filling out a voter registration card and ending with putting their filled-in ballot in the ballot box. Students also create timelines throughout the year to demonstrate their understanding of events that shaped our world.

Students gain knowledge of past events, current events, important people's lives, holidays, and traditions through the use of Scholastic News and Studies Weekly. Both of these sources provide videos, magazines, and hands-on activities for students. History questions are presented in a variety of ways for the students to answer. Short answer and multiple choice questions are used to check for understanding. These resources also provide on-and-above grade level vocabulary words and games that are aligned with the TEKS. Students also learn about communities and cultures near and far. Students love to share with classmates if they have traveled somewhere during breaks, during the school year, or during the summer. Show-and-tell allows students to bring items that they got during a trip and share the experience with their friends. Students explore what it is like to live in a different place and in a different part of the world. Our students are very interested in the world around them. They love to ask questions and discover what is outside of the small town of Devers.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

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

Devers pre-Kindergarten curriculum literally goes from A to Z. It introduces social development, communication, handwriting, math, science, and social studies. We incorporate several different curricula to ensure that each student is exposed to the basic foundation needed for pre-K. Lessons are filled with activities that are fun, engaging, and highly effective. Each school year brings a new set of challenges, being flexible benefits everyone, involved. If more days are needed for a particular skill, we are given the extra time. We have 10 different centers, and 8 of them are student led. Students are given the chance to have imaginary play time to experience multi-sensory levels of learning. We also have 2 centers where students have a game to play with the teacher and a few peers to assure play is purposeful. Pre-Kindergarten is directly in line with kindergarten - 3rd grade. The teachers work together to provide seamless transitions from grade to grade. By using the pre-Kindergarten guidelines, students are ready to meet the expectations and TEKS for kindergarten. The preparation and foundation they receive from attending a full day pre-K program is priceless. In addition to academics, students are taught basic rules, how to line up, respect for

personal space, and how to behave in a school setting. At the end of each school year, discussions are held to find ways to improve and better equip our students for kindergarten and beyond. Students who attend Devers pre-Kindergarten are ready for kindergarten. At school during the pandemic, we were more focused on the students social and emotional well-being. We were in constant contact with parents to ensure their child was getting exactly what was needed; be it an extra snack, a bottle of water, extra help on an assignment, or someone to just listen.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

### Arts

Devers ISD has a talented group of student artists. Each grade attends art class one day a week. Specific TEK-related projects are assigned that allow students to use their creativity. Each class studies the color wheel and creates an art piece. Kindergarten students use finger-paint on painter's boards to mix primary and secondary colors. Eighth-grade students use higher-level thinking skills to create a bike where the handlebars look proportionate and the paints mixed correspond to the color wheel. Each student is encouraged to develop the skills needed while building up their confidence.

Elementary students receive music enrichment one class a week. Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade play musical games and sing songs while learning basics. For example, kindergarteners sing nursery rhymes using five different voices. Third graders learn to read and write music using rhythmic patterns. Each music class has a corresponding TEK-related game or cartoon.

### Physical Education / Health / Nutrition

Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade have 120 minutes of physical education while 6th through 8th grade have 180 minutes per our 4-day school week and guidelines of the state. All classes are taught by a qualified physical education teacher with small class sizes, proper equipment, great facilities, and a self-made curriculum that follows the TEKS guidelines.

The goal of health education is to build student knowledge on how to maintain and improve social, physical, and mental health. Incorporated in the class is an effort to instill positive behavior towards others and motivate students to make a difference in the lives around them.

Our goal is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthy physical activity by providing fun, age-appropriate games that require movement. Students also participate in the Kids' Heart Challenge promoted by the American Heart Association. During this time, they get moving with running challenges and learn about keeping their hearts and brains healthy, while also helping others with fundraising.

### Technology / Library / Media

Beginning with pre-Kindergarten, all students through fifth grade have a 55-minute scheduled technology period each week. Pre-Kindergarten and kindergarten learn basic computer skills and practice mouse usage. First through fifth grades work on home row and typing practice. Sixth, seventh and eighth grade students attend technology each of our 4-day school week. The skills they learn include computer terminology, keyboarding, word processing, and desktop publishing.

The school is equipped with 1:1 student devices. Teachers incorporate an online educational platform to communicate with students and parents, assign classwork, and online assessments. Licensed student accounts are available in all core subjects. Teachers have access to free and paid online assistance. Our fifth grade classroom has a Promethean board and Skype capabilities.

All Devers ISD students and teachers have access to a media center which includes library opportunities and research on desktop computers. Our online Follett system is used to check books in and out. Students can complete AR reading quizzes, STAAR assessments and search online for a book.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

Devers ISD strives to help every individual student succeed. We provide supplemental instruction for students who perform below grade level in the classroom, in small group settings, and individualized direction. The focus on academic gaps is specific to students' needs. Tutorial time is offered during a school day with the student's assigned teacher as well as other help from certified educators depending on the student's grade level. One day a week, there is a Challenge Hour provided for pre-Kindergarten students who need extra support in the way of small group instruction. Kindergarten through 2nd grade have scheduled pull-out time during a school day, and 3rd through 8th grade, have extra hours apart from a full classroom setting. The extra time given allows students the opportunity to grasp a concept that might be difficult to understand, make up for time missed from class instruction, or follow-up on a lesson that the student struggled with in the classroom. Online assignments and assessments provide immediate feedback for teachers to observe areas in the current lesson that need more attention for certain students without having to reteach a concept to the entire class. During a brain break hour, struggling students are given a chance to have further individualized instruction with the classroom teacher. All core academic concepts are subject to tutorial time with a special emphasis on reading, writing, math, spelling and phonics. Purchased testing programs such as CLI Engage and Renaissance STAR give teachers and parents knowledge of where their child registers on a scale compared to other students in the same grade. We also provide an opportunity for students to meet with a certified individual that assists with reading and other core subject area assignments on a needed basis throughout the school day.

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

Devers ISD has some exceptional students that perform above-grade level standards. This is apparent across all grade levels and across all subject areas. Students have been seen to exhibit higher level thinking skills in science, math and reading. Three times a year, beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year, students complete an online reading and math assessments. Over a multitude of grade levels, students show reading comprehension skills well above their own grade level. Teachers have incorporated project-based learning in their classrooms. Students choose a topic they are passionate about which is not included in their current grade level curriculum. The individual student studies, researches, creates and presents the topic to the class as a student-led lesson. This has occurred on multiple occasions. For example, a third student chose to learn more about DNA which is not a part of the state-based curriculum for that age group. Challenge hour is also offered for kindergarten through 4th grade where students are engaged in a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) project on a weekly basis. These projects cover a wide variety of fine motor skills, science terminology, creative assembly, and writing ability. Last year, a select group of third and fourth grade students designed and composed a published book about United States Presidents. The students were instructed to research, write a summary, and create a depiction of their selected candidate. A few chosen students were also assigned to sketch an image for the cover of the hard-bound published book. Teachers provide a genius hour that also gives students the opportunity to tap into those creative juices and see what they can design. Materials are provided from the school or brought from home to create projects.

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

At Devers ISD, we employ highly qualified teachers that do an exceptional job providing a positive learning environments, and supporting all special education students. Our teachers utilize research-based instructional strategies that allow every student to have the same educational opportunities in a least restrictive environment. These specific strategies are effective, simple, and comprehensible for our special education population. We provide differentiated and explicit instruction that caters to each individual's unique learning differences and skills. Another important way of making sure that we are able to truly reach each student's individual needs is following their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Based on their IEP, we ensure that we are providing the appropriate modifications and accommodations necessary.

Additionally, we understand the importance of teamwork, collaboration, and co-teaching amongst our teachers. Our teachers work closely together to verify that our implementation of instruction is consistent,

and our expectations are the same for all of our special education students across the district. One way of confirming this is by including the general education teacher, special education teacher, and the upcoming general education teacher in the student's Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meeting. In these ARD meetings, we discuss the student's current Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) and academic, behavioral or social goals. Also, their PLAAFP helps us to develop a tailored individual educational plan that is most suitable for their academic or behavioral needs. From the PLAAFP, we want to make certain that we utilize the appropriate assistive technology, visual, and sensory supports the student needs in order for them to be successful in and out of the classroom. We understand the importance of making sure that these students have access to the general education curriculum that is suitable for their educational and performance level needs. This is how our district meets and supports the needs of our special education students.

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

At Devers ISD, we fully understand the importance of supporting the English Language Learners (ELL) in an enriched and positive learning environment. Our ELL students are given an enriched education integrated within our mainstream classrooms. This method allows them to be fully immersed in the English language, while still providing the appropriate language support. We always want to make sure that the ELL student is guaranteed full academic and language support with all of their classes and teachers. Our instructional strategies used are research based and have always been extremely effective.

Moreover, one way that we can ensure our strategies are effective within the classroom is by making sure our teachers are English as a Second Language (ESL) certified. Our teachers are proficient in the English language, and strive to help ELL students acquire the English language in the most supportive and appropriate methods possible. Language supports include English dictionaries, differentiated instruction, oral administration on tests per level of support needed, literacy development, and teachers highlighting the proper language objectives for ELL students in all content areas. Likewise, it is very important to utilize group work in class for an ultimate learning and engaging experience. An effective method is peer to peer learning. The ELL student works with native English learners. This allows for conversational practice, as well as building their academic vocabulary. This also gives them an opportunity to practice the English language with their peers in a more relaxed environment.

Furthermore, our teachers understand how essential it is for us to modify our speech while providing instruction. By speaking in a clear and slower tone. We allow extra time for thinking and processing. We simplify our directions. We pair our classroom instruction with visual aids, gestures, and teacher modeling. This is how our school district meets the needs of our ELL students.

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

There are many reasons a student is considered 'at risk.' Ultimately, it is in the hands of the teacher to help the student succeed. There are several ways we achieve this at Devers ISD.

First of all, we build relationships with our students. What works for one student does not always work for another. Knowing how to serve the student not only puts learning on their level, it also shows the student that we care. When a student sees that you care, it makes learning more important to them. Secondly, we must identify the student's strengths and build on them. If they have a need, meet it. For example, if a student does not have a parent to help them study spelling words at home, be that parent at school.

Thirdly, find time to work with the student one-on-one. Whether you have to give up your conference period or even your lunch, find the time as soon as you recognize a problem. Accommodations do not have to be for an entire school year. Make a timeline of how to wean the student off of their accommodations. This will help teach them independence. In addition to working with the student, teachers must communicate with their parents. It is important to remember that parents are not the enemy. Although they may not be willing to help or even support you, let them know what is being done at school for their child. Use the strengths that have been found in their child to approach the situation. Document all that is being done and everything that was discussed.

Finally, do not give up on your 'at risk' students. They need you and you can make a difference. Make the most of your time with them at school. For some, you may be the only positive influence they have in their life.

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

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

Devers ISD has high expectations for students beyond state mandated grade level standards. The staff uses many instructional methods to ensure that each student is successful. Instruction is differentiated in all curriculum areas so that our instruction can be as student specific as possible. In grades pre-Kindergarten through 5th, students are taught in self-contained classrooms. This serves as a huge benefit for the task of differentiating instruction. The students spend their entire instructional day with a teacher that knows their skill level. Teachers have the flexibility to adjust their instructional minutes based on student's needs instead of a bell schedule. Formal and informal assessments are used to determine areas of strength and weaknesses. Self-contained classrooms also allow the teacher to build relationships with students and parents. Teachers have a small group tutorial period built into their daily schedule as well as a gifted and talented pull out program. Peer tutoring is a strategy used to help our ESL students. Students at all grade levels regularly attend technology class, and teachers routinely use technology in their daily instruction. In grades 3-5, students are given an online bank account as a positive reinforcement and classroom management system. They earn income by completing their assigned classroom job duties and can earn bonuses for academic achievement and good behavior. In addition, they are required to pay monthly expenses while trying to accumulate and save money. They constantly monitor their account ledger knowing that they will be able to use their savings to purchase items at the end of the year auction. This classroom economy system helps address the need for students to acquire real world skills. This activity also connects the College Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) component that helps prepare students for life after graduation.

Classroom conversations are targeted on future goals and plans. These include graduating from high school, going to college, entering the workforce, or enlisting in the military. Graduating from high school is the main focus - Commit to Graduate (C2G). The middle school hallway has 42 college flags with each teacher's name hung above their alma mater. At the end of the year, we host a Parade of the Graduates where we invite the high school seniors that graduated from Devers in the 8th grade to come back and walk the halls in their senior caps and gowns. It is a small way that we can celebrate and recognize their accomplishments from high school.

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

Devers ISD prides itself in being one of the most successful districts in Liberty County. We welcome opportunities to work with our families and community members to ensure student success and school improvement. Community members are always welcome at our school and we need and appreciate their continued support. Our small school district gives us the opportunity to personalize and build strong relationships between our teachers and our students. Using a challenging and relevant curriculum with performance-based instruction allows for student growth. The collaboration among teachers helps instruction to be target-focused. We encourage our families to build a relationship with our teachers and administrators. We want parents to feel comfortable about having a conversation about their child's education. We encourage regular parent conferences which helps us to know each student and their family better.

With a 4-day school week, attendance is a top priority for our district, and this message is conveyed to our parents and students. Two-way communication is key. Having a relationship with parents only helps the communication process. Keeping an open line of communication allows our families to come directly to us if they have a question or concern. Working together is the best way we can answer questions and discuss any concern they may have.

Parents are regularly updated through our social media accounts, text messages, group messages, student agenda, monthly calendar, etc.

Parents, grandparents and the community are welcome at our school for special occasions: breakfast and lunch, Book Fair, Field Day, End of the Year Awards Programs, Graduation, and Homecoming Week.

We have incentive and reward programs for students who have perfect attendance, honor roll, end of year subject awards, reading goals met for nine weeks, Kids' Heart Challenge, Book Club, 100-point Reading Club, and University Interscholastic League (UIL) competition.

We encourage our alumni to visit and share their success stories with students. Each year, a former student is selected as the guest speaker for graduation. School board members come to the school throughout the year so they are fully aware of what is happening at our school. We support our local businesses as much as possible. For example, our perfect attendance students are transported to one of the local restaurants for their reward celebration each nine-weeks. We strongly believe that our school is the heartbeat, and the center of our small community. We hope to continue to make everyone involved with Devers ISD proud of the Tigers!

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

Devers ISD prides itself in providing support for all - students, parents, and staff, in all aspects of the school environment. This philosophy has been key to our success.

Staff development is strategically planned based on accumulated data, formal assessments, STAAR results, academic gains or losses by students and student groups. Staff development emphasis changes based on weaknesses in overall student performance in subject specific areas. Staff development should be beneficial and provide an opportunity for educators to improve their expertise.

When faced with the challenge of delivering distance-learning instruction to all students during COVID-19, doing what was best for students always drove our decisions. Parent meetings were held to ensure our parents were familiar with the distant-learning expectations.

With technology in hand and administrative support, teachers rose to the occasion and delivered high quality lessons for the small number who chose to learn in a distance-learning environment. Students in distance-learning environments were provided with internet access, if needed, and an individual device to access the assignments.

Many teachers were new to the technology world of teaching which caused some anxiety. They were now tasked with providing both in-person learning and distance-learning at the same time. We utilized an online educational platform to post lessons and remote video conference to provide direct teaching opportunities, and to post video lessons for student access. Teachers were able to choose the appropriate platform for their lessons and activities based upon the TEK and the concept to be taught. Being flexible was certainly key and helped with continued teacher autonomy and relieved some anxiety over the dual teaching role they now faced.

To help support teachers with technology and provide instruction through distance learning, the district provided access to online training sessions from our region service centers. As a teaching staff, we also worked together to help those who struggled in the beginning and to make sure we continued to provide the best instructional platform to those learning remotely.

Our administrative staff provides positive praise daily and reminds the staff of their importance to student success and the success of our district. Monthly treats are provided, mainly in the form of chocolate, as well as an End of Year Staff Field Trip.

The challenges faced by the teachers, students, and parents during COVID-19 was unprecedented. However, the teachers ultimately made the difference for our students in the way they were able to successfully go between in-person learning and distance-learning.

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

The ultimate success or failure of a school district lies with the teachers in the classroom. They are truly the wheels on the bus. They must have the ability to build relationships, to make learning fun, be self-motivated, and have a sincere love for children. It would be hard to think that the school could be successful at anything, especially academics without these characteristics. Building relationships with students is so important, but with parents, also. Parent conferences are scheduled throughout the year to inform them of their child's strengths /weaknesses, and gains. Building student relationships allows the teachers to build trust with their students – what they like, what they don't like, their goals, their heroes, what inspires them, and what motivates them. Great schools are not just led by the administration, but by teachers, too. In great schools, everyone owns the vision, and everyone must be on a daily mission. There is always somebody learning how to be an adult by watching you. So our example must be great every day.

Hiring teachers with the characteristics listed above should be the number one priority for every school district, because school/student success begins there. Leadership must assure that the teachers in the classrooms are able to maximize their instruction time to the fullest. Leadership must have a positive attitude/energy and be willing to bend over backwards to support their teachers in every way. They must also have the courage to rock the boat or jump out of the box, while always considering what is best for the teachers/staff, students, parents, community, and district. As a leader, one must control their attitude, body language, and how you talk with teachers/staff. Leaders cannot be energy vampires. Leaders must also add value to people's lives, and show them you care, encourage them, and inspire them.

Open communication and an open-door policy with administration allows teachers and staff to freely ask questions, share concerns or ideas about policies, procedures, instructional materials, and student achievement. Staff meetings and grade level meetings also provide a time to discuss what is working, what is not working, and ways we can improve as an administrator, a teacher, a classroom, a grade level, and a district.

COVID-19 has been the biggest and most difficult challenge as an administrator. Our focus changed from academic growth/achievement for each student to keeping the school open safely, providing meals, addressing student insecurities, and protecting the health and well-being of students, staff, and parents.

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

While not very diverse, the community of Devers has been and continues to be welcoming, supportive and encouraging with regard to cultural awareness and equity. This is achieved through the use of curriculum, as well as staff and community support.

Our overall approach to leading students in cultural awareness is accomplished through a specifically chosen curriculum that is culturally diverse. Teachers' lessons allow the students ample opportunity to discuss current events and social movements. Grade level reading magazines provide articles that discuss current issues. This enables teachers to lead conversations about gender, racial and cultural differences. Each issue promotes valuable conversation and acceptance of differing viewpoints, treating others kindly, and being fair. Our weekly news resources include articles about current events and topics. They allow teachers to assist students in learning about different cultures and points of view. Students are given opportunities to discuss and debate issues they wouldn't normally experience. This is also beneficial to the students and the impact is seen in the manner with which a small school welcomes new students. Students enjoy learning about the history and background of new students. They treat them with respect, and welcome them into the school family. The social studies curriculum also addresses current events and cultural celebrations which leads to incredible conversations about unique lifestyles and communities around the world.

Another way that Devers ISD demonstrates inclusivity is through STEM activities. Some students are given opportunities through the enrichment program, called Challenge. The Challenge program is generally for Gifted and Talented (GT) students. They engage in ongoing projects and challenges. Students of all races, genders, and abilities have the opportunity to explore curiosities that are of interest to them through project-based learning and classroom activities. Students are challenged to participate in lessons that encourage teamwork through problem solving. One example would be using escape activities as a review of curriculum which promotes team building and collaboration. All of these contribute to the inclusivity and strength of

our student population.

As for the school community of Devers, they have a rich history of African American and Hispanic ethnic groups, as well as serving a large low socio-economic population. Treating students, staff and parents with respect and equality is extremely important. Parents teach their children similar shared values with regard to inclusion of differences. Community support through sports, school activities, and school policies continue to allow teachers and staff to demonstrate the importance of acceptance of all students and families.

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

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The one word that would effectively describe Devers Independent School District's reason for our continued student success would be expectations. High expectations from day one of pre-Kindergarten. In 2019, we implemented a 4-day school week that has been unbelievable for our students, teachers, staff and parents. Going from a five-day school week to a 4-day school week has made us even more aware of the importance of expectations.

These expectations begin by setting up the guidelines for students regarding behavior, instruction time, at home assignments and at school assignments, projects, daily reading time, etc. Once these guidelines have been established, teachers begin building relationships with their students and their parents. Through these relationships, students know that we truly care about them, believe in them, and will do everything possible to help them achieve their potential. The teachers also know what their students like, and what they don't like, and what inspires and motivates them.

We are also able to have effective 2-way communication with parents about concerns, student strengths, and student/parent expectations. High expectations are not just for our students, but for our staff, also. Accountability is expected for everyone. We have self-contained classroom settings through fifth grade, so it is no secret to anyone who a student had for second grade math, for instance. Student success is not defined by the grade curriculum that is taught, but reaches much farther than that – life lessons. We hope to also instill a love for learning in all of our students. Just like students, the teachers need to feel needed and appreciated for the job they do every day in their classroom. Without them, we would have very little student success, if any. The success of our students is a matter of personal pride for every faculty member. We hold our students to a high standard and accept no less from ourselves. When thinking about student success, it is important to consider the total year's success with student growth/achievement and not just the end of year STAAR results for a student. The STAAR results do not define our students, teachers or district. We are much more than the results of a single test administered on a given day. We are in the character building business. Building strong characters, future productive citizens, one student at a time – academically, emotionally and socially. Remember it takes a village!