

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

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

School Mailing Address PO Box 1139
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Gruver State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79040-1139

County Hansford County

Telephone (806) 733-2031 Fax (806) 733-5412

Web site/URL https://www.gruverisd.net E-mail wade.callaway@gruverisd.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. Wade Callaway E-mail wade.callaway@gruverisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Gruver Independent School District Tel. (806) 733-2001

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. Mike Yanke
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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

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

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

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

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	11	9	20
K	12	13	25
1	15	10	25
2	14	13	27
3	13	6	19
4	15	11	26
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	80	62	142

*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
 - 50 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 48.6 % White
 - 1.4 % 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:

N/A

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	6
(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	142
(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: 30 %
43 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44 %

Total number students who qualify: 63

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 11 %
16 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>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 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.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	11
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	5
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

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 13:1

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

Required Information	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	98%	100%	97%	98%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2012

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

The mission of Gruver Independent School District (GISD) is to provide exceptional educational opportunities to every child in a safe and nurturing environment, which will produce responsible, productive, and successful citizens.

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

<https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/566?filter=FFH>

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

Gruver Elementary is a very close-knit, caring, and competitive pre-Kindergarten (pre-k) through fourth-grade public school elementary campus. Although the campus has been honored by the National Blue Ribbon Schools recognition two-times previous, the administration, faculty, and staff have certainly not rested on their laurels, but rather continue to pursue excellence on behalf of the students at Gruver Elementary. With such an astounding track record of success, there could be the tendency to suggest that Gruver Elementary must have a very adversity-free composition of students. The data suggests otherwise. In fact, Gruver Elementary has a significant portion of young people who are either learning a second language, come from economically-challenged households or both. The overall demographics of the campus is not diverse; in fact, two races comprise the vast majority of the student population, with Hispanic students making up 50-percent of the students; consequently, Gruver Elementary has a significant number of children categorized as English Language Learners (ELL). Thirty-percent of the students are, in point of fact, enrolled in the campus's English as a Second Language (ESL) program, while, Gruver Elementary's "Free and Reduced Lunch" percentage is 44-percent.

The small community, hence the small class sizes of the Elementary, plays a pivotal role in the overall success of the campus. This personalized touch not only makes the pupils feel important and cared for, but also adds to the esprit de corps of the campus. The collegiality of the teachers is further enhanced by their eagerness to work with one another in collaboration. The alignment of curriculum and the collaboration of teachers to discuss students' needs and pedagogical strategies that have helped specific students in years past is frequent and year-round. The positive consequences of the highly-skilled and deeply-vested faculty and staff are further enhanced by a number of on-line educational programs that have the ability to assess students, disaggregate data, and then develop a personalized plan to augment the classroom instruction.

The assessment of students begins at the very beginning of each year. Within the first couple of weeks of the first semester, the students will have intervention plans and schedules, as well as incredibly effective and beneficial literacy groups. Reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension are the foundation of a quality education. The state-mandated Reading Academies are one response to this urgent need. Gruver Elementary has known this for decades and has been far ahead of the curve regarding the science of reading instruction. Although reading is a priority at Gruver Elementary, the other core subjects do not in any way take a backseat. Mathematics, another vital and foundational area, is also emphasized and instructed from day one. The aforementioned collaboration and teamwork allows for common instructional techniques and vocabulary to be used throughout a student's tenure at Gruver Elementary. This consistency is crucial. Likewise, similar strategies are used across all grades and subjects, including physical education (PE) and music.

As was previously mentioned, Gruver Elementary has a relatively high percentage of students who are considered at risk. Whether they are ELL, low income, special education (SPED), or 504, the teachers and staff at the elementary school are prepared for the task at hand. Regarding the high Hispanic student population, every single full-time instructor is ESL certified. In conjunction with this, Gruver Elementary has at its disposal several extremely experienced and outstanding ESL paraprofessionals. These invaluable teacher aides not only work side-by-side with the students, but also communicate with parents and assist in translating documents. A very similar setup is seen within the SPED and 504 pupil population. Highly-qualified SPED aides are available to assist both teachers and students whenever necessary.

The global pandemic of 2020 brought to light the necessity and supremacy of the above practices and local traditions. The teamwork component was very important when the entire district had to drop everything and recreate an entire new method of educational delivery. Gruver Elementary has one technological device per student. This technological familiarity expedited the remote learning curve, even among the youngest of students. Likewise, the teachers' technological acumen also aided in the transition to remote instruction. For those students whose families did not have internet, the faculty and staff at Gruver Elementary setup pickup and delivery days and hours in which homework could be exchanged.

Gruver Elementary is a member of an elite group of Texas campuses who has been nominated three times.

This tremendous accomplishment has only solidified the confidence that the Board of Trustees, administration, and community has in the faculty and staff of Gruver Elementary. The professionals at Gruver Elementary go about their business with great confidence. This confidence is passed on to the students and the students' parents who truly believe and trust in their classroom teachers. Furthermore, while Gruver ISD takes pride in supporting its teachers, it is much easier to trust administrators and instructors who have such a phenomenal track record of success.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

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

In order to cover all the required Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) at the depth and complexity needed, a cross-curricular approach is part of how the teachers at Gruver Elementary instruct. Students require this spiraling instruction so that content is repeated by several teachers in various classrooms over a long period of time. This allows the necessary information to go from short-term memory to long-term memory.

The strategies used by the professionals on the campus are varied, but well planned and intentional in their design. There is no one size fits all, so the teachers collaborate and discuss what works with specific students. Conference times are purposefully aligned so that teaming can occur daily. An example would be the first grade, second grade, SPED, and reading recovery (RR) teachers all have time to meet every day. During these collaborative meetings the teachers pore over the data from the multiple assessments given to each student. The assessments are formal, informal, formative, and summative in nature, and range from simple observation to more benchmark tests. The building also aligns with the junior high school in subject areas during in-service days to ensure common vocabulary is used and to discuss every student leaving the elementary to join the junior high campus.

Curricular approach is based on student need. Administration works to hire excellent teachers and trusts them to have flexibility in their instruction based on student need. Teachers have the autonomy to try new things. Gruver Elementary provides two teachers per grade level, which allows for better flexibility with our students and teachers than if there were only one teacher. More often than not, first-grade through fourth-grade students rotate between the two classrooms for English, language arts and reading (ELAR), math, science, and social studies (SS).

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

Reading is a key component to the success of the students at Gruver Elementary. If students are able to read fluently and with high retention and comprehension, then they will perform better in all core areas. Again, literacy groups are formed very early in the school year. The elementary campus employs two trained, full-time reading interventionists, plus one full-time, fully trained dyslexia instructor. The elementary also provides the teachers and students with a variety of ELAR curricula. Much of the curricula is on-line; however, some of it is also more traditional paper-and-pencil ancillaries and books. The online programs are geared to meet the students where they are academically and assist in filling in reading and comprehension gaps. If a new program is tried for a school year, it is strongly vetted and determined whether or not to be up to the high standards of the campus. If not, the campus will switch back to previously utilized programs.

As is always the case, the greatest impact on any subject is the experienced professionals at the campus. The use of both scaffolding and spiraling techniques maximizes the efficacy of the instruction. By 2022-23, every core instructor will have completed the state's Reading Academy. Prior to this state-mandated training, the elementary campus already had teaching reading ascertained; however, the teachers did appreciate the reminders and reinforcement of practices they have implemented for years. It was stated above that the school also has two reading recovery teachers. These specialists are able to pull out students and work with them individually or in small groups. They are also more readily available to work with students who need more assistance in ELAR. Of course, the full-time dyslexia instructor has a state-approved program and a wealth of knowledge and experience which is used to assist those pupils who are in the dyslexia program.

Throughout the school year, the teachers are monitoring and assessing every student regarding literacy. Both formal and informal assessments, as well as both formative and summative assessments are used. There are daily observations, classwork, and quizzes from which observations and data can be gleaned. There are also

more formal assessments, such as unit exams, benchmarks, and state-mandated tests. These types of assessments are widely used by every teacher and grade in the building; in fact, the data from these aforementioned tests is used to put students into their literacy groups by the reading specialists.

During the pandemic, virtual instruction was not as feasible or effective for every grade level. The upper grade levels, especially grades three and four, were capable of having remote teaching, and - more importantly - having it with relatively good results. Conversely, the campus required parents of the younger grade levels to pick up and drop off work on a weekly basis so that teachers could instruct, modify, assess, and provide feedback to the students. Technology was, however, utilized by the lowest grades if, for nothing else, to visit with the students and see how they were doing emotionally.

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

The preeminent subject at Gruver Elementary may be ELAR; nevertheless, mathematics is a close second. Tiered and differentiated instruction is again utilized to introduce new areas within this core area. The teachers instruct with the assistance of state-approved textbooks and ancillaries, as well as expert-approved online programs. The teachers and the educational aides do the lion's share of the crucial instruction; nonetheless, computer programs designed for tutoring and expediting the educational process are also used. Classroom teachers use a diverse assortment of curricula. All grade levels within the building have state-approved textbooks and supplemental materials that cover the necessary state objectives. The two teachers at each grade level have the authority and autonomy to select the material which they believe will be best for their students and for them as teachers.

Instructors at Gruver Elementary use a combination of large-group, small-group, and individual instruction techniques. Explicit and differentiated instruction is given, and the initial assessments begin on the first day of school. In order to gauge where students are, math benchmarks are given at the beginning of the school year. Benchmarks are also prescribed near the middle of the year, as well as at the end of the second semester. Data is collected and analyzed to see how far each student has progressed. Similarly, the math textbooks have units which are arranged so that there is an increase in complexity and rigor, and often a need to build upon previously acquired knowledge. Unit tests are assigned at the completion of each unit. Weekly math fact quizzes and additional tests are given throughout the week, months, and school year.

All assessments (i.e. formal, informal, summative, and formative) are disaggregated in order to find each student's weaknesses and strengths. Based on the data, students can then be set to work on various online programs designed to address computational weaknesses or placed into smaller groups for the teacher and/or educational paraprofessional to provide assistance and remediation, if necessary. At the upper-elementary grades there is also a modicum of peer instruction taking place, which benefits both the mentor and mentee. Instructors at Gruver Elementary are quick to modify and adjust as the needs of the students changes throughout the two semesters.

As was the case for the instruction of reading and writing, the faculty and staff of Gruver Elementary used a variety of techniques to accommodate the needs of the pupils during the Spring of 2020. Although the students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade had technological devices, the district opted to keep the devices at school. The more mature students (e.g. students in grades two, three, and four) were allowed to take their technological devices home. The younger students, as was done in ELAR, had their parents/guardians pick up and return classroom work. The teachers stayed in contact with parents and pupils throughout the pandemic pause. Work was always graded, notes made, and returned weekly. Access to both special education (SPED) and English Language Learner (ELL) aides were made available, as were translators. Communication was constant and in the family's native language.

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

In this day and age, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) has become more important than ever; consequently, time is set aside daily, in every classroom, for students to be taught various scientific concepts. Textbooks that have been given the state's seal of approval are used, as well as a variety of supplemental programs: both online and otherwise. Scientific inquiry begins in PK; for example, time for

"free-choice science centers" is provided daily, which offers opportunities for hands-on learning about various scientific concepts. This allows for exploration, which coupled with teacher questioning, instructs and supports students at a level appropriate for each child. On the other hand, the third- and fourth-grade classes, which are taught by one of the junior high science teachers, have much more advanced techniques and equipment at their disposal. For instance, students in these grades perform hands-on labs, group projects, and test with on-line assignments. These novice scientists also use virtual reality goggles which allow them to "visit" different parts of the world or even inside of a cell. The pupils are also exposed to robotics when they program "ozobots" to follow simple pathways on sheets of paper. The ability to offer science classes by the teacher who will instruct them in grades five and six is a huge advantage for the students, as the vocabulary and pedagogy will be consistent for at least four years.

Throughout the process, variable assessments are performed and the data analyzed and utilized to address students' needs. The technological adeptness and diversity of Gruver Elementary intensifies the efficacy of the scientific instruction. Students can use their devices to work on enhancing their science acumen on their tablets through a variety of programs. These programs, not unlike those for ELAR and math, present information at the students' levels and increase in complexity and rigor at a pace appropriate for them.

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

The techniques implemented by the educators at the elementary campus for the instruction of social studies are very similar to those used in science. There is a state-approved textbook and ancillaries, such as weekly social studies "newspapers" for the teaching of history and civic responsibility. The primary and overarching topic for social studies is Texas history. The material, like the state itself, is rich and diverse in what it covers. The curriculum provides quizzes and tests for teachers to give so that formal assessments can be made throughout the year. There are also computer programs devoted entirely to social studies which the instructors assign to the students. These programs, in turn, disaggregate student data and individualize lessons to meet their learning level. Real-life history lessons abound in the Texas panhandle; therefore, the district approves occasional field trips for students in the Elementary. These educational excursions not only introduce students to historical places and events, but also expose them to areas and people outside of Gruver. Field trips are also an excellent way to reinforce civic responsibilities and behavior the students are expected to display when in public. Social interaction with new people - while under constant adult supervision - is more important than ever in this age of technology. While technological intelligence has increased greatly, many students' social acuity has diminished. The administration and staff at Gruver Elementary make it a priority to emphasize and model how "Greyhounds should behave". This is another important component to the social and civic areas found within the scope of social studies.

During the pandemic, social studies was taught. Both the paper-and-pencil assessments and online components were taken advantage of, depending on the grade level. The work was graded and assessed. Adjustments were made accordingly and communication was perpetual and coherent.

1f. For secondary schools:

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

Pre-kindergarten is a foundational grade level where students are exposed to the fundamental cognitive, social-emotional, and disciplinary components of school. The pre-k curricula encompasses the state-recommended guidelines in ELAR, mathematics, science, and social studies. It is embedded with foundational learning skills, such as inquiry, exploration, and discovery, and is introduced at the appropriate academic rigor to take advantage of the meaningful interactions exhibited and encouraged within the pre-k classroom. These interactions encourage the development of social-emotional learning and cognitive development.

This age is where children begin learning school procedures and routines. pre-k focuses on opportunities to "talk and retell", which translates into successful reading and writing across all content areas. Many pre-k

students come to the elementary with a lack of language and social skills. The instructors immerse the young children in a literacy-rich environment that fosters vocabulary building and comprehension skills. Students interact through play to develop skills and concepts that will benefit them socially and academically. The curriculum chosen lends itself to teachers asking reflective questions. Multiple modalities are used to ensure all students are challenged and are authentically assessed to monitor how they are developing at their individual pace.

The Elementary's "Family Engagement" component also provides activities for parents, which can be performed at home to foster and emphasize learning concepts. Parents are encouraged to send documentation to the teacher; in turn, the data can be used to help both the parents and teachers improve instruction for each individual child. pre-k and kindergarten share the same conference time so they are able to plan and collaborate with one another. Bilingual aides are also inserted into each pre-k classroom. While in the classroom, the bilingual students are immersed in the English language, but the paraprofessionals are present to give them support in their native language. The campus encourages both students and parents to grow in each language.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The students at the elementary school are exposed to fine arts, physical education (PE), technology, the library, and social-emotional learning (SEL) on a daily basis. Every grade has at least thirty minutes of fine arts and PE every day. Each instructor uses the TEKS as a guide to implement a variety of activities. The fine arts component teaches very introductory musical skills and then progresses to more advanced competencies. Likewise, the PE instructors move from very basic skills, such as lining up, to more advanced tactile-kinesthetic capabilities, such as catching and throwing. The PE classes work every day on developing hand-eye coordination, motor skills, and also intentionally work to have students cross the midline of their body, which promotes the coordination and communication of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. These skills not only increase physical ability, but also translate into classroom management, structure, and discipline.

Technology Applications standards are implemented daily into the students' core curriculum. Students at Gruver Elementary have transitioned well to online content creation and assessment, and have adopted crucial digital citizenship skills. The campus has a variety of technological devices for each student, from desktop computers to much smaller handheld devices. The students first become familiar with the different devices and then eventually become adept at operating the machines. Regarding a more traditional educational tool, library books, the campus employs an educational aide to oversee the operation of the building library. Students are encouraged and rewarded for reading outside the school day, and the campus has a well-stocked variety of appropriate and interesting books for the students to enjoy.

The district and campus takes the development of each student's social-emotional learning very seriously. The district strives to ensure our students are able to perform to their best ability everyday within the classroom. This sometimes means making sure students have a warm coat, food in their bellies, an older mentor to provide a listening ear, and strong guidance regarding characteristics that will help them be successful not only in the classroom, but also in society outside of school. The classroom teachers integrate SEL everyday into their classroom lessons and social interactions. Students are also provided with bi-monthly lessons that target the various components of SEL: self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Both the elementary and junior high campuses have adopted a specific SEL curriculum which helps facilitate the students' ongoing learning of these key tools of life. Students' emotional strengths and weaknesses are taken into account so that each month a different topic is intentionally introduced. Activities are then created for the students' character education time. The building counselor, who oversees this part of curricula, understands that each child must be met where he/she is emotionally and socially, and addresses those needs before asking them to excel academically. If a group or class of students shows that they require additional support in a particular area, a small group is created to really focus and dive into the underlining issue for that group.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

Gruver Elementary strives to meet the needs of all its students. In order to accomplish this, the campus has a group of teachers, outside the exceptional classroom teachers, designated to assist children performing below grade level. This group of specialized instructors includes two certified SPED teachers, a full-time dyslexia professional, and a part-time Speech specialist.

All students are regularly monitored through a variety of means, including: teacher observation surveys, progress monitoring, and guided reading level progression. Prompt intervention is key so that learning gaps are addressed early. Below-grade-level students are given extra wait time, simplified questioning, scaffolded support, and/or rephrasing to support thinking skills to assist them in answering questions in larger groups. Small groups are also formed based on needs, and activities here range from playing games to re-teaching previously introduced concepts. One-on-one tutoring with the teacher and peer tutoring is also used to provide extra support. Classroom teachers and interventionists watch the assessments (formative, summative, formal, and informal) to assist in individualizing instruction.

Speech services are provided as both an intervention and as a special education service. When students receive speech intervention, they are able to receive short-term, targeted instruction to meet their specific needs. Students needing ongoing services are referred for a SPED evaluation. Both speech intervention and speech SPED students are closely monitored for progress in the classroom. Parents receive timely reports on the progress of their children, as well as suggestions on supporting their progress at home. Most speech students receive services in a one-on-one setting until their skills are developed and ready to carryover to other settings. The speech therapist is welcome to participate in all school settings. This allows services to be provided in the classroom, during PE, on the playground, in the lunchroom, or other settings that are most relevant to a student's specific needs.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

The students who perform at a higher grade level than most of their peers are also an incredibly valuable and cared for subpopulation at Gruver Elementary. All students are given a universal screening assessment for the campus' gifted and talented (G/T) program in kindergarten each year. The rest of the student body has the opportunity to be nominated and tested each year. In addition to having an instructor who oversees the G/T program at the campus, all of the elementary teachers are trained in serving the gifted and talented students in their classrooms. Students in this group do not need more work, but they do often need more rigor in the work they receive. An example of this would be a second-grade math teacher challenging students to add extra place values when solving problems. Some teachers intentionally devote specific days to higher-order thinking. During "Figure-It-Out Friday", students are given challenging problems and have the opportunity to work the problems out along with their classmates. Similarly, when students are placed in academically heterogeneous groups, some of the more advanced students have the ability to assist their peers, but always under the watchful eye of the teacher. The students in the G/T program are also given opportunities to shine through the annual district University Interscholastic League (UIL) Academic meet. The competition is among several rival elementary campuses in the area, and includes such diverse topics and events as: chess, social studies, mathematics, oral reading, writing, music memory, and an art memory contest. The teachers and students of Gruver Elementary work hard and consistently win the district competition; moreover, the G/T students are pulled out of class periodically to work together as a cohesive group with the supervisor of the G/T program.

3c. Special education:

In the previously written section regarding students achieving at a lower grade level than their peers, it was stated that Gruver Elementary has a group of specialized instructors, which includes two certified special education (SPED) teachers. Although performing below grade level does not always equate with special education, it can be one of many indicators. One of the first steps in assisting students with special needs is to identify these students and the specific needs they possess. Gruver ISD does not employ its own SPED diagnostician, so the district must partner with neighboring districts to hire this specialist. The district, and consequently the elementary campus, has a Shared Service Agreement (SSA) with nine other districts of

similar size. The SPED SSA designates a diagnostician for each district to test children who have been identified as being potential candidates for the program. The building's two SPED instructors work hand-in-hand with the diagnostician, principal, teachers and parents of our identified SPED students. Modifications and/or accommodations are then prescribed and mandated in order to meet the specific need(s) of each SPED pupil. The modifications and accommodations are written within each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and are followed with fidelity by the teachers. These IEPs are considered fluid based to the child's ever changing academic/social emotional needs. In addition to the IEPs, the teachers at the elementary have a wide variety of interventions at their disposal. These include inclusion, small group, and pullouts for individual remediation. This is all provided by highly-qualified and well-trained teachers to ensure that students are given exactly what they require. Finally, the campus employs several SPED paraprofessionals who assist when the SPED students are included in the regular classroom. They sit adjacent to the student (or nearby) and are ready to clarify, assist, and communicate with the student during the lesson.

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

Currently, 30-percent of the students at Gruver Elementary are in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. These English Language Learners (ELL) are a large and very important component of the campus. The faculty and staff at the elementary campus are more than capable of meeting the needs of these students; in fact, every instructor at Gruver Elementary is ESL certified. The teachers use the skills and strategies they have learned and developed over the years to assist in helping the ELL students learn in both Spanish (the only other language other than English currently spoken in the district) and English. This begins in pre-k. Embedded within the PK is a highly experienced and invaluable ESL paraprofessional. In many cases there are students in pre-k who are being exposed to English on a consistent basis for the first time in their young lives. The ESL aide assists both teacher and student in the necessary communication that takes place, especially early in the year. Other strategies used by the teachers in the building include the use of pictures to help assimilate the new vocabulary. Flipbooks, graphic organizers, and photographs are all used to this end. Journaling and online computer programs are also effective tools that assist in both writing and reading. Regarding speech services, whenever screening or evaluating ELL's communication skills, an interpreter is utilized for testing in order to accurately understand what needs may be due to a language-based learning disability and what needs are related to being newly introduced to the English language. The same holds true for SPED services. A student new to the English language is expected to have more difficulty in school and certainly does not denote any educational disability. There are, of course, ESL SPED students, but the vast majority of ESL students end up being very high-performing academic students.

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

Gruver Elementary has very few students that fall into this category; however, there are a handful of children who are in the migrant program. Gruver Elementary currently does not have any students who are categorized as "homeless". Because the campus and district have such a small population of migrant students, there is no full-time (or even part-time) employee devoted to that program. In order for the campus to meet the needs of the migrant students and their families, the campus has entered a SSA with the local Educational Service Center (ESC). The state of Texas has a total of twenty such ESCs. The purpose of the Educational Service Centers is to assist the area public schools in a variety of capacities. One such capacity is to oversee and provide direction regarding the migrant student program. The ESC provides Gruver Elementary with guidance and documentation in order to meet the unique needs of the migrant students. The migrant program in which the elementary is a part of offers parent trainings, transportation to and from workshops/migrant meetings, tutoring services for students identified as "priority", and an education resources portal. All documentation and communication are in both English and Spanish. The English as a Second Language (ESL) aides also work closely with the migrant students, who recently, have all been English Language Learners. The administration and staff are very comfortable and habituated to offering communication to parents in a bilingual format. Although it is not guaranteed, it has been the trend that the elementary's migrant students have also been a part of the building's ESL program; therefore, the aforementioned strategies and skills are utilized here as well. In spite of some migrant student's enrollment being quite transitory, the elementary campus cares for each of them as if they will be a permanent fixture at the district for years to come.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

From the first day of school until the final day, the teachers await the arrival of the students daily and greet every student upon entering the building. This sets the tone for the day and the year. Even during the pandemic, the faculty and staff not only addressed the students' academic needs but took it upon themselves to regularly check in on their emotional needs as well. This was done in a variety of ways, including live feeds on computers to even loading up in vehicles and going by the house of every student just to wave and say "hello".

The administration and staff at Gruver Elementary are sincere about equipping their students to become problem solvers, not only in the classroom, but also in life. One way this is achieved is that the teachers allow the students to struggle in order to achieve gains. This builds academic stamina, develops problem-solving skills, and develops a real-life application that life is not always easy. Students' strengths and weaknesses are certainly considered and the faculty and staff are there to encourage and assist when necessary.

Gruver Elementary also excels at celebrating their children's successes and recognizing when they have worked hard to overcome adversity. Students are identified regularly for everything from having a birthday to winning district UIL Academic contests. Individual teachers award students every six weeks for excellence and improvement in core subjects, such as writing, reading, and math, but also point out students who have excellent attendance, help their fellow students, and who are exceptionally kind and generous. To commemorate such achievements the campus purchases cloth tags that the students keep and collect. It is a source of pride for the children, and you will often see them carrying around a backpack decorated with their various and sundry accolades.

The social and emotional component of the students at Gruver Elementary, as previously mentioned, is also a big priority. A character education program is overseen by the campus counselor. Students meet monthly based on grade level and gender, and they are able to explore authentic situations that materialize in the lives of all students. Topics vary depending on the grade level, but they consist of themes such as making good decisions, peer pressure, and even puberty. The attributes developed through this process, coupled with the technological immersion and high rigor in the classroom, prepare the students for success, not only in the grades to come, but set the critical foundation that will help them be successful in their post-secondary pursuits, their career, and in life.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Easily the most remarkable community-involvement program within the district is the "Gruver Farm Scholarship Foundation Program". The synopsis of this non-profit, educational program is that a group of local farmers and business people decided to plant, tend, reap, store, sell, and transport a little over 400 acres of irrigated corn, and put the proceeds into a scholarship program for all Gruver High School graduates. The program has generated millions of dollars, and it has allowed scores of students to help pay for the post-secondary education of their choice. Probably the greatest achievement of the program is that it has assisted several first-generation students to get their college degree!

Although the students at Gruver Elementary are years away from reaping the rewards of this phenomenal program, the administration and staff at the campus promote it often. With the exception of the pandemic year, the elementary students are taken to the field (located approximately five miles from campus) to see first-hand the harvest of the corn crop. Volunteers are present with their equipment, on which the students can climb and investigate. The farmers also assist in answering questions about the machinery and the processes of planting, growing, and cutting corn.

Beyond the scholarship program, the community is involved in a number of other ways. There are always elementary youth sporting events and practices taking place on the grounds of GISD, coached and sponsored

by local community members. An annual Halloween Carnival is also held at the elementary gymnasium, and it is a favorite event for the children at the elementary. Recently a program was initiated to provide for "food insecure" students and their families; likewise, there is also a local food pantry and a non-profit program that collects and donates essential items to students and families, especially those who move to Gruver with very little in the way of furniture and clothing. The elementary campus also takes part in a mentor program in which recommended and vetted high school students are paired with an elementary student of their same gender. This program has been a great success for both mentors and mentees.

The people of Gruver love attending and assisting with the activities at Gruver Elementary. The community is kept abreast of all activities through a variety of means, including text messages and emails - sent in the preferred language of those receiving the communication.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

It is the objective of Gruver Independent School District to allow faculty and staff the freedom and autonomy to make impactful decisions for their classrooms. One of the administration's main goals is to support the teachers and paraprofessionals in this endeavor. It is an expectation that teachers complete pertinent professional development training throughout each year. There have also been several instances where the district's own experts have delivered professional development for our campuses, as well as for other districts.

Often times the instructors will be introduced to something they like and think will be beneficial for their students. If possible, the building principal works to make it a reality. Even with research and careful delivery, not every idea works as well as hoped. When ideas and plans do not work out as expected, the teachers learn from it and move on to the next idea, or back to the original one. The administration of GISD encourages the faculty and staff to take calculated risks for their students. The fear of failure is often the enemy of progress. The district and the elementary campus desire independent thinking and creative faculty and staff, so that the educational process can remain fresh and not become stagnant. The traditions at Gruver Elementary are certainly important, but no tradition is as crucial as that of developing outstanding students.

A key component to the success of the students is that the instructors challenge their pupils with both high rigor and high expectations. Without support from the building principal, this task would not be so eagerly undertaken. This is key for the rapport between administration and staff, and the end result is an extremely productive and trusting working relationship with the common goal of meeting students' needs.

Finally, the aforementioned "Gruver Farm Scholarship Program" has extended its reach to include assisting current GISD employees with teacher certification and/or a Master's degree. The district currently has a couple of paraprofessionals pursuing their teaching certification, and the Farm Scholarship is helping pay for it; additionally, several certified teachers are in the process of getting their Master's degree in an educationally pertinent field of study. Once completed, the district will then pay the teachers earning their Master's with an additional \$3,000 annually. In a similar vein, some of the federal grant money given to the district was distributed this school year (and the next) to every employee at Gruver ISD as an incentive to continue at the district.

4. School Leadership:

The impetus for the administration is to assist the teachers. The teachers and paraprofessionals are the "boots on the ground", and it is they who make the biggest impact - educationally, and otherwise - on the students at Gruver Elementary, outside of only the children's parents. The goal of the leadership, although it sounds trite and cliché, is that of being a servant-leader. Everyone, it seems, talks about it, but it is a priority to put the term into action. The building principal at Gruver Elementary is a Gruver High School graduate and knows first-hand the high expectations of each campus. She, as stated earlier, supports and encourages not only the students, but also - and maybe more importantly - the teachers and staff in her building. The principal also has an excellent relationship with community members and parents and is able to serve as an excellent liaison between the two groups. This is important because, although both parents and instructors have the same objective, they sometimes do not see eye-to-eye on how to meet the goal. Again, teacher

support is imperative, while simultaneously listening to the parent and giving their voice credence.

Because the campus is quite small, the principal has the advantage of knowing every student by name; moreover, the principal is knowledgeable about many, if not all, of the needs of the students. She not only attends all of the SPED Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings, but also Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) meetings, 504 meetings, and numerous parent-teacher conferences - when necessary. The principal at Gruver Elementary is also adept at discussing local and legal policy, as well as topics very important to her employees, such as insurance, paid leave, professional development, budgetary matters, and personnel issues. Regarding personnel, each campus principal is given the authority and autonomy to hire those whom they believe will best fill a position, and/or move staff members around in order to better serve the students at the elementary. Without a great working relationship with the teachers and staff, this would be very difficult indeed.

Beyond the typical day-to-day activities of the administration, there are often very atypical activities which the principal pursues. This may include helping shovel snow off of sidewalks or cleaning up vomit when the custodian is occupied with something else. From the top down the phrase "That is not my job" is rarely, if ever, uttered by anyone.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

With Gruver Elementary being comprised of more Hispanic students than any other race, it is important to make their culture a priority. The campus has intentionally hired bilingual staff in order to meet the communication needs of both the parents and the students. The campus provides bilingual interpreters for all meetings and conferences, as needed, and all written communication goes home in English and Spanish. The Hispanic paraprofessionals certainly assist in these important matters, but they have also influenced and educated both staff members and students regarding cultural awareness. A real-life example of this occurred not long ago during a pre-k birthday celebration. The Hispanic student whose birthday the class was celebrating did not pick up the cupcake provided to her with her hands, but rather leaned over to take a bite of it with only her mouth. The pre-k teacher was in the process of correcting her when the ESL aide in the classroom quietly and politely informed the instructor that it was a Mexican tradition to put your face down for the first bite. It is now a customary practice in that classroom!

The Hispanic community in Gruver, Texas is second-to-none, regardless of race or ethnicity. There are two locally-owned restaurants in town, both owned and operated by very philanthropic Hispanic families. Both families have repeatedly offered to assist in fundraising for various activities and events. Gruver Elementary takes great pride in partnering with both businesses and their representatives. In fact, they have each provided meals for the faculty and staff of Gruver Elementary to show their appreciation and gratitude. Many of the volunteers which make the "Gruver Farm Scholarship Foundation" program so successful are also members of the Hispanic community. This wonderful relationship between the two major ethnicities of Gruver trickles down throughout the district, including into the elementary campus. Gruver is not perfect, but there are not many better, more cooperative and loving communities anywhere to be found.

As far as current events and social movements are concerned, they are not prioritized in the community, the district, or in the elementary school. There is a very strong, traditional belief of what is right and what is wrong. The campus holds strong to these fundamental beliefs, and again, assist the students in thinking for themselves.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

All of the teachers at Gruver Elementary were asked to submit feedback for every part of this application, including what they believed the number one practice for the success of the campus was. The top responses were "high expectations" and the collegiality of the staff, parents, and the community. Other factors mentioned included the vertical alignment and spiraling components embedded with the school, as well as the competitive nature of the faculty and staff. All of these, no doubt, play a huge role in the success of Gruver Elementary; however, the one factor that cannot be overlooked nor underestimated is the family-like culture of the building.

Currently 23 of our 29 elementary staff have children attending school at Gruver Independent School District (GISD). Six of the remaining staff members have children who graduated from GISD and/or have children or grandchildren who will be attending school in Gruver. In a previous section it was even mentioned that the principal of Gruver Elementary is a former Gruver High School graduate. Working at Gruver Elementary is not a job these employees go to and then forget about when they leave the building. Their students and coworkers are their friends, family members, business partners, Sunday school students, in short, their community. The student an instructor teaches in pre-k is the same student they later watch play in the state championship basketball game. This intertwining of lives creates an atmosphere of commitment, responsibility, and care for one other.

The experiences and expectations for the elementary campus are not simply expectations for this school year. The expectations and experiences are generational. It may be impossible to quantify this advantage that the entire district has, including the elementary campus, but it is difficult to overstate its importance. The pedagogy and technology has changed over the scores of years since Gruver Elementary has been in existence, but expectations have not. Most of the teachers experienced this first-hand as students or as parents of Gruver students. Success begets success. It is undeniable. Yes, there is a great deal of hard work, innovative and ingenious pedagogical techniques, and tremendous technology at the disposal of the faculty and staff; however, this means little without the dedication and drive of the teachers who are not willing to see the high achievement of the campus they know so well be diminished in any capacity. This commitment to excellence and the supportive and caring atmosphere combine to foster a campus where students are able to thrive emotionally and excel academically.