

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2010 - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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Type of School: (Check all that apply)     Charter  Title I  Magnet  Choice

Name of Principal: Mr. Chris Borland

Official School Name: La Vega Elementary School

School Mailing Address:  
3100 Wheeler ST  
Waco, TX 76705-2599

County: McLennan    State School Code Number\*: 161906105

Telephone: (254) 299-6755    Fax: (254) 799-4453

Web site/URL: <http://www.lavegaisd.org/education/school/school.php?sectionid=6&linkid=nav-menu-container-4-485>    E-mail: [peggy.johnson@lavegaisd.org](mailto:peggy.johnson@lavegaisd.org)

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

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

Name of Superintendent\*: Dr. Sharon Shields

District Name: La Vega ISD    Tel: (254) 299-6700

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

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

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Henry Jennings

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

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

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Blue Ribbon Schools Project Manager ([aba.kumi@ed.gov](mailto:aba.kumi@ed.gov)) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173

## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2004.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district: (per district designation)
- |          |                                   |
|----------|-----------------------------------|
| 3        | Elementary schools (includes K-8) |
| 1        | Middle/Junior high schools        |
| 1        | High schools                      |
| 0        | K-12 schools                      |
| <b>5</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>                      |

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 7002

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- Urban or large central city  
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area  
 Suburban  
 Small city or town in a rural area  
 Rural

4. 1 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>			0	<b>6</b>			0
<b>K</b>			0	<b>7</b>			0
<b>1</b>	106	122	228	<b>8</b>			0
<b>2</b>	120	109	229	<b>9</b>			0
<b>3</b>	112	114	226	<b>10</b>			0
<b>4</b>			0	<b>11</b>			0
<b>5</b>			0	<b>12</b>			0
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL</b>							683

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
0 % Asian  
29 % Black or African American  
45 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
26 % White  
0 % Two or more races  
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting 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.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 18 %

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

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	74
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	50
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	124
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	686
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.181
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	18.076

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 24 %

Total number limited English proficient 165

Number of languages represented: 1

Specify languages:

Spanish

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 92 %

Total number students who qualify: 629

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 7 %

Total Number of Students Served: 51

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>4</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>17</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>29</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>36</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>16</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>12</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>81</u>	<u>0</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 17 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Daily student attendance	96%	96%	96%	97%	97%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	94%	95%	96%	97%
Teacher turnover rate	12%	24%	27%	18%	24%
Student dropout rate	%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

The years that the teacher turnover rate was greater than 12%, many teachers relocated with spouses, transferred to other districts for more pay or were non-renewed.

The reason for the 94% teacher attendance rate for 2007-08 was due to 2 pregnancies and 1 sustained illness.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2009 are doing as of the Fall 2009.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0	%
Enrolled in a community college	0	%
Enrolled in vocational training	0	%
Found employment	0	%
Military service	0	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	0	%
Unknown	0	%
<b>Total</b>	0	%

## PART III - SUMMARY

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La Vega Elementary's motto for the last several years has been, "The business of La Vega Elementary is learning...handle your business." We believe that if we provide the appropriate instruction and interventions, our students will be successful. There is great attention given to retaining professional and support staff who embrace the same philosophy. La Vega Elementary is steeped in the tradition of La Vega ISD which is committed to creating an atmosphere of caring and nurturing in a family-oriented community. The saying that kids are not interested in knowing how much you know until they know how much you care is true of La Vega Elementary. We are constantly pouring into our children daily. Some days this means that a child needs several hugs throughout the day; or they need the same skills that a teacher has taught all week taught a different way. This also means that we are always seeking new and creative ways to celebrate success along the way. Our children know that we work hard and we play hard, but the work always precedes the play. This philosophy about how we do business has enabled La Vega Elementary to achieve goals far beyond what others ever imagined.

The Bellmead community, founded in 1954, is comprised of about 9,500 people. We are close in proximity to three institutions of higher learning. These institutions are Baylor University, McLennan community College and Texas State Technical Institute. About 36% of households have children under the age of 18, and approximately 15% of the community members are 65 years of age or older. The median age of our community is 32 and the median household income is approximately \$33,000, with 20% of the community operating below the poverty line. The average home is valued at \$62,000 and there are a significant number of rental properties. About 20% of the community is non-English speakers. Bellmead is composed of predominantly blue collar employees with a high school education or less. As a subset of the Bellmead community, La Vega Elementary serves 690 students, with 29% African American, 45% Hispanic and 26% White. Within this group of students, 92% are economically disadvantaged, 24 % are limited English proficient, 67% are at-risk and 18% are transient students who are in and out of several districts. A little more than 1% of the students received disciplinary placements, which is a little less than the state average. What does this data suggest? It suggests that while our community may not possess all of the amenities and advantages that other communities might, our stakeholders value the future, which is our children. Because of that value, the community of Bellmead is a strong proponent of La Vega ISD. The stakeholders support and place a high value on learning and the education of the children.

Knowing this, La Vega Elementary was compelled to provide the best education for every child that entered the classroom. We knew that if we believed in the children, they would come to know how much we cared about their learning and would achieve at higher levels. This began a journey for La Vega Elementary to pursue academic excellence. As recent as 2003, our Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test score for all tests was 60%. That score improved in 2004 to 68%. As new administration was selected for the elementary campus the following year, a paradigm shift began to infuse the corridors and classrooms. In 2005, the scores increased to 74%. This all seemed like good progress; but it was just not enough. We just did not believe that these scores expressed the value of what was within our students' ability and our ability as educators. We knew that our students could perform better and our staff could deliver more effective instruction. The next year we fully implemented Reading First and then mirrored the same type of instruction for math the following year. In 2006, the TAKS scores increased to 93% for all tests. Imagine our elation! That elation almost immediately turned to the fear of wondering if we could do it again. Not only did we perform to the previous year's level, but we surpassed it to score at 97% for 2007 and maintained at 99% for 2008-2009.

Why do I feel that La Vega Elementary is a unique and successful place worthy of Blue Ribbon school status? It is because we are nestled in a community where many would think that our success could never happen. Yet, in spite of all of the challenges that our students must overcome just to get to school, they do come. When they come, we find them learning and retaining what they have learned. In the past, La Vega has been called a well kept secret. Now, we are still well kept, but no longer a secret. We believe that our students, staff and community deserve this honor. A Blue Ribbon status would give us the opportunity to be a model for other schools who think they cannot excel due to a high number of students in less than ideal environments.

## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### 1. Assessment Results:

In the state of Texas, our schools are given a school accountability rating determined by The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test. TAKS measures a student's mastery of the state mandated curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This rating takes into account all sub-population groups, and the number of economically disadvantaged students. Each student subgroup must meet the standards set. La Vega Elementary subgroups consist of African American, Hispanic, White, Asian, and Economically Disadvantaged. There are four rankings that a school can earn: Academically Unacceptable, Academically Acceptable, Recognized or Exemplary. The current standards for meeting each rating are as follows: To be rated as *Academically Acceptable*, seventy percent or more of each subgroup must meet minimum standards on the reading portion of the TAKS test. Sixty percent or more of each subgroup must meet minimum standard requirements on the math portion of the TAKS test. To be rated as *Recognized*, eighty percent or more of each subgroup must meet minimum standards in both reading and math on the TAKS test. To be rated as *Exemplary*, ninety percent or more of each subgroup must meet minimum standards in both reading and math on the TAKS test.

In 2002-2003, according to the Texas state assessment system, La Vega Elementary received an accountability rating of academically acceptable. In 2003-2004, significant increases in math and reading scores led to an accountability rating of recognized. By 2005-2006 the school achieved an accountability rating of exemplary- the highest ranking offered by the state! We have maintained that ranking for four consecutive years. In addition, we have also received Gold Performance Acknowledgments from the state assessment system for our number of students achieving commended performance scores in reading and math every year that we have reached exemplary. To receive a commended performance designation, the students have to earn a scale score of 2400 or higher. We have also been recognized by the Texas Business Education Coalition and Justs for the Kids for high academic performance for three consecutive years. More information about the state assessment system can be found at [www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us).

In order to see La Vega Elementary's great gains, one must look back to the years before 2004. In the early 2000's, our scores averaged between the 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of students meeting minimum standards on the state assessments for reading and math. Ninety two percent of our students are economically disadvantaged and sixty seven percent are at risk. For our area, the general consensus was that these scores were adequate. Unfortunately, we were satisfied with mediocrity.

The climate of La Vega Elementary began to change with the arrival of new leadership and new personnel. It was no longer enough to be "good enough". The new leadership set higher standards and expectations. We fully implemented the Reading First model which also brought in additional personnel to address the specific needs of our struggling students. We then mirrored the same Reading First model for math and began to see significant gains in student performance in that area as well. As the academic climate for the staff changed, we also began to see the students expectations rise to a new level that we had not seen before.

In the past four years we have maintained our exemplary state ranking. Our focus now is on helping each student reach their highest potential. Our commended performance percentages have been steadily increasing each year. In 2004-2005, fourteen percent of our economically disadvantaged students received commended performance recognition on the math portion of the TAKS. In 2008-2009, that same sub- group had seventy percent receive commended performance on the math TAKS. The increase has been shown consistently throughout each subgroup. In the area of reading we also saw significant gains. In 2004-2005, twenty percent of our economically disadvantaged students received commended performance. This number rose to fifty nine percent in the year 2008-2009. Our mission at La Vega Elementary is to not only sustain our state ranking, but to continually improve student performance in every area.

## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

La Vega Elementary uses various types of assessment tools to understand and improve student and school performance. We use various assessment tools to ensure that classroom and tier instruction is guided by student needs based on data. At the beginning of the year, we analyze the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), end of year Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), report card grades and teacher anecdotes to determine initial placement of students in the Tier system. Teachers and interventionists use this information to begin the year of instruction. The method of instruction and assessment implementation at La Vega Elementary includes teaching, testing, analyzing, modifying and adjusting instruction on a weekly basis. The first evaluation of instruction is determined by weekly benchmark tests, which are administered campus wide to determine student mastery on the week's learning objectives. The staff grid and analyze the results of the weekly tests to enhance instruction, target areas of need and determine further classroom interventions.

Each six weeks administrators, interventionists, reading coaches, ESL teachers, special education and classroom teachers participate in a data analysis meeting which we like to call "War Room." During these sessions we discuss the facts as determined by the six weeks data. The meetings are designed to openly share strengths and weaknesses by grade level, by teacher, by student and by skills taught. Teachers who demonstrate areas of strength share their strategies with the team. Teachers who demonstrate need for growth implement a plan of action to improve student achievement. After the strengths and weaknesses are determined a plan of action is implemented.

As we continue this process throughout the year, our teachers become more proficient and able to deliver instruction according to data-driven best practices. As a result, students are able to learn and achieve the goals established by state requirements and our high expectations.

## **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

La Vega Elementary uses multiple methods of communicating student performance to our stake holders. Parents receive information weekly from their student's classroom teachers via take home folders. This take home folder includes information regarding daily grades as well as our weekly tests. Conferences are held each six weeks with parents. Additionally, Student Intervention Team (SIT) meetings are held as needed when students are struggling. These meetings are called by the teacher based on data collected in the classroom. The teacher, parent/guardian, and a counselor hold this meeting where they discuss the student's progress and any additional interventions that need to be put in place. Parents have the opportunity to share input regarding their student and teachers have the opportunity to gather important information about their students. This process allows parents to stay current with accurate information about their child. Parents also receive progress reports three weeks into each grading period and report cards at the end of each grading period. State assessment results are shared with our parents and community each year utilizing several methods. The School Report card issued by TEA is sent home to parents each year describing our current accountability status. This information is also distributed by the district to our local media outlets and featured prominently on our district website.

## **4. Sharing Success:**

La Vega Elementary is in a unique position in regards to sharing its successes. Due to the success that LVE has had over the last five years, opportunities for collaboration and sharing our success have rapidly increased. Our sharing of our successful initiatives begins at home. Some of the important strategies that we employ such as War Room are now being implemented on other campuses within the La Vega Independent School District. Collaboration with the principals as well as larger groups of stake holders has allowed La Vega Elementary to help teach success in other areas.

In the 2009-2010 school year, LVE was recognized as a Reading First Demonstration Site Grant Recipient. This grant was awarded to only 16 schools in Texas. As a demonstration site, LVE is required to share its best practices with other schools across the state. LVE is in the process of creating a video that highlights many of

the strengths of our campus, including teaching strategies, data disaggregation, and campus accountability based on data findings. This video will be available upon request to interested schools. LVE also participates in various conferences throughout the state as session presenters. This gives LVE a much broader audience with which to share our successes and plans for continued success. La Vega Elementary has also hosted many tours and visits for schools that wish to see the models and strategies that we have in place. As a Blue Ribbon School, LVE fully expects to continue our current model of welcoming interested parties to view and learn from the programs and strategies that we have in place.

## PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Curriculum:

The Reading Curriculum is Macmillan McGraw Hill, which is a scientifically based reading research comprehensive program that includes the five essential components of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP) report in 2000. At the beginning of implementing this curriculum in 2003, La Vega Elementary was moving from an Acceptable to a Recognized rating by the Texas Education Agency. This curriculum was implemented with fidelity, but not without great teacher resistance. Implementing this curriculum meant that teachers would have to abandon some of their “favorite things to teach” for a more systemic and structured approach. We found that the phonics component in Macmillan McGraw Hill did not meet all our instructional needs. Therefore we began to supplement instruction with strategies from the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR). This resource not only addressed the phonics component, but also enhanced all of the reading components including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

Beginning in 2004, we moved away from the Saxon math curriculum and began to base our scope and sequence around the TEKS. This strategy enabled teachers to use additional resources that provided the necessary rigor to prepare students for TAKS tests and the skill mastery for them to move to the next grade level. The main resource used for the math curriculum is Motivational Math. We have found that with this resource, students are challenged to function at a higher instructional level and teachers are provided with appropriate materials for effective instruction. This resource is also closely aligned to the TAKS test in format and skills taught. Currently, we are using one of the state adopted math textbooks because of the new math adoption, but the textbook is still used as a resource.

For Science and Social Studies, the teacher’s main resource is the textbook. However, they are encouraged to use additional resources to provide effective instruction beyond what the textbook covers. One tool to help crystallize student learning in Science is the implementation of a Science Fair at the end of the school year.

The reading and math programs are designed after the Reading First Model. Instruction is delivered in whole and small group settings with Tier Intervention used as necessary. Teachers design lesson plans for the whole and small group sessions based on results from weekly test data. Each week teacher instruction is informed by not only overall class or individual student performance, but also according to specific student group performance in relation to each other. We have found that analyzing data in this manner allows us to closely monitor how each student group is performing all throughout the school year and then plan strategies to close any gaps that might exist.

The Science and Social Studies curriculum is designed around the concepts the state has determined that 3<sup>rd</sup> graders need to know and be able to do in these grades. We specifically engage students in a much more detailed fashion with the skills they will need prior to taking the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Science TAKS test. We understand that some of those skills are only taught in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade; therefore, we feel it is our responsibility to ensure that students have a deep understanding of those skills before leaving our campus.

In all content areas, students are actively engaged by a wide array of cooperative learning strategies, every pupil response techniques, talking to a partner, using gestures, and guided and independent practice. In this model of instruction it is very common to see all students actively engaged in the lesson. They will work with partners to ask each other questions and clarify words and ideas they don’t understand while reading or reviewing lessons. The students are able to internalize these reciprocal teaching techniques which help them to develop higher order thinking skills while reading for any content area. Our goal is to establish the foundation for students to be able to understand, comprehend, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information throughout their lives.

Lastly, we understand the value of developing the whole child. Therefore, we feel that it is important to tap into their strengths that fall outside of the core content areas, in the way of visual and performing arts. Our students participate in special programs during Hispanic Heritage and Black History months and at Christmas time. Our students work hard to prepare for these programs by learning speaking and acting parts along with vocal and instrumental parts. Parents and teachers help make costumes and props. Everyone involved brings a great amount of enthusiasm and excitement about the programs. You can feel the festivity in the air! Food is served prior to these programs that connects to the culture being celebrated. During these celebrations, we not only showcase our student's talents, but we also take this opportunity to celebrate and value the beauty of diversity throughout the entire month.

#### **2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:**

(This question is for elementary schools only)

La Vega Elementary has implemented Macmillan McGraw Hill, which is a scientifically based reading research comprehensive program that includes the five essential components of reading as identified by the National Reading Panel (NRP) report in 2000. These components include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Teachers at La Vega Elementary provide systematic, explicit instruction to meet the targeted needs of the students using this core program. A 90 minute uninterrupted block for reading has been implemented using the McGraw Hill core program. During this 90 minute block, 45 minutes is devoted to whole group instruction and 45 minutes to small group instruction in order to meet the needs of all students. The McGraw Hill reading program incorporates the reciprocal teaching model of instruction. We place, group, teach, and assess each lesson with the core program and use reciprocal teaching strategies. At La Vega Elementary we enhance this model by providing teachers with extensive professional development in the reciprocal method of teaching comprehension skills. The reciprocal teaching model leads teachers to model strategic thinking, or think alouds, has students generate questions, clarify, predict and infer, and produce summaries as they read together with the teacher. We use comprehension characters that represent the thinking behind each of the comprehension strategies. Daily use of these characters is woven throughout the daily reading from the basal lesson. Students are actively engaged by a wide array of cooperative learning strategies, every pupil response techniques, talking to a partner, or using gestures. In this model of instruction it is very common to see all students actively engaged in the lesson. They will work with partners to ask each other questions and clarify words and ideas they don't understand while reading. The students internalize these reciprocal teaching techniques which help them to develop higher order thinking skills while reading.

#### **3. Additional Curriculum Area:**

La Vega Elementary has structured the math program to mirror the success of our reading program, which is based on the Reading First Model of instruction. Our math instruction is comprised of a daily ninety minute uninterrupted block of time. The math block includes two forty-five minute sessions. One session consists of whole group instruction led by the classroom teacher and based on the campus scope and sequence. The other session is focused on small group instruction with teacher led and independent group activities that are designed to meet student needs based on weekly assessment/observation data. Students that need additional remediation beyond the ninety minute classroom setting receive support through our math intervention model. Additional competitive activities are integrated during the course of the year to reinforce math fact skills.

Math instruction relates to essential skills in that all Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are included in the campus scope and sequence. All skills are taught to mastery or introduction level during the first semester. During the second semester, all skills are either reviewed if previously mastered or taught to mastery if only previously introduced. While covering the TEKS is a necessary part of the teaching/learning process, the ability to read, analyze, and determine a plan of action is an essential skill that can be utilized in all aspects of learning. Honing a skill such as this allows one to get a much better "handle" on their personal education, which leads us to our school's mission.

La Vega Elementary's mission is best summarized by our motto "The business of La Vega Elementary is learning...handle your business." Therefore we believe it is necessary that our teachers and interventionists are well grounded in the essentials skills that the students need to learn. They also must have the requisite teaching skills to effectively deliver instruction. In recruiting new teachers, we search for those who share our philosophy of all students being able to learn and the passion for doing whatever it takes to get the job done.

#### **4. Instructional Methods:**

La Vega Elementary implements the 3- Tier model of instruction. The first level of instruction begins in the classroom. The teachers deliver math and reading instruction to their students in 90 minute uninterrupted block segments for each of the above mentioned content areas. During the 90 minute blocks, students receive and participate in whole group and small group instruction that are 45 minutes each.

The whole group instruction is designed to introduce, model, practice and re-teach skills that will benefit the whole class. Small group instruction is more specifically and individually designed and based on results from weekly and six weeks test data. The classroom teachers not only create weekly whole group lesson plans, but they also create weekly small group lesson plans. These small group plans are differentiated to meet the individual needs of their students. These plans range from skills that will be taught in the teacher-led group to skills that students will work on during their independent groups. The small groups usually include no more than 6 students to maximize the greatest teacher focus possible. They rotate in increments of 15 to 20 minutes and students are grouped by specific skill needs as determined from test data. Interventionists and paraprofessionals also work with students in the classroom during the small group time. English language learners and dyslexic students are placed with specialists in these areas. These teachers are able to provide differentiated instruction in a more meaningful way to the students.

The second tier intervention is provided by Interventionists in a pull out setting with 3 to 5 students for an additional 30 minutes. This level of intervention is more intensive and more individualized for the students who need additional support beyond the small group in the classroom. These are the students who usually are more focused without the usual distractions in the classroom setting. If the students need more intervention beyond the second tier, the third tier is available. This includes another 30 minute pull out with groups of no more than 3 students.

Additionally, students have the opportunity to participate in before and after-school tutorial sessions. These sessions are provided in either 30 or 60 minute increments determined by student need and parent availability for transportation.

#### **5. Professional Development:**

Staff development activities are determined by teacher, campus or district administration needs. In addition to direct conversation, needs are also determined through informal surveys. Most activities are directly related to teaching strategies that specifically address student needs. The majority of staff development for teachers is centered around the Reading First Model of instruction and the teaching strategies that make the model successful. Teachers that are new to the campus receive first priority for intensive activities, such as trainings provided through the Education Service Center 12 throughout the year, On-line Reading Academies and the Summer Reading Institute. During grade level and faculty meetings, teachers are called on to share information learned with the staff upon returning to campus.

The Instructional Facilitator and Local Campus Coach assist teachers by modeling and team teaching lessons in the classroom. This practice is effective in that it demonstrates to the classroom teacher in a very practical way that the strategies, if effectively delivered, will produce the desired outcome of student success. The principal, instructional facilitator and the coach are continually monitoring classrooms to assess whether or not new learning is being effectively implemented by the teacher.

When it is determined that the prescribed professional development is not producing a positive impact on instruction in the classroom, the teachers are afforded the opportunity to participate in peer observations followed by debriefing dialogues with their colleagues. Administrators continue to monitor instruction and conference with teachers individually to exchange ideas about strengths as well as areas for growth.

Because La Vega Elementary has been so successful, our veteran teachers are usually able to assist any teacher who needs direction. However, we have two team leaders in each grade who work with the Instructional Facilitator to ensure that everyone is on track and has the necessary skills to move their students to success.

## **6. School Leadership:**

The leadership structure of La Vega Elementary is similar to many schools in the country with the admin team of LVE being comprised of a Principal, Assistant Principal for Student Services, an Instructional Facilitator (IF) and two counselors. The Assistant Principal's role deals primarily with discipline as well as handling most of the scheduling for the campus. The Instructional Facilitator is vital to maintaining the curriculum of the campus. The IF handles the supervision of lesson plans, teaches model lessons, writes many of our benchmark assessments, and supervises and conducts our state mandated testing. Major campus decisions are made as an administrative team. The team meets regularly as a formal group and constantly in the manner of informal chats and collaboration of individual ideas. The leadership of the principal is essential in maintaining balance on the campus. While the IF is consistently on the front line with the teachers, the principal is the final say and arbiter in cases where friction might arise. The principal and IF must work closely together for while the principal is the instructional leader, the IF puts the ideas into practice in the classrooms. The principal must hold all employees accountable to the schools mission to ensure fidelity of implementation. As a principal working through my first year on this campus, the charge is to maintain the high level of instruction that has made LVE successful. Working with the Director of Elementary Education, who was the former principal, will help me to learn the processes and systems that were implemented under her leadership. Specific activities such as War Room, uninterrupted blocks of instruction, and the maintenance and analysis of testing data are all strategies that as the instructional leader, I must continue.

# PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

## STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 3

Test: TAKS

Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Publisher: Texas Education Agency/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	97	94	78
Commended	70	51	46	32	16
Number of students tested	203	225	207	217	189
Percent of total students tested	98	99	100	98	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	1	2	0	0	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	0	0	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	97	94	77
Commended	71	50	46	30	13
Number of students tested	177	199	179	187	158
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	96	91	81
Commended	66	44	46	25	5
Number of students tested	64	65	52	41	47
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	98	94	72
Commended	68	55	45	33	17
Number of students tested	87	99	92	96	73
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	64
Commended	50	45	29	60	9
Number of students tested	26	28	14	26	38
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	97	86	63
Commended	67	47	41	38	11
Number of students tested	50	53	34	27	21
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
Met Standard	97	99	98	95	84
Commended	79	50	46	36	23
Number of students tested	51	58	61	77	67

Notes:

Other subgroup = White

Subject: Reading

Grade: 3

Test: TAKS

Edition/Publication Year: 2003

Publisher: Texas Education Agency/Pearson

	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005
Testing Month	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	93
Commended	60	49	40	43	23
Number of students tested	203	225	207	217	189
Percent of total students tested	98	99	100	98	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	2	0	0	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	1	1	0	0	1
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Socio-Economic Disadvantaged/Free and Reduced-Price Meal Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	92
Commended	60	46	38	41	21
Number of students tested	177	199	179	187	158
<b>2. African American Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	98	99	99	92
Commended	54	52	37	34	30
Number of students tested	64	65	52	41	47
<b>3. Hispanic or Latino Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	95
Commended	61	43	41	33	19
Number of students tested	87	99	92	96	73
<b>4. Special Education Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	78
Commended	38	36	43	40	1
Number of students tested	26	28	14	26	38
<b>5. Limited English Proficient Students</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	82
Commended	50	35	31	14	6
Number of students tested	50	53	34	27	21
<b>6. Largest Other Subgroup</b>					
Met Standard	99	99	99	99	90
Commended	68	57	40	59	24
Number of students tested	51	58	61	77	67

Notes:

Other subgroup = White