

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

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

School Mailing Address 240 West Bearkat Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Garden City State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79739-0001

County Glasscock County

Telephone (432) 242-1022 Fax (432) 354-2503

Web site/URL https://www.gckats.net E-mail beubanks@gckats.net

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. Ben Eubanks E-mail beubanks@gckats.net  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Glasscock County Independent School District Tel. (432) 242-1022

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. Doug Jost  
(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
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 2 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	6	9	15
1	13	11	24
2	9	13	22
3	8	6	14
4	11	14	25
5	12	7	19
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	69	69	138

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 40.7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 59.3 % White
  - 0 % 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: 4%

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	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	138
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

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

Spanish

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

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

Total number students who qualify: 36

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 20 %  
27 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism                  | <u>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>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>10</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>17</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
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.	14
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	4
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

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

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	99%	99%	98%	97%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

<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.

Achieving Excellence Together.

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

[https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/512?filename=FB\(LEGAL\).html&title=EQUAL%20EDUCATIONAL%20OPPORTUNITY&subtitle=](https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Download/512?filename=FB(LEGAL).html&title=EQUAL%20EDUCATIONAL%20OPPORTUNITY&subtitle=)

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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“The soil is the great connector of lives,” states Wendell Barry in his book *The Unsettling of America*. Certainly, in this small rural community and at Garden City Elementary (GCE), connection to the land brings us together.

Garden City is a small town of 500 people and serves as the county seat and only town in Glasscock County with a population of 1500. An independent spirit was a vital part of the establishment of the county in 1887, when the county was created with the first settlements of ranchers who arrived to find no water and dug the first wells by hand. The county was named after George W Glasscock, a soldier in the Texas Revolution, who traveled to West Texas as a surveyor facing harsh conditions, including Indian raids on his party.

Oil hit in 1926 with the Settles well in the Northeast part of the county. The oil and gas industry grew to be a substantial part of the way of life. Today, the county produces 3.3 million barrels of oil and ranks 27 nationally in most barrels produced.

In 1939, Garden City School was built to consolidate several one-teacher classrooms and serve all children of Glasscock County. The school that stands today, known as Glasscock County Independent School District (GCISD), serves some 300 students, with many traveling over thirty miles to get to school every day. GCISD consists of pre-K through twelfth grade students in a U-shaped building, where elementary students are taught on one side of the building, before crossing the “divide” to join the high school as sixth graders.

After World War II, more families arrived to tame the pastures and create farmland for growing cotton. In 1948, Father Albrecht bought a small army barrack to convert to a Catholic Church, which helped create the community of St. Lawrence, located fifteen miles south of Garden City. The Glasscock County Coop was added in 1969 and produced around 5000-bales. This year, the Coop processed over 130,000 bales and ranks high among world leaders.

Students come from all backgrounds to attend Garden City Elementary, where they find a safe environment to learn. The school is equipped with a fob system to enter the school and classrooms. Cameras are mounted around the halls and exterior of the campus. The Sheriff’s department deals with little to no crime, and those values are reflected in the school system with no drug or gang activity and few discipline referrals. The students reflect the hard work ethic of their parents and come to school knowing they will grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

Garden City Elementary has a strong focus on students’ academics, with all staff working together. The GCE Mission Statement, “Achieving Excellence Together” isn’t just words. They are the foundation of all academic programs. The campus employs highly qualified teachers using a curriculum that is researched based and chosen to fit the needs of our students. Having all students excel creates high expectations for teachers and students. To help reach those expectations, the school employs specialists, including English as a Second Language Director, Licensed Dyslexia Teacher, Counselor, and a Special Education Director. In addition, a partnership exists with 8720 Coop to provide services such as speech, counseling, and diagnostic evaluations. GCE removes or minimizes any obstacle to academic success by providing year-round help for any student. This help includes tutorials and Response to Intervention five days a week. Students are also challenged to go above and beyond in activities, such as a gifted and talented program run by a certified teacher. Students can also participate in academic contests, stock shows, and 4-H.

Achieving excellence includes social, cultural, and emotional education. The counselor teaches lessons on respect, bullying, and acceptance. The campus is connected to the high school, so Bearkat Spirit is a big part of the students’ socialization. On Football Friday, the elementary students are met by the football players and cheerleaders to be escorted to breakfast. School pride is seen in pep rallies, Homecoming traditions, and summer athletic camps, to name a few.

The history and connection to the land are also taught in unique ways at Garden City Elementary. Second

graders have a unit on horses, cowboys, and landscape that culminates in a rodeo. Each student and their cardboard “horse” are introduced to walk down the hall on the way to competing in rodeo events held for the public in the gym. The third grade uses an Agriculture in the Classroom program to learn about crops and livestock. Classes take trips to the Petroleum Museum to understand the industry so many depend on. Each grade level creates units to celebrate the local history. Parents heavily support all these events. The people brought together by the soil have created a special community and an elementary school in which everyone achieves together.

## **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:**

Garden City Elementary prides itself on the ability to know each child and meet their individual needs. The vision of our campus is to provide an exemplary education that encourages each student to reach their potential, sets the appropriate expectations for all students, and reflects the real-world knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school prepared for college or enter the workforce. The school has embraced the same expectations for rigorous and relevant curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all academic areas.

It is the philosophy of the school that our instructional practices are grounded in strong research and data. Highly qualified teachers teach the curriculum with a depth of complexity and maintain fidelity to educational programs. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) is the curricular foundation of GCE. The teaching staff must have a deep understanding of the structure and the student expectations at each grade level. Instructional Focus Documents (IFD) provide a targeted and specific focus for teachers to create productive, engaging lessons. All teachers use a year-at-a-glance (YAG) technique to ensure that all required essential knowledge and skills are covered every six weeks.

Staff recognizes that students are unique and diverse; therefore, instructional methods must be as well. Individual strategies are selected based on what the data reflects about each child. Teachers use strategies such as the Gradual Release Model, guided reading and math, and cooperative learning. A multisensory approach is used with students who are dyslexic or have reading difficulties. A wide variety of visuals are used to assist English language learners in the acquisition of vocabulary.

Computer-based programs are used to address reading, mathematical, science, and social studies education. GCE has implemented an effective student needs identifying system using formative and summative assessments, allowing teachers to target learning gaps quickly and intervene during small-group instruction in reading and math.

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

At Garden City Elementary, every content area is important, but reading is critical. GCE is committed to making sure every child has a solid foundation in literacy, as reading and comprehension promote and assist in all other curriculum areas. Teachers understand the importance of building lifelong readers. GCE teachers participate in various professional development opportunities to increase their knowledge and improve their instructional practices. English Language Arts/Reading (ELAR) is introduced in pre-Kindergarten (preK) and taught throughout elementary. Underlying foundational skills must be mastered by students to access the grade-level TEKS and become fluent, life-long readers.

Teachers are incredibly knowledgeable about the five main components of the reading process (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension). These educators understand that without this important literacy foundation, students will not reach their full potential as readers or master Texas standards. Concepts are spiraled throughout the year to cement ideas and help learners excel. Phonics, word work, shared reading, and journal writing help reading learners excel in the ELAR curriculum.

Students in grades kindergarten through fifth are assessed quarterly for independent and instructional reading levels. GCE has a robust library of both fiction and nonfiction leveled books, providing teachers with access to books that align with each student's reading level. The mix of relevant fiction and non-fiction literature provides students ample opportunity to practice and hone their reading skills. With more exposure to various genres, students become familiar with different writing styles. Students write about what they read, use mentor texts to enhance their writing skills, and emulate specific writing skills taught throughout

the lesson. Integrating writing with reading during these learning times is crucial.

GCE teachers supplement the state-adopted curriculum with various materials, including teacher-created materials as well as technology. Classrooms devote 90-120 minutes daily to literacy instruction, using this time to include one-on-one teaching and small group instruction. Each classroom is fortunate that the computer to student ratio is one-to-one to allow supplemental reading apps. Instructors incorporate guided reading, shared and independent reading, and word study into instruction. The principles behind the Science of Reading (SOR) are also employed. Phonics is essential for children to become successful readers, spellers, and writers in the early years of schooling and beyond. Teachers utilize explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, spelling, and fluency to supplement the reading curriculum in pre-K through second grade.

Classroom teachers use various assessments to guide instruction, from which critical data is disaggregated. For all primary grades, screeners are used to identify the causes of reading struggles, such as dyslexia. This group of students also take national standard-based assessments to track student growth as they progress through the school year and career. For third through fifth grades, benchmarks are also taken twice a year. Data from each assessment is disaggregated to identify students who could potentially need intervention. A trained interventionist provides forty-five minutes of daily literacy and mathematics for students who are not progressing at grade level. Teachers' use of weekly progress monitoring also provides data as a guide to identifying gaps and specific student needs.

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

Garden City primary grade teachers, pre-Kindergarten through second, use a math curriculum that aligns with the TEKS and is vertically aligned through to Algebra II. The curriculum uses visual models, student-centered activities, and problem-based learning. Using this model of instruction is essential for young math learners to create a deeper understanding of concepts and build a strong mathematical foundation. Teachers also integrate several different math computer programs to further enhance corresponding lessons. The students typically use the computer program twenty minutes per day to enrich and strengthen math fluency. Students regularly practice math facts and work in small groups with various types of manipulatives for hands-on learning. Teachers believe that through hands-on and engaging lessons, they can better provide students with conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and strategies that ultimately build self-confidence.

Math teachers in the third through fifth grade use various approaches including the guided math model, cumulative notebooks, and technology based. Using the guided math framework allows for some of the transfer of responsibility of learning from the teacher to the student. Placing the students into several collaborative small groups, teachers can reinforce several math skills which were previously taught, while the teacher is present to guide them. Another benefit of using the guided math/small group approach is teachers may integrate science, social studies, and/or reading into the different stations allowing the students a co-curriculum opportunity. Upper elementary also keep year-long math notebooks, in which the students note important math facts that will be used to study and polish before taking the state assessments at the end of the school year. Being a one-to-one computer campus allows instructors to take advantage of teaching students 21st-century skills while learning math. For example, fifth grade math students use their computers to answer questions for most of their lessons, which before would be paper copies. While this is not only better for the environment, using the computer daily reinforces computer skills that the students will need as Texas moved to an online platform for state assessments.

Students in fourth and fifth grades who seek an extra mathematical challenge can participate in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Number Sense competition. The GCE UIL Academic Team has won the district championship for six consecutive years, and the Number Sense team can be counted on for their exemplary results. These students have the privilege of receiving weekly instruction from our Junior High Number Sense coach. They are taught valuable tricks and strategies, which undoubtedly help our students learn critical math skills that can be used for real-world problem-solving. Students who make our GCE number sense team historically become part of our high school team, which are always contenders for the state championship.

Should any student struggle with math at any point of the year, GCE's Response to Intervention (RTI) Protocol can fluidly and effectively step in. A highly trained interventionist can quickly reteach and reinforce any troublesome math concept. The staff works together making sure all students can reach their full potential.

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

Garden City Elementary science teachers employ a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) based curriculum. Careers in the future will almost assuredly be centered around STEM fields. In teaching students at GCE using STEM concepts, the development of 21st-century skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and team collaboration are promoted.

The GCE STEM curriculum is aligned with TEKS and provides results-driven instruction complete with print and digital resources, and experiment kits. To support the STEM curriculum, GCE provides a fully furnished elementary science lab where students can use the knowledge gained in the classroom.

Students at GCE have the opportunity to participate in various classroom demonstrations and science-related field trips. For example, the third grade teachers partner with the local Extension Center to provide "Agriculture in the Classroom". The county extension agent trains high school students to teach third graders on topics such as seed growth, agricultural economics, and water conservation. The GCE third grade Farm Tour consists of a trip to the neighboring community of St. Lawrence, where students learn about the main agricultural goods produced in Glasscock County. The students learn about growing cotton and the production of livestock. Students visit a working cotton farm, see the harvesting equipment up close, and visit the local cotton gin to understand how the fiber is processed. A guided tour of one of the nation's largest cotton gins allows students to follow cotton from the field as it becomes fiber. The local game warden is on hand to answer questions, and several agricultural learning stations are set up for the students.

Students in fifth grade compete each year in the Glasscock County Soil, Water, and Conservation District's Poster Contest. The contest provides the opportunity for students to convey their thoughts about the conservation of soil, water, and the earth's natural resources. Winners from the local contest will advance to the state level.

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

At the forefront of the Garden City Elementary social studies curriculum are two weekly periodicals. Teachers use these standards-based online and consumable platforms to learn about the past and present history of Texas, the United States, and the world at every level. These resources provide thematic strands of civics, government, geography, economics, and history. They also provide virtual field trips to historical places throughout the United States. The lessons are intertwined with English Language Arts to provide an even more comprehensive co-curriculum.

In addition to the periodicals, students also experience a wide range of social studies topics through various class field trips throughout the year. In the spring term, each grade selects a class field trip with an emphasis on social studies. Many students and their families have direct ties to the oil and gas industry in the Permian Basin. The visit to the Petroleum Museum in Midland, Texas is relevant to all West Texas students as they learn about how the petroleum industry in this region impacts the world. They also learn about the origins of the Permian Basin and how discovery of oil changed the people, the landscape, and the future of this region in Texas. Students also travel to Fort Chadbourne in Bronte, Texas, where they learn about its role in Texas history. The museum guides teach the students how this fort was an integral part of the military, Native American, and even postal service history. Another group of GCE students travel to Angelo State University's Mayer Museum, where they explore the natural history of our region through dinosaur exhibits, interactive fossil games, and biological specimens. Additional field trip locations may include the Presidential Museum in Odessa, Texas, or the Commemorative Air Force Museum in Midland, Texas.

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

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

Glasscock County Independent School District offers a free, open enrollment, full-day pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) program. The curriculum implemented follows Texas pre-K guidelines, which are aligned to the TEKS, to ensure that all students entering kindergarten are adequately prepared for success in the primary grades. Teachers supplement the adopted curriculum with research-based activities that incorporate movement and development of social, emotional, communication, and technology.

Teachers lead instruction through the gradual release model to ensure comprehension. Throughout the school year, students cover letter and sound recognition, blending sounds, number recognition, comparing and contrasting, social and emotional development, and language communication. Progress is thoroughly monitored using a pre-K specific monitoring system that assesses a student's skills in letter recognition, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, math, science, social studies, and other components. Teachers also utilize daily observations conducted through one-on-one assessments, flashcards, learning stations, and homework. GCE pre-K teachers have an established goal of ninety percent of students beginning to read by the end of the school year.

Pre-K classrooms follow a one-device per student technology plan, with every student having an iPad for instructional purposes. Students use research-based computer programs and applications during technology time to emphasize phonics, fluency, literacy, and essential elements taught in the classroom. Pre-K teachers administer kindergarten readiness tests based on state and national assessments to ensure that their curriculum prepares students for future academic success. For students not meeting kindergarten readiness expectations, the campus interventionist begins the RTI process to help students reach grade-level readiness.

Historically, students who complete the pre-K program versus students who do not, score higher on the kindergarten beginning of year assessments, particularly in their knowledge of letters, reading ability, and numeracy skills. This allows the kindergarten teacher to begin more rigorous instruction for students who attended the GCE pre-K program.

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

Garden City Elementary is committed to a well-rounded education. Students receive weekly art education instruction from a certified art teacher. This teacher is also our librarian, which allows students to be exposed to art in varying forms. Students learn to create, respond, and make connections to the visual world around them. The art teacher integrates the TEKS from each grade level within her lessons, and students create artwork that is then displayed on the library windows. Additionally, students participate in the Art Smart UIL competition, regularly placing high individually and as a team. Art Smart team members gain an understanding of art history and how to interpret artwork.

Students also attend weekly music classes, where they follow a standards-based music curriculum. In addition to the curriculum, students learn songs to perform in activities such as pep rallies, the Veterans Day Program, and the Elementary Christmas Program.

In an effort to expand students' knowledge of the arts, GCE is also host to a week-long summer theater camp. Students audition for parts in a spinoff of a traditional children's fairy tale. They spend a week learning lines, rehearsing, and participating in acting classes. They also learn elements of theater and production, while preparing for the performance at the end of the week, where they will welcome the entire community.

The Physical Education (PE) department is committed to the health and well-being of every student. "Mileage Mondays" is one way our students are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Each Monday, students head to the track to work on physical fitness. They are given running goals, with each student receiving his or her personal goal. Students are rewarded with a colored bead each time they reach a set number of miles. In partnership with the school nurse and the National Heart Association, our physical

education students also participate in Kids Heart Challenge. This year, PE students raised over \$7,000 in donations. During basketball season, GCE PE students spend countless hours preparing for a basketball skills halftime show, which is performed for the entire community. A tennis pro also visited the students to introduce the tennis unit. The grand finale of the PE year is our annual field day, where students showcase all their physical talents in various track and field events.

The school nurse also provides weekly lessons to our students. She visits classrooms to teach students about their overall health and wellness. The nurse educates our students in dental health, proper nutrition, and age-appropriate hygiene. Finally, she invites the Midland Life Center to speak to the upper elementary grades about their changing bodies. Students also learn about the social and emotional challenges they will face as they grow and mature.

Starting at the first grade, students at GCE also participate in weekly Spanish classes with the High School Spanish teacher. She teaches them the Spanish alphabet and basic Spanish vocabulary. The students also learn about and celebrate traditional Mexican holidays, such as Día de los Muertos, Cinco de Mayo and Las Posadas.

### **3. Academic Supports**

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

To ensure our students achieve success, the GCE staff uses a combination of instructional approaches. Most students receive direct instruction with hands-on learning. However, some classes take a learner-centered and discovery-based approach to learning. At the beginning of each school year, teachers and administrators disaggregate summative assessments. Previous year's local and state assessments are reviewed. These results are used to identify the school's performance, check student learning, and gauge the learning process.

After the data has been gathered, an analysis is made every three to six weeks of a student's fluency, comprehension, and instructional reading level is tracked, and plans for at-risk students are created or modified. Teachers also differentiate instructional content and incorporate tiered activities with levels of support for students identified as performing below grade level. After-school tutorials and summer school are used to offer remediation to students performing below grade level.

When students fail to make progress after interventions are implemented, they are referred to the campus coordinated "Care Team". The Care Team goal is to increase student achievement by linking educational interventions with needed support services. The Care Team can make decisions based on past educational performance and take the steps and/or referrals necessary to help students achieve future success. Special Education or Dyslexia Departments may conduct initial testing. Students identified as dyslexic meet with a dyslexia therapist four days per week for forty-five minutes for specialized dyslexia instruction. These students also receive the necessary accommodations for success in their classrooms. Accommodations include reducing spelling lists, phonics instruction, and oral administration of tests.

When a need is observed, teachers and staff are encouraged to make in-class instructional adjustments to meet individual learning needs. For example, when Texas state-mandated testing began an online platform, many below grade level students struggled with typing demands. The staff requested, and the school responded by implementing a school-wide keyboarding program.

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

Students performing above grade level have many enrichment opportunities, including the gifted and talented (GT) pull-out program. This is a pull-out program for students who demonstrate complex thinking skills or need an academic challenge. Students identified as gifted, in first through fifth grade, attend weekly classes with a GT certified instructor for differentiated, challenging activities. To ensure the high achievers are engaged, the teacher uses discovery-based modeling, project-based learning, and student-led/choice methodology. Students work on creative-thinking tasks, critical-thinking activities, problem-solving, and independent projects of their choice. The identified students are given opportunities to work individually and

in small groups with other GT students to plan, design, and participate in project activities. The group goes on an annual field trip to an Escape Room. Escape rooms teach valuable life skills that are highly applicable to education. Students practice teamwork, time management, problem-solving, focus under pressure, and respect.

The school also challenges students performing above grade level by competing in UIL Academic events. These events range from mathematics to social studies, art knowledge, music appreciation, and writing events. These activities, which enhance the academic curriculum, are designed to motivate as they acquire higher levels of knowledge, challenge the students, and provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of specific skills. Students are challenged to think critically and creatively, exhibiting much more than knowledge and comprehension.

In partnership with 4H, students can participate in robotics to learn STEM concepts in a hands-on environment. Students can program, design, and make their robots. Robotics offers an educational tool for kids to think out of the box. Additionally, the library stocks an assortment of advanced reading level books, but at appropriate maturity levels to engage elementary students. GCE also allows students who are high achieving in specific content areas to attend classes in the next higher grade level to meet their specific educational needs.

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

The staff of GCE believes all students can learn and is committed to the academic success of each student. Educating all students incorporates meeting a variety of student needs, educational levels, and learning styles. Staff members are committed to ensuring students receive accommodations, rich instruction, and interventions that best fit the challenges and talents of the child. Teachers receive differentiated classroom instruction and accommodation training each year to support students. Student data is used to drive instructional goals and placement. Students are provided instruction according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. These accommodations and modifications allow students to address their educational requirements while maximizing intellectual growth. Educators work in partnership to develop these plans with parents and students, and consistently track data in the campus' Response to Intervention and Care Team systems.

Students may attend class with their peers in the general education classroom, sometimes through inclusion, or receive small-group instruction to reinforce content as needed. Lessons are presented in various ways to meet the needs of learners, including technology, songs, visual representations, student-to-student communication, hands-on activities, problem-based learning, small group, and kinesthetic learning. From ADD/ADHD to anxiety to cognitively disabled, students require accommodations and modifications that allow them full access to educational programs. The school works with a small school cooperative to provide specialized services like physical and occupational therapy.

Collaborative lesson plans ensure the core curriculum is taught and allow specialized teachers to further tailor instruction. Content Mastery provides additional support and a quiet learning environment. High expectations and extensive community support help meet the diverse and specific needs of all students and accelerate the closure of achievement disparities.

Students with specific disabilities qualify for accommodations through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These students are evaluated by a committee of educators and parents that develop an individualized plan of services for each student.

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

The GCE English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher specializes in helping non-native speakers of all ages and levels learn the formal grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of spoken and written English. What the students learn gives them the confidence to communicate clearly and comfortably with native English speakers. Emergent Bilingual (EB) students at Garden City Elementary participate in an ESL pull-out program.

From pre-Kindergarten to twelfth grade, students meet daily for instruction from an ESL certified teacher. Individual strategies for learning are created based on the student's level of English proficiency. Whether an ESL student is classified as beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced-high, targeted custom instruction is assigned. Students regularly practice basic conversation, questioning and answering appropriately, listening comprehension, and reading fluently with understanding.

The ESL teacher also serves as a cultural bridge for students, linking a student's native culture with their new cultural experience at Garden City Elementary. By doing so, students may recognize the similarities between the two cultures, helping them adjust to the new environment.

The school also utilizes a computer program that emulates the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). The ESL program instructs the student in the cognitive, linguistic, and affective domains of the English language. Students also practice the four domains of TELPAS, and the ESL teacher receives feedback from classroom instructors to closely monitor progress. Through this program, the elementary has seen success in transitioning students from the ESL program into the regular education classroom.

To better serve our EB student population in the regular education setting, teachers are trained and qualified to implement ESL strategies daily using the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) and Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs). Each school day instructors focus on the four key elements of English proficiency: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

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

Early identification of students needing instructional support is crucial in maximizing students' success rates. Frequent monitoring of student progress is done through formal and informal assessments by teachers, interventionists, and campus leaders. The Response to Intervention process has great fluidity at GCE, as students enter and exit the program quickly and efficiently, without causing a break in learning. Student data is continually gathered and reviewed. The goal for students who are performing below grade level and struggling for different reasons is to intervene through the RTI process.

The RTI process begins with the child's teacher assessing the skills of everyone in the class. These assessments are performed through daily assignment monitoring, weekly tests, reading inventory testing, and computer reading and math software that track their reading and math levels. The campus interventionist, reading specialist, general education teachers, and administration explore the needs of struggling students to pinpoint the reason for unexpected academic learning. The goal of GCE's RTI program is to reteach difficult concepts and determine underlying problems interfering with learning.

Students in RTI receive individualized research-based interventions focusing on specific skills and objectives. Grade-level spreadsheets are generated to track reading levels and benchmarks. These spreadsheets allow staff to quickly follow the progress of all students and make plans to provide additional support or growth opportunities. Care Team meetings are scheduled throughout the year to monitor individual student progress to interventions being implemented. These meetings allow teachers to collaborate with interventionists to set specific academic or behavioral goals to intentionally target student growth.

Parent involvement is important to the intervention process. Feedback is provided to parents after Care Team meetings and throughout the year. Through RTI progress monitoring, recommendations are made to help students succeed in the general education classroom or refer them to specialized programs, such as 504, dyslexia, and special education.

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

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

Garden City Elementary believes every child can be successful with a positive attitude and a supportive and engaging environment. All staff work together to ensure every student feels safe and secure to achieve high academic standards.

Garden City is a small tight-knit town where staff live and are part of the community. Due to that connection, every person feels responsible for each child’s emotional well-being. The campus is clean and safe, while inviting and fun. Staff greet students by name at the front door. The cafeteria is a decked-out 1950s diner, and the library an enchanted kingdom. “Student of the Week” is broadcast on TVs around the school.

Being able to reach students at an individual level is important to engagement and academic success. At the campus, the student-teacher ratio is under ten to one. The low ratio allows teachers to form relationships to understand the needs and motivations of each student. Different teaching styles can be seen with each lesson, and differentiation is used with small groups. In addition, staff work one-on-one with students. Teachers want students to succeed on grade level, but also to be college and career ready as they progress into junior high. To promote college and career development the school counselor has activities such as college t-shirt Wednesdays. The counselor also teaches lessons on careers, job skills needed for careers, how to get a job, and a career interest survey.

The school also integrates social education within the curriculum. Teachers model and expect appropriate social behavior. “Barkat Bucks” are given for exceptional behavior and can be redeemed at the “Barkat Store” for prizes. Special units are taught at each grade level. For example, first grade puts on a ball complete with cake and dancing. Students are taught skills such as manners when eating in a formal situation, how to ask someone to dance, and escorting someone to their seat. Parents are invited, and it is a rite of passage at Garden City.

Remote learning presented a new challenge with engagement and achievement. Hot spots were delivered to students without internet access, so that classes could be taught. Staff continued to check in with students. Fourth grade had a drive-by pep rally with a car decorated to encourage students. The principal delivered lunches and used the time to pick up work and check on students' well-being. Kindergarten teachers had socially distanced kindergarten graduation. The expectations are high at GCE, and teachers and students meet that challenge.

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

Community engagement begins with open communication and establishing relationships. Garden City Elementary strives to have parents involved in a partnership with the school, so their children thrive.

Communication is essential. A district-level Barkat App was developed with parents and the community in mind. Instead of looking through all the various online social media, parents can find information easily in one place. Being in a small community allows all staff to know parents and easily relay any concerns or updates. Teachers are in continuous communication, from visiting in the drop-off lane to daily electronic reminders to conferences.

Opportunities for parents and the community to be included in school life are numerous throughout the year at GCE. Before school even starts, everyone comes together for “Meet the Barkats”, where athletes are introduced, and everyone enjoys ice cream. At the end of the first six weeks, a Report Card Night is held. Parents are encouraged to pick up their child’s report card from their teacher, then head to the library to browse the book fair and finish the evening enjoying a meal in the cafeteria. The cafeteria serves as the center of many community meals. One example is the annual Thanksgiving lunch, where over 300 meals were served this past year. In fact, the community passed a bond this year to double the space in the

cafeteria for community events at the school.

Partnerships in the community are vital for success at GCE. Interaction levels vary, but they are all important. The local Agriculture Extension Agent acts as an adjunct teacher to help students participating in stock shows across the state. Several oil companies operating in the county donate money used for resources, such as library books. One of the more recent partnerships having an impact on the students and community is with Stanton Medical Hospital. Virtual appointments can be made through the school nurse. She can test for flu, strep, and COVID and conduct an examination with special instruments that allow the doctor to hear the heart and look in the ears. The doctor can then provide a medical diagnosis. In a rural community where facilities are over thirty miles away, this allows the school to help prioritize health.

The commitment to include and serve the community at GCE has created a positive environment where everyone is interconnected and shares in school achievement.

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

Garden City Elementary is a supportive environment where teamwork and family runs through all grades. Communication is key, and the principal has an open-door policy, giving voice to the staff's concerns and ideas. A weekly bulletin with important information, dates, and praise is sent every Friday to staff. It is not uncommon to have food and celebrations in the break room to recognize staff.

Each staff member has three 2-hour leave options each semester to save on taking personal leave to help take care of personal appointments. In the event a staff member has a family emergency, the campus comes together to take care of each other. Personal days can be donated to the sick pool leave to help cover staff for extended periods.

Support also includes presenting choices in continuing to learn in the education field. It is important to continue to stay abreast of new research, technology, laws, and policies in education. The professional development (PD) needed at GCE is determined at the classroom level, with teachers assessing the needs of their students, but also at a district level based on an annual needs assessment.

GCE requires all staff to complete three days of PD in the summer. Staff may use the Region Center to sign up for training specific to their teaching field and level. The school also encourages attending conferences to gain more certifications, expertise, or knowledge for any staff.

A local committee reviews and assesses the community-based needs to develop areas to improve for the staff and the school. PD is developed around those areas for two weeks of in-service before school begins. Staff is educated in areas such as dyslexia, technology, online assessments, special education, and 504. Due to our rural and isolated area, many staff members have become experts in their field and complete training for the rest of the staff.

The hardships of COVID-19 provided challenges to staff. One of the ways teachers were supported was the hiring of a full-time certified Remote Asynchronous (RA) teacher, who was bilingual. The RA liaison was a connection between the students at home and the staff teaching in a hybrid model. Books, work, computers, and any needed resources were gathered for students. In addition, providing tutorials, answering questions, and operating after school hours for testing was offered. The positive environment, commitment to lifelong learning, and support were integral to GCE's success.

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

The leadership at Glasscock County consists of a superintendent over both campuses, with a high school principal and an elementary principal. For small schools in the area, it is unusual for the elementary campus to have a dedicated principal. This helps focus on needs, resources, and programs for younger students. However, all administrators collaborate and believe in a simple but powerful philosophy of “no student gets left behind or forgotten”. This philosophy can be seen from greeting the students each day at the door, to appearances at sporting events, to weekly administrative meetings.

At Garden City Elementary, the principal is visible in the classrooms and halls, speaking with staff and students. A weekly walk-through is conducted to observe every classroom with immediate feedback provided to the teacher. Staff and students see this as a positive experience, not punitive where ideas are freely shared. The principal regularly meets with teachers to review benchmark results and discusses possible referrals for remediation or acceleration. The principal is present at meetings with Special Education Director and 504 Coordinator in all ARD meetings, making sure struggling students receive the resources needed.

The elementary principal also serves as the curriculum coordinator to ensure teaching resources are vertically and horizontally aligned. Teachers and staff seek research-based resources and technology to supplement teaching. Data is collected and analyzed to ensure appropriate integration of the curriculum. If a need is identified, funds will be allocated.

The principal attends annual conferences and training to stay on top of any legal or educational changes. Any changes are communicated to the staff. The handbook is updated annually with school board approval to address any needs. The administration works with directors of federal and state programs, such as special education, dyslexia/504, and gifted and talented, to ensure compliance for each. Budget meetings are held throughout the year and spending is monitored. All federal, state and local monies are allocated to provide an educational environment most beneficial to all students.

The past year brought challenges with COVID. GCE adopted a Health Plan Procedure to communicate, prevent, respond, and help mitigate the effects of COVID on students and staff. As a result, communication with the school nurse increased, as did the flexibility with staff to take care of students and their own families. In all challenges, the GCE administration believes in whatever it takes, so no Bearkat is left behind.

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

Quality education would not be complete without a school environment that is culturally responsive. Studies show that by the time culturally and linguistically diverse students enter third grade, many of them are one or more years behind in reading. Aware of this fact, the teachers and support staff of Garden City Elementary are constantly striving to create a classroom environment that is academically demanding while also compassionate, caring, and empathetic.

The staff at GCE recognizes the importance of creating opportunities and conditions for academic success for children from diverse backgrounds. In an effort to promote a culturally responsive community, teachers weave a multitude of culturally diverse activities into their curriculum each month. These activities provide frequent opportunities to supplement instruction that is rich in diversity. Beginning in September, students observe September 11th, along with National Grandparents Day. Students also honor September 17th as Constitution and Citizenship Day. GCE elementary students celebrate Día de Los Muertos in Spanish class as they finish out the month of October.

Other examples include December's Christmas Around the World. In this activity, the entire month is dedicated to learning about various Christmas traditions and celebrations the world over. In January, the students honor Martin Luther King, Jr. They create a kaleidoscope of art projects which line the hallways. February always marks the celebration of Black History Month. Students honor and study numerous African American heroes, such as Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, Jackie Robinson, and Simone Biles. Our ties to Mexican culture round out the school year with the celebration of Cinco de Mayo.

Parent involvement and communication play a big role in the success of our school. So that Spanish-speaking parents feel connected to the school and understand their role of being a partner in their child's education, the ESL teacher volunteers her time after school to tutor parents in English. Additionally, an elementary aide serves as our liaison between Spanish-speaking parents and the elementary. Catholic parents are encouraged that the school honors their beliefs by offering non-meat alternatives in the cafeteria each Friday during the season of Lent.

The students at GCE are immersed in a culturally responsive learning environment that fosters a sense of belonging and where every student is respected and challenged. Understanding the importance of parent involvement, the school tries its best to create a sense of partnership between the school, the student, and the parents.

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

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With the boom of the petroleum industry, Garden City Elementary has been financially secure in recent years. While this makes running the school easier, this is not the key to the school's success. The one practice that makes the school successful is that all stakeholders work together for a common purpose: excellence. Just like the cotton that grows in the fields, GCE's roots run deep, are strong, and are intertwined.

The campus is an exceptional school due to its deep-seated interpersonal connections with staff, students, parents, and community members. A large portion of our staff and student body can trace their roots back to attending or working at GCE. This legacy creates the feeling of home for students, allowing them to thrive.

When individuals are in need, the reaction is to rally together to offer help and support. For example, every Christmas a list is created of students experiencing economic hardships. The staff and community come together so that these students have a joyful Christmas. Unfortunately, the school community has experienced loss and tragedy. When this happens, an overwhelming show of support in all forms surrounds those affected. Because of the strength of genuine caring in our community, the students of GCE continue to reach our high standards.

Garden City Elementary is a close-knit community that flourishes due to an interwovenness that creates a team-driven atmosphere. The school operates as one big family. When the doors of the school closed due to COVID, most schools were scrambling to come up with a game plan. Because of the relationships teachers had built before the pandemic with parents, the transition was as seamless as it could be. The school quickly created and organized a staggered method for picking up student work and materials. Within days, GCE teachers began teaching lessons using a completely new methodology. This included online lessons, the use of instructional apps, disbursement of hot spots, delivery of lunches. Equally important was the need for support of parents, who overnight took on a new and vital role. This support included an increase in communication, instructional help, and even emotional support.

Just because the school bell rings at the end of the day, our school connections are still strong. Staff and students are present at athletic events, community activities, church, and all other aspects of life. Our school Mission Statement is "Achieving Excellence Together" and that is truly what Garden City Elementary accomplishes.