

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

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

School Mailing Address P.O. Box 709
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Gruver State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79040-0709

County Hansford County

Telephone (806) 733-2081 Fax (806) 733-5523

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	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	7	16	23
6	19	16	35
7	13	14	27
8	17	14	31
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	56	60	116

*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
 - 47.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 52.6 % 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.

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	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	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	116
(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: 23 %
27 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 40 %

Total number students who qualify: 46

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 11 %
13 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>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
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 14:1

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	99%	100%	97%	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.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

The Mission of Gruver ISD is to provide exceptional educational opportunities to every child in a safe and nurturing environment that 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

The community of Gruver, Texas is simultaneously typical and unique. It is typical in that it is, like most rural Texas communities, very agriculturally-centered and socially conservative. Cattle and corn are the primary commodities, and traditions run deep. Gruver is unique in its philanthropy, high expectations, and in its progressive mindset toward these ends. The school district is the life-blood of the community. One of these aforementioned expectations is that Gruver Junior High School (GJHS) students are encouraged to become involved in various activities, from their pre-requisite classroom courses, to athletics, fine arts, leadership and service programs, and agriculturally-based programs. This participation allows students to try new activities in safe and nurturing, yet challenging environments, learn life lessons, and move towards becoming more well-balanced, emotionally-secure productive citizens. There are also several examples of GJHS's progressive attitude regarding its program development. One such student-centered program is referred to as "You Are Never Alone" (YANA). This program, an idea from a current student, was developed to address the social-emotional component of students. All GJHS students are invited to YANA group, which meets once a month during lunch. During their time the students eat, play games, make crafts, and most importantly, visit about real-life issues they are experiencing. Our counselor and other teachers volunteer to walk around the various groups, but otherwise, it is student-centered and student-led. The junior high also has a character-recognition initiative that has been in existence for well over a decade: "Citizens of the Six Weeks". Faculty and staff nominate students who have exemplified character traits, such as kindness, helpfulness, and service. At the conclusion of each six-weeks grading period, names of GJHS students are drawn. Those selected get their photograph taken, one "homework pass", and have a letter sent home to their parents informing them of their child's recognition. Academically speaking, GJHS has an incredibly strong tradition of excellence in University Interscholastic League (UIL) Academics, winning the district contest for over 20 years in a row! Finally, in regards to innovative programs, a GJHS student and family created the philanthropic "Give Back Literacy Program" several years ago. This program, currently overseen by the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS), raises funds that purchase books for elementary students so that they can begin to build their own at-home library and encourage reading at a young age.

The strong traditions, high expectations, and progressive mindset played a strong role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gruver Independent School District (GISD) has had a one-to-one technological-device-to-student ratio for a number of years. The students and teachers are also proficient in their use. When the pandemic occurred, there was a steep learning curve for remote instruction, but the teachers of GJHS were able to keep in constant contact with their students and continued to vary their instruction across a variety of online programs in order to meet the needs of all students. Because GISD has many students who live outside of the city limits, there were cases where lack of internet services affected remote learning; however, this was overcome by making paper packets and distributing them, along with school lunches, to the students who lived in remote areas. In addition, our administrators and instructional technology department were in contact with our students' parents. They worked cooperatively with local internet service providers to distribute mobile hotspots to families to provide internet access at no charge to families to keep student engaged.

The needs of the students within special populations were a very high priority; for example, English Language Learners (ELL) and special education (SPED) students met with their teachers via live video feeds at least once per week, but met with ELL and SPED teaching paraprofessionals daily for individualized instructional support and services. The faculty and staff of GJHS also attended to the social and emotional needs of the students. The teachers took it upon themselves to announce to all of the parents and students that they would be doing a "virtual visit". The GJHS teachers then loaded up in vehicles and drove all over town to wave at the children and their parents and visit briefly from afar.

Gruver Junior High School is extremely honored and humbled to receive the National Blue Ribbon School award nomination. Although GJHS has never before been nominated, Gruver ISD's elementary campus has been recognized twice previously, and again this year. Faculty and staff of both campuses work closely together with vertical alignment and pedagogical best practice for students; furthermore, several GISD staff members work in both the elementary and junior high school, so they have been able to share in the elementary's recognition more directly. Because GISD is such a small, close-knit district, the elementary's

prior nominations and awards have been a source of great pride for the entire district. It is very rewarding for Gruver Junior High School to now be able to claim such a prestigious honor.

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:

Three common threads run through every classroom at Gruver Junior High School (GJHS): small class size, traditional teaching methods, and differentiated, problem-solving activities. Inasmuch as the population of Gruver, Texas is very limited, small class size is an inherent attribute throughout the district. Research has shown repeatedly that small class size is a major component to academic achievement. Each of the four grade levels of the junior high is divided into two class sections. Each section is comprised of a heterogeneous group of students. Through flexible grouping, this arrangement allows the campus' ELL and SPED paraprofessionals to be embedded within these classrooms to offer support for teachers as well as these special populations. This not only allows the campus to meet each student's particular academic needs, but it also ensures the district's compliance regarding pupils' Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) recommendations or Individualized Education Program (IEP) which are each components of the district's English as a Second Language (ESL) program and special education program respectively. The second component, traditional instructional methods, does not simply denote lecture-and-note-taking teaching, but rather traditional in the sense that instruction is face-to-face and in the classroom. Most of the classrooms are, in fact, arranged in very traditional ways; however, the lesson taught therein are anything but traditional. The third major previously-mentioned component is differentiated, high-level instruction. Teachers will use terms, such as: differentiated instruction, spiraling, metacognition, high-order problem solving, hands-on and experiential learning, as well as project-based education. Small classes, emotionally and professionally invested faculty and staff, diverse and challenging pedagogy, and high expectations are consistent throughout the district, and these traits are ubiquitous within the walls of GJHS. Coupling GJHS's robust technology with the district-wide vertical alignment within all core subjects, and it is a recipe for success.

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

There are two English, Language Arts, and Reading (ELAR) instructors at Gruver Junior High School. One teacher is responsible for instructing the fifth- and sixth-grade classes; whereas, the other instructor oversees teaching the seventh- and eighth-grade classes. Tiered instruction is a key component in all ELAR classes. Scaffolded note-taking strategies are used during instructional time, as well as technologically-based assignments, which allow for the students to question and process at their level. This time is also used for one-on-one discussions with students which allows for more individual, specific attention. Both teachers use a traditional textbook company, but it offers both printed and online materials. Pedagogical strategies and methods are relatively straightforward, yet impactful and meaningful. The teachers will supplement the textbooks with grade-appropriate novel studies. These book studies provide a creative outlet in which students can locate and respond to literary techniques in various ways; furthermore, it is the hope that these novel studies will also help foster a love for reading, as well as improve reading and reading comprehension.

The teachers use a variety of assessment tools. One such tool is referred to locally as probing. This consists of twenty to thirty questions every six weeks to judge every student's reading ability, fluency, and, comprehension. The online program also places each student at a particular instructional level based on nation-wide data. For a more comprehensive view of the pupils' reading abilities, the ELAR instructors also administer reading benchmark tests in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each reader. The benchmarks are given during the fall of each school year, as well as around mid-spring of the second semester. The data from the benchmarks is disaggregated and analyzed by the reading program, which then puts each student on their own individualized reading pathway. GJHS also employs one ESL instructor and one SPED instructor, as well as ESL and SPED instructional aides to facilitate reading and writing skills for the at-risk student populations. In addition to the ESL teacher and paraprofessionals, Gruver Junior High School also utilizes online language-acquisition software for ELL students on a weekly basis. Another component to enhance ELAR skills of GJHS students is a writing period to further develop the seventh-

grade students' and assist them is performing better on the state-mandated State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) writing exam. Every other day, every student in the seventh grade spends the first forty-five minutes of the school day in a class devoted entirely to augmenting their writing skill. Finally, the schedule at GJHS has been constructed so as to include staff-monitored tutorials for every grade level twice each week. Although this period of time is not wholly devoted to ELAR, portions of it are used to this end. During the pandemic GISD did not stray widely from traditional instruction; nevertheless, the use of online curriculum, as well as other technology platforms changed our ELAR classrooms for the better and forced all teachers to put even more emphasis on the needs of the students, rather than the comfort level of themselves.

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

The Mathematics Department at Gruver Junior High School, like that of the ELAR Department, consists of two teachers, each of which are responsible for two separate grade levels. The two math teachers for GJHS also have adopted, and use, a state-approved textbook curriculum. New print textbooks for all four grades come in before the start of each school year. The consumable textbooks not only offer information, but also have pages in which work can be done, and handed in to be assessed. There is also an online component of the curriculum. This hybridized curriculum is used along with all core subjects. Again, lessons normally reflect a traditional pattern. Questions are asked to engage previous learning and to connect previously acquired skills. Direct instruction is delivered and numerous strategies are solicited and various thought processes are shared for approaching and solving problems. Notes are scaffolded, while guided practice is done to ensure understanding, after which independent practice is assigned. During the entire process, additional support is made available by the teacher, an ELL or SPED paraprofessionals embedded within the classroom, and/or the ESL teacher or SPED instructor. Tactile-kinesthetic projects and real-life lessons are also utilized during math courses at GJHS. Cases in point are dilations, tessellations, transformations, budgeting and finance projects, and even three-dimensional drawings of "tiny houses" and a Pythagorean snail art project.

Data, both formative and summative, is collected. Examples of both types of assessment include: daily observations, homework, quizzes, end-of-chapter exams, and benchmarks. The data is then analyzed in order to identify students who are in need of intervention. This intervention varies from quick, short individual or peer tutoring where a minor issue can be remedied, to a more extensive plan. These extensive plans use a combination of face-to-face instruction with a teacher (individually or in small groups) or aide and online educational programs. The programs analyze students' strengths and weaknesses and develop an individual plan tailored to their needs. There is also Response to Intervention (RtI) built-in the daily schedule so that the math teachers can intervene with struggling students. In addition to the previously mentioned tutorial time embedded into the daily schedule of the, there are 45-minute slots of time available a couple of times per week, and it is used to assist students - especially those at-risk students - with review and remediation. The in-person, as well as the online instructional and corrective components, expedite and facilitate the necessary math remediation.

The period of time during the Spring of 2020 when classes throughout Texas were held remotely presented not only a tremendous challenge but also a great learning opportunity for the faculty and staff of GISD. The math teachers of Gruver Junior High School have continued to implement some of the practices and technological platforms used during the pandemic. These tools have allowed the teachers to broaden their instructional toolbox and better prepare our students for high school, and beyond. They also continue to be used for students who are absent for relatively long periods of time due to illness or extracurricular activities.

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

Both science instructors use a vertically-aligned curriculum for the basis of their teaching. The state-approved curriculum is a hybrid of both written textbooks and online resources and gives students several different approaches to each broad subject area. Curriculums include reading passages, videos, labs, and interactive notes and lessons. To supplement this curriculum, a variety of ancillary products and online programs are also used. The newly renovated scientific labs complete with terrariums and aquariums are

perfect for hands-on activities. Additionally, GJHS utilizes virtual reality (VR) goggles. The VR goggles allow students to be taken to different parts of not only the earth but the universe, or students can also be transported to the inside of an animal cell. Both teachers also utilize miniature robots which students can use code to program.

The primary assessments used by the science instructors are online programs. One program analyzes the student data and reveals to the teachers what specific Texas Essential Knowledge Skills (TEKS) need to be retaught. Benchmark tests are also given twice each school year in science as well as other core curriculums. Based on the information from these tests, the teachers can give students specialized and individualized tutoring in order to build their scientific acumen in specific areas.

The science instructors have been able to adapt many of their lessons to an online format. The pandemic of 2020 helped necessitate this, but the practice has continued to today. Classroom notes have been transformed into a digital format with videos and websites in order to better engage students. The format also allows students to fill in their notes, rather than to try to write them verbatim. This is particularly advantageous for our students in special programs. One online supplementary program has notes, vocabulary, games, reading passages, tests, and labs built into it and was particularly beneficial during the pandemic, and again, continues today.

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

Gruver Junior High School's pair of social studies instructors are very experienced and proficient. A hybrid model of curriculum is used by a state-approved textbook company. The textbooks are traditional hardcover books; however, all four grades also have the online components available with the textbook adoption. Digital media is utilized to bring historical time periods and activities to bring to life. Online supplementary programs are also used frequently in all four grade levels, and at least one of the programs has data disaggregation capabilities so that both teachers can analyze the results for each student in order to address weaknesses and fill in any possible learning gaps.

In the seventh- and eighth-grade classes students pair up to research various and sundry topics relative to the TEK-related subject. The students then produce computer slide presentations which they use to give an oral exposition over the topic. There is even a cross-curricular component in that the students also present their projects in ELAR class. The students in the fifth- and sixth-grades have research projects which they present to the class. One is a "Foods Around the World" project where students research a country, including common foods. Students take into account food allergies, and parent assistance is required, but on the designated day food is brought to the classroom for a day of international discovery, both academic and epicurean!

To assess student progress, both teachers use benchmarks and an online program that monitors student data. During the pandemic, the 1:1 device-to-student ratio was useful for the social studies courses. There was a hybridized model of instructional delivery based upon the household wireless capabilities. The data, of course, suggests that our social studies instructors, as well as our other instructors, did an outstanding job preventing learning loss during that trying period of time.

1f. For secondary schools:

Gruver Junior High School offers a number of activities, programs, and courses that prepare our promoting students for not only high school, but also for post-secondary success. Many of the state-adopted textbooks have career exploration sections within the curriculum. Teachers in science, mathematics, and social studies all utilize this component. A common denominator found in all of the core courses at GJHS is the high rigor and high expectations set by the faculty and staff. More than anything, these could be the characteristics that prepare the students for high achievement in high school and beyond.

Beyond the core classes, GJHS offers three additional courses that address college and career readiness. The most pertinent class is called "CCR", or "College and Career Readiness". This course is offered to eighth-grade students during the last period of the day. Students begin by participating in career interest surveys

and researching and discussing the various high school endorsements and pathways. During their exploration, students meet with high school teachers to learn about CTE electives available in each endorsement. They follow this up later in the year by examining and practicing traits that make candidates ready for interviews and being employable. Practical concepts, such as resume-building, are also addressed. The eighth-graders also have the opportunity to take a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in the morning, while our seventh-grade grade pupils have the option to take a course we call "Wellness", which includes sections on budgeting and finance. Finally, GJHS has a National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) program. This is a service-oriented program that stresses critical traits such as service, integrity, and high academic achievement. These are all characteristics that lend themselves to success in any post-secondary program to marketability within the competitive field of job searching.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Gruver Junior High School offers a wide-ranging array of non-core and extracurricular programs and activities that help develop a more rounded and complete student. Each class has its own set of TEKS followed with fidelity by the faculty. GJHS provides the opportunity for all students to take part in band. It is required for fifth and sixth grades, while the seventh and eighth-graders are given the option of whether or not to join. Music reading and instrument playing are introduced in the fifth grade. Students progress to more complex theories and performance objectives within grade-level TEKS. This culminates with eighth-graders joining the high school marching band. For the eighth-grade students who choose not to participate in band, they have the opportunity to take Spanish I. The goal in this beginning foreign language course is to develop, reinforce, and refine communicative competency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish. There is also a cultural component to which the students are exposed and immersed. Bilingual students are offered an alternative and they can take the Spanish Credit by Exam at no charge. Many students prove proficient and promote from GJHS with two years of Spanish high school credit.

GJHS students participate in physical education (PE) daily. Students in 5th and 6th grade take pre-athletics, while 7th and 8th grade have the option to compete in competitive play athletics or PE. Students at GJHS increase their health and fitness through PE. Understanding that nutrition is essential, the coaching staff distributes free breakfast in the mornings so students can perform at their best both athletically and academically.

GJHS offers additional courses that address college and career readiness. The most pertinent class regarding developing these skills is called "CCR", or "College and Career Readiness". This course is offered to eighth-grade students. Students begin by researching and discussing the various high school endorsements and pathways. They follow this up later in the year by examining and practicing traits that make candidates ready for interviews and being employable. Practical concepts, such as resume-building, are also addressed. The eighth-graders also can take science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Seventh-graders take advantage of a data entry class. The course helps to improve their technological skill-set. Students work to increase their speed and accuracy while typing, and they are introduced to programs for creating and editing word documents, spreadsheets, and slide shows. These competencies will assist them throughout high school and college. Seventh graders also have the option to take Wellness. This course discusses making positive life choices regarding the physical, social-emotional, and financial areas of their life.

Finally, GJHS is invested in enhancing every student's character development through a social-emotional program led by the counselor. Students meet bi-monthly by grade level and gender to discuss - among other topics - problem-solving, decision-making skills, and peer pressure. GJHS also offers the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) program. This service-oriented program stresses critical traits such as service, integrity, and high academic achievement. These are characteristics that lend themselves to success in any post-secondary program and marketability within the competitive field.

3. Academic Supports

3a. Students performing below grade level:

For students who are performing below grade level, the campus addresses their needs in several ways. The most powerful means of accomplishing this is one-to-one instruction with the teacher, paraprofessional, or other interventionists. GJHS employs certified, experienced instructors and has a number of experienced instructional aides in special education (SPED) and English as a Second Language (ESL). These paraprofessionals are embedded within the classroom and sit side-by-side with the students assisting, clarifying, and encouraging when needed. Furthermore, the junior high school also has an experienced, certified dyslexia interventionist and a vetted, effective dyslexia program. The SPED instructor also has time embedded throughout the period where she can work with individuals or small groups to clarify teaching points, assist with tests, and progress monitor SPED students. The 504 program works closely with the SPED department, although a separate, highly-skilled teacher oversees this program. The paraprofessionals in the classroom are present primarily for the students in either SPED or ESL; nevertheless, they are often assisting other students who may be struggling, whether in a special program or not, but never at the expense of those students under their direction. The classroom teachers also use tiered and scaffolded lessons, modified notes, and follow very closely the accommodations and modifications found within students' IEPs. The instructors at GJHS also regularly pull students to work with them before school, during lunch, or after school. A tutorial period is built-in to the master class schedule, so that every student has an opportunity to receive support during this time. Finally, with the data gained from diagnostic online programs for each grade level, several online programs purchased have the ability to tailor additional instruction for areas deemed lacking across the core subjects. The data from this, plus benchmarks, daily work, quizzes, and tests, allows the teachers to continuously monitor and adjust to the student and their needs.

3b. Students performing above grade level:

There are several ways in which GJHS provides for students who are performing above grade level. Again, the most effective component of this comes from the excellent classroom teachers. Lesson plans are developed and assignments and projects are created to meet the individual needs of every student, including those excelling in the classroom. The exercises are not simply extra work but are intentionally modified for increased rigor and the necessity for higher-level, critical-thinking skills. Many, if not all of the classes, offer opportunities for peer tutoring. The pupils who have a firmer grasp of certain academic themes are allowed to mentor their fellow students, under the watchful eye of the classroom teacher, and often have a unique perspective regarding the subject matter that is beneficial for their peers. Another opportunity for students performing above grade level is the high participation rates in the annual University Interscholastic League (UIL) Academic contest. GJHS has dominated this competitive academic event for at least a score of years, having won the team championship for as long as anyone can remember against other very good schools in our district. The events range from art, music, mathematics, social studies, science, writing, speaking, and even chess and dictionary skills. Students are able to select those events that are of interest to them and expand their knowledge base with the help - once again - of the dedicated professionals employed at GJHS. Finally, Gruver Junior High School has a robust gifted and talented (G/T) program and G/T trained teachers. Identified G/T students are served by the G/T coordinator and have the opportunity to explore and excel in their areas of strengths. The program is comprised of students across all four grade levels. The students are allowed to work together on project-based learning. There have also been field trips offered, as well as virtual field trips via videoconferencing.

3c. Special education:

Gruver Junior High School is extremely fortunate to be able to have interventionists and SPED paraprofessionals ingrained within the core classes. Students are able to have the teacher's instructional aide or interventionist either sitting in a chair immediately adjacent to them or - in the case where there are several SPED students found within the same class - in close proximity, easily and readily accessible to assist the pupil. The paraprofessionals assist the children academically the majority of the time; however, there is a small portion of the time that behavioral intervention may be necessary. The bulk of this

intervention is simply redirecting the students to refocus or pay closer attention to the instructor rather than attempting to correct any major disciplinary misbehavior. Gruver Independent School District does not employ its own diagnostician; consequently, GISD is a member district within the Sunray Special Education Shared Services Arrangement (SSA). The SPED instructor works closely with the SSA director and diagnostician regarding testing, Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), as well as future goals the students have. The SPED teacher, in turn, works directly with the classroom teachers and SPED paraprofessionals regarding the strict implementation of the IEPs. The SPED team also keeps in frequent communication with the parents at home to receive their feedback and update them on their child's journey. Time throughout the day is available for either the SPED instructor herself or a SPED aide, to pull students in order for them to receive additional specialized and individualized assistance. The study skills classes and study halls are also an effective means of instructional support. The human component of this is the most essential and crucial; however, the aforementioned online programs also serve a purpose in providing specific and intentional aid in expediting and facilitating academic advancement.

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

Gruver Junior High School prioritizes providing experienced and highly-qualified English as a Second Language (ESL) certified ELAR teachers and paraprofessionals for our students. One of the biggest contributions the bilingual professionals are able to make is to assist the students - often new to America - in understanding the new vocabulary and novel concepts contained within each content area. The classroom teachers are also very aware of the need for bilingual assistance and can offer this to some degree by utilizing the bilingual components found within the textbooks and ancillaries of the state-approved curriculum. Overseeing all of this is an excellent ESL Coordinator who works with the building principal and teachers in the logistic placement of the teacher's aides and in offering professional recommendations and assistance to them all. The ESL teacher also meets with the students in her classroom for more intensive and individualized assistance. The classroom is also equipped with more robust desktop computers, complete with headphones in order to take advantage of the online platforms that facilitate language acquisition. Additionally, the ESL coordinator is also responsible for setting up and directing the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) meetings, in which the parents of the students are present and able to receive and give feedback concerning their child's education. Regarding communication, GJHS is intentional about providing bilingual written communication for guardians who require it and having accomplished bilingual translators present at all parent and community meetings; furthermore, newsletters and calendars are sent monthly to parents and the school maintains documentation of this. Prior (and following the pandemic) Parent/Family engagement activities were held throughout the year. During the pandemic, links were provided to parents with webinars dedicated to supporting ELL learners. The primary objective is to integrate these students into our school and community while simultaneously recognizing and respecting their unique cultures and backgrounds.

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

The junior high does not currently have any homeless students and rarely has many migrant students. Due to the small population of students served in the migrant program throughout the district, there is not a full-time district employee assigned solely to the migrant program yet students are still served. GJHS has met the needs of these students and their families by participating in the migrant SSA with one of the state's 20 local Educational Service Centers (ESC). The ESC's role is to assist the public schools in various capacities, one of which is serving students and families categorized as migrant or homeless.

The ESC provides GJHS with specific guidance and documentation to meet the students' unique needs to help them succeed in the classroom. In previous years, the migrant program offered parent trainings, transportation to and from workshops/migrant meetings, tutoring services for students identified as "priority," as well as an educational resources portal. GJHS understands that parents are an integral part of their child's educational process and all communication, both written and verbal, is provided in the parent's native language. The administration and staff continually provide offerings in bilingual formats. ESL aides work closely with the migrant students and their families, as well as those who are in the monitoring stages of the ESL program. In addition to the parent trainings, the school works with the ESC to communicate

opportunities for student growth and extensions during the summer to better help prepare the students for the academic rigor of junior high and beyond. The district provides bilingual students an opportunity to take a Spanish Credit by Exam in order for them to gain foreign language credit while in GJHS. Students and parents are provided with information to prepare for the test and, if they pass, students qualify to receive high school credit.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

The old adage, "success begets success" is quite applicable for the whole of Gruver Independent School District, and - more specifically - for GJHS. Many of the faculty and staff employed at GJHS are alumni of GISD. There might not be scientific inquiries with substantial quantitative data to suggest the significance of this; however, the longstanding traditions of excellence and high expectations our faculty and staff experienced during their schools days is passed on to their students. It matters! It is difficult to explain or underestimate this to others, but the data proves beyond doubt that what they do works. Every district has essentially the same curriculum, pedagogical methods and theories, the same number of hours, and the same technology. What separates GJHS from others are the high expectations, attention to detail, genuine empathy and love for the students, and plain hard work of the faculty and staff. All that being said, GJHS does have reward systems and recognition programs to encourage students to excel in various activities. Among these are Honor Roll awards and Citizen of the Six Weeks ceremony, both of which are revealed after every six-weeks grading period. GJHS also encourages its students to explore career and post-secondary opportunities. Classes such as the Career and College Readiness course, the STEM class, Wellness and CTE course all address this consequential area.

The aforementioned propensity of the faculty and staff of GJHS to care for the needs of their students was particularly evident during the pandemic of 2020. While all schools closed their doors, some schools attempted to continue genuine, intentional, and novel instruction. Gruver Junior High School was one of the latter examples. There was, no doubt, some learning loss experienced by some of our students; nevertheless, the faculty and staff of GJHS went above and beyond to meet their students' needs, both academic and social-emotional. The employees and GJHS understood the need to check on their students' emotional needs and their physical and academic needs. From online video conferencing with their students to not only instruct but also simply see how they were doing. Other times paper-and-pencil homework was sent home on bus routes. Regardless, the teachers created lessons, graded, collected data, and provided feedback. Times were set up and announced to parents and students when and where homework could be picked up and returned. Meals were also made available to all students at GISD, including those enrolled at the junior high school.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The members of the Gruver community are generous with not only their time but also their financial resources as well. The few fundraisers and various periodic programs are always well received and productive. An example of this is a fundraiser to purchase new student lockers for the junior high building. It was student-organized and student-led, and student representatives even put together a presentation for the GISD Board of Trustees regarding their proposition. The fundraiser netted over \$15,000 and was the largest-ever single fundraiser in the history of the district. Another philanthropic program found within the community is the "Angel Tree" program. This is organized around Christmas time, and the names of students who have apparent needs, especially in regard to warm clothing and shoes, are submitted to the appropriate adults. Parents must apply for this program and sizes of clothing and shoes are yielded by the guardians. Gifts are then purchased, wrapped, and anonymously presented to the families.

There are several businesses who are also heavily involved with the district. Our local bank donates waters for athletic events, while a local internet provider - along with an Amarillo-based company, assisted in setting up "hot spots" during the pandemic so that our students would have better wireless internet capabilities for their technological devices they were able to take home. GJHS also takes advantage of local adult volunteers who work with some students, especially in reading. Additionally, two Hispanic-owned restaurants are eager to volunteer to help fundraise for specific school programs by donating a portion of their profits to the pre-designated group. There are also a number of faith-based programs available to the students of GJHS. Several churches have active youth groups; moreover, there is also a non-denominational group that meets weekly at the local community center called "Boys Club". It was organized years ago and develops the emotional and spiritual components of young men and teaches them skills such as

woodworking and cooking.

Within the school district itself, a program has been established at the high school where vetted high school students pair up with junior high students who request, with parent permission, a high school mentor. The pairs meet weekly during the lunch period. It is a time for the students to visit about a myriad of topics and for the older students to support, model, and encourage the younger ones.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

It is often the little things that can make the biggest impact. Simple acts such as purchasing teachers the soft drink beverage of their choice to more impactful and meaningful actions, such as the Board of Trustees extending the COVID-19 sick days, are appreciated by the faculty and staff of GJHS. Another monthly activity within the junior high is the "birthday luncheon" in honor of all the employees celebrating a birthday for that specific month. Faculty and staff bring homemade food items, and a time of food and fellowship is shared amongst all the employees of GJHS. Other Board-approved actions that were impactful financially for the employees of GJHS included a retention stipend for all GISD employees (taken from funding made available by the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program) and a revised salary schedule for all at-will employees of the district, including paraprofessionals, secretary, and custodians. Another program, distinctly unique to GISD is the Gruver Farm Scholarship Program. While it also engages families and community, it also assists in creating a professional culture. Initially designed to assist in paying for graduates of Gruver High School to attend post-secondary education, the program has now expanded to help pay for employees at GISD to receive college degrees and/or certification. Several paraprofessionals are now pursuing teaching certification, while a number of our certified teachers are seeking their Master's degree, all because of the additional funding provided by the Farm Scholarship program. Gruver ISD also pays an additional \$3,000 per year for employees who attain their Master's degree in any academically-relative field of study. There is an intentional and purposeful objective by the campus and the district to employ highly-skilled teachers and staff, and then give them the autonomy and support to lead their classes and students in the direction they deem most appropriate. The campus also promotes independence in the professional development opportunities which each individual staff member chooses to attend. Regarding the budget, if an employee can convincingly recommend a service, program, or product that will assist them in educating students, the campus and district do their best to find a way to get it as well as provide the employee transportation to professional development. There are studies that strongly suggest this type of independence is empowering and very effective. The data suggests this to be the case at Gruver Junior High School.

4. School Leadership:

While there is an organizational hierarchy at Gruver Independent School District, as with any district, GJHS is structured in such a way that teachers are given a high level of professional autonomy to lead in their respective fields and within the campus. The administration and key district-wide stakeholders at GISD, which include: the superintendent, all three campus principals, the athletic director and girls' athletic coordinator, and the director of technology meet regularly to discuss any issues and in what ways the district and individual campuses can be improved. While tradition is important, especially in small, rural districts, the administration has a very progressive mindset and is constantly looking for ways to meet students' needs and improve academic performance. One of the key themes amongst the administration that trickles down to the teachers and staff is the mantra of "do not fear failure". The teachers are challenged to get outside of their comfort zones and to attempt activities and ideas - after due diligence in research has been done - which have to date, not been done. Furthermore, the campus principal has a participative leadership style where she engages teachers in the decision-making process. This leadership style fosters the belief that the staff members are included and vital in key educational determinations. This, in turn, motivates teachers and staff to be active members in carrying out the goals set for the students and the school. When everyone comes together for the good of the students, progress and achievement are possible. Also, being included in decision-making hopefully makes teachers and staff be more receptive to principal knowledge and expectations when a more authoritarian approach needs to be taken. The Junior High has most recently been collaborating, debating, and considering how to better construct the master schedule, so as to maximize student learning and provide additional instruction to struggling students. Every teacher has been able to

provide input in the matter, and discussions have been conducted in a professional and productive way. The administration throughout the district is also very visible during the school day. The campus principal is often in the hallway and in the classrooms. The Board of Trustees, the most recent recipient of the local Educational Service Center "School Board of the Year", has a very student- and teacher-centric mindset. There are no apparent personal agendas, but rather a genuine desire to make the district and each campus the very best it can be.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

The community of Gruver, Texas is not an extremely diverse one, especially based on race and ethnicity. The population of the town - and the school district - is roughly fifty-percent Hispanic and fifty-percent Caucasian. The district and campus are intentional in communicating with English and Spanish-speaking community members and parents. The campus provides a bilingual interpreter at every community or individual parent meeting, including all school board meetings. Yearly parent input from surveys creates an open dialogue between GJHS and parents to evaluate academic, social-emotional and cultural needs. Feedback is utilized and ultimately benefits students and teachers in the classroom. Not only does the campus strive to meet the academic and social needs of all students, but occasionally there are times when physical needs must be met. From time to time, a student from a migrant family will move to the community with little material goods. Members of the school have delivered food, furniture, and/or clothing to families on more than one occasion.

In the classroom, diversity and cultural awareness are also promoted. One junior high social studies class has a "Foods from Around the World" unit in which students research various cultures across the globe. The Spanish class also has a "Dia de Muertos" ("Day of the Dead") unit in which the Spanish culture is more closely examined by all student groups. The campus librarian also stocks the library with a plethora of culturally diverse, age-appropriate books. The teachers of GJHS have the autonomy to discuss various topics - when pertinent - as they arise. The three classrooms in which this occurs with the most regularity are social studies, science, and ELAR. The science classrooms have discussed such topics as cloning. The discussions encompassed more than the science behind the processes but the social, philosophical, and ethical ramifications resulting from the science. Social studies classes also set aside time to discuss current events. Varying views are explained and appreciated. ELAR and social studies teachers build cross-curricular cultural units. ELAR classrooms have a novel student about a family trip to Birmingham, Alabama and uncover the blight of racism in America and the subsequent civil rights movement. During Holocaust Remembrance, a novel about a well-known child who wrote her memoirs during the Nazi Holocaust. A number of powerful discussions are initiated from the reading and study of both these novels. Students are then given the opportunity to express their emotions and feelings about the topics in journals and class projects.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The faculty and staff of Gruver Junior High School were asked for input for every question in this application. Every response to this specific question fell into three categories: high expectations, accountability, and teacher autonomy. All three are integral to the success of GJHS. Without holding students and staff accountable for their performance there is no way the lofty goals at GJHS could be met. Fortunately, a vast majority of the faculty and staff are intrinsically motivated and highly competitive in nature, which helps immeasurably. With a campus full of experienced and proven instructors and aides, the administration is able to have confidence in them and grant a great deal of autonomy to meet the needs of their students.

Out of all the wonderful data-driven, evidence-based teaching methods they employ; the highly-touted, peer-reviewed online programs capable of instantaneous data disaggregation and individualized instruction that they implement; the robust, cutting-edge technological devices put into the students' hands; it was "high expectations" that the teachers of GJHS consistently marked down on their surveys. GJHS possesses tremendous faculty and staff who, in turn, are in possession of great skill set and technologically-advanced educational accoutrements, but even with all of this no student will rise to low expectations. This is a timeless and irrefutable fact based on centuries of research and made evident by innumerable examples from all fields of study. It is apparent that every child is different, and every student has different skill sets and needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to expectations is destined to fail and lead to disenchantment and abdication. High expectations without kindness are cruelty; conversely, love without high expectations and accountability is also misguided and prone to disappointing results. Believing that every student has the potential to reach intellectual goals previously unattained and giving said students the tools to do so is an empowering and life-changing gift. The administration, faculty, and staff of GJHS do this year-in and year-out. There is no secret formula to success, and GISD has no proprietary knowledge regarding the high achievement of its student population. Every district has essentially the same curriculum, the same pedagogical methods and theories, the same number of hours, and the same technology at its disposal. What separates GJHS from others are the high expectations, attention to detail, genuine empathy and love for the students, and plain hard work of the faculty and staff. It is simple and straightforward, but that should not be mistaken for easy.