

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Shannon Brown M.ED

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

Official School Name Herfurth Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7500 Miller Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Rowlett State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75088-6603

County Dallas County

Telephone (972) 475-7994

Fax (972) 475-7391

Web site/URL

https://www.garlandisd.schools.net/herfurth

E-mail sbrown2@garlandisd.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\* Dr. Ricardo Lopez EdD E-mail rlopez23@garlandisd.net

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

District Name Garland Independent School District Tel. (972) 494-8201

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 Ms. Linda Griffin M.B.A.

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

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

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

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

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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**Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) 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):
- 53 Elementary schools (includes K-8)  
14 Middle/Junior high schools  
7 High schools  
0 K-12 schools
- 74 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, 2022 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 Students
PreK	83
K	93
1	87
2	86
3	76
4	61
5	53
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	539

\*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):
- 0.2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 8.9 % Asian
  - 17.4 % Black or African American
  - 40.6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.6 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 24.7 % White
  - 7.6 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 5%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	10
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	17
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	27
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	539
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

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

Amharic, Arabic, Cambodian (Khmer), Danish, French, Gujarati, Indonesian, Korean, Malayalam, Mandarin (Chinese), Nepali, Pilipino (Tagalog), Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 29 %

159 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 50 %

Total number students who qualify: 267

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 15 %  
Total number of students served 80

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 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>11</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Developmental Delay	<u>18</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>11</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>42</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 7 %  
Total number of students served: 40

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 1

11. 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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	25
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	9
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	11
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

12. 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 22:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	94%	98%	99%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

16. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

The mission at Herfurth Elementary is to encourage whole child development by providing opportunities for individual academic and social growth through exploration.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://garlandisd.net/legal-notices>

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

The "Choice of School" program allows parents to customize their child's educational experience by selecting the campus they want their child to attend for the next school year. Parents are permitted to choose up to three campuses. Garland ISD does its best to honor parents' first choice and also places siblings at the same campus. More than 96% of families receive their first choice. Although the district's goal is to grant everyone's choice, other factors play a role in the final assignment such as: distance student lives to their choice, building capacity, teacher-to-student ratios, court-ordered ethnicity ratio requirements, and/or number of students with the right to remain at their campus.

Students who are three or four-years-old, on or before Sept. 1, and students entering kindergarten through fifth grades, are eligible to apply for attendance. In order to qualify for the Montessori program, students must score in the 50th percentile on the reading and math achievement tests. Students must a) be passing all subjects on their report card, b) pass STAAR (grades three to five), and c) may not have any serious discipline problems. Qualifying students are entered into a lottery and openings are filled by applicants in the order in which they are drawn. Students who wish to continue their magnet experience after completing fifth grade are accepted into the Global Business & Leadership Magnet at Sellers Middle School, provided all qualifications continue to be met.

## PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW

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At Herfurth Elementary School, one can feel the enthusiasm of teaching and learning in every classroom and witness the power of parents, teachers, and volunteers working together to create a better future for all children. Herfurth Elementary is one of 53 elementary campuses in the Garland Independent School District (GISD), the second-largest district in Dallas County and fifteenth-largest in Texas. Herfurth Elementary is located in Rowlett, Texas, a suburb located 20 miles east of Dallas with over 70,000 residents. The mission of Herfurth Elementary is to encourage whole child development by providing opportunities for individual, academic, and social growth through exploration.

Herfurth Elementary opened in the fall of 1988. In 2016, the magnet program was created for students to take advantage of Montessori's student-centered style learning. The magnet program allows students to participate in this specialized curriculum at a local public school. The transition to Montessori began with seven classes of multi-age three-, four-, and five-year-olds, adding new grade levels each year. By 2021, the program expanded to include fifth grade. Students from Garland ISD who ranked at/above the 50th percentile in their reading and mathematics achievement tests were invited to apply for admission. Currently, there are seven primary classrooms, nine lower elementary classrooms, and five upper elementary classrooms. Students have benefited from the multitude of opportunities offered through the magnet program. In addition to the Montessori students in the magnet program, traditional students who live in close proximity to the school are also included in the school population that consists of 539 students. The traditional strand is offered in kindergarten through third grade with plans to expand to fourth and fifth grade in the upcoming years. Montessori classrooms group grade levels together, forming communities in which older children naturally share their knowledge with younger children. During the day, the Montessori classrooms have a three-hour, uninterrupted work cycle. The Montessori curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all students, with multi-sensory materials sequenced by level of difficulty. Teachers and students collaborate to create individual work plans, which allows students to take ownership of their own learning, habits, and social maturity. Teachers are facilitators and deliver differentiated lessons to students in whole groups, small groups, and individually. Students continually work with multi-sensory materials to gain mastery. Students also have a 90-minute intervention block, which is used to address reading and math needs. Classrooms utilize an online portfolio program where students photograph and record their individual work. This formative assessment allows teachers to provide student feedback, reteach, and extend lessons. In addition, parents have access to this portfolio, which creates a partnership between home and school. Students benefit from a multitude of enrichment and support programs, such as gifted and talented, a multi-tiered system of support, special education, 504, and counseling services, which are all targeted to address individual student learning needs.

Herfurth Elementary is the only Title I Montessori campus in Garland ISD that also serves bilingual students. Students speak a combination of 14 different languages. The diversity of the school requires the staff to grow as educators and learn to continually support the needs of the students and their families. The staff believe in order to teach minds, they must also reach hearts and instill intrinsic motivation. School-wide expectations align with the core of Montessori beliefs: respect for self, others, and the environment. This approach used in both Montessori and traditional classrooms creates a culture of courtesy and compassion. Outside of the classroom, learning is extended by maintaining the chicken coop, compost bin, rain barrel, garden, and outdoor classroom environment. Additionally, students have unique opportunities to improve the lives of others both in school and in the community through canned food drives, sock drives, Salvation Army Angels collection, and Bic Stationery Recycling Program. In the evenings, Herfurth is busy with parents, staff and students at Block Parties, Family Learning Nights, Reading for Treats, Spring Market, curriculum nights, and more.

It is a shared philosophy at Herfurth that all students can perform at high levels. This belief has been instrumental in closing the achievement gap for student groups and economically disadvantaged students. While emphasizing academic excellence, Herfurth has created an exceptional culture of purpose, responsibility, integrity, determination, and character excellence. Commitment to doing whatever it takes and an understanding that student progress and achievement are a campus priority make Herfurth a highly engaging learning environment for all students. In the 2018-2019 school year, Herfurth earned the top 25



percent comparative academic growth and a B+ accountability rating by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Academic growth continued in 2021-2022, rewarding Herfurth with an A accountability rating from TEA. These achievements heightened school visibility, staff morale, and strengthened parent and community confidence in Herfurth's educational programming. It is also confirmation that the Montessori approach to learning has rendered successful results.

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

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

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

The Herfurth curriculum is a blend of the Montessori method known by its accreditation through Association Montessori Internationale or American Montessori Society (AMS) and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) approved by the State Board of Texas. The Montessori language curriculum follows a phonetic approach. It begins in primary with pre-reading skills such as oral language acquisition, visual discrimination, concept development, and beginning handwriting skills. Students have explicit phonics instruction using concrete materials and tactile sandpaper letters. Once children have developed the alphabetic principle, they begin to work on the manipulation of sounds and letters through a carefully designed sequence. The sequence is as follows: consonant vowel consonant, blends, digraphs, and diphthongs. Lessons are introduced through a three-period lesson. The three steps are introduction, identification, and cognition. An example illustrated is the teacher introducing the letters a and m by saying, “This is A. A says /a/. This is M. M says /m/” and showing students the letter formation with the sandpaper letters. To show understanding, the teacher asks students to point to a letter by saying, “Show me the letter M. Show me the letter A.” The final step in the three-period lesson is cognition. The teacher points to a letter and asks students, “What is this? What sound does it make?” This three-period lesson is used throughout the Montessori curriculum to introduce new concepts. Students begin learning cursive handwriting to further develop their fine motor skills. In primary, students learn grammar and parts of speech through a miniature farm environment. Lower elementary students learn more advanced phonics patterns, sentence analysis, grammar, and word study. At this age, sentence analysis is taught to determine subject/predicate and direct/indirect object. Many of the lessons are more focused on comprehension and inferencing as decoding has become second nature. Upper elementary students focus on sentence analysis, grammar, etymology, morphology, and research skills. Sentence analysis is further developed to understand types of phrases and clauses. Upper students also practice and apply knowledge of comprehension and composition skills for real-world applications. Herfurth’s traditional students follow a TEKS-based curriculum aligned to the Science of Reading. Students in grades kindergarten through 2nd receive 60 minutes of foundational reading skills and 60 minutes of knowledge, which consists of cross-curricular content. Third grade students receive 120 minutes of cross-curricular knowledge with embedded foundational reading skill review. All students in kindergarten through third grade receive 30 minutes of purposeful small group instruction. Teachers intentionally scaffold lessons for small groups of students who demonstrate similar skill-based strengths and needs. Teachers use daily formative assessments for tracking student progress and are ready to reteach students struggling with a concept. Student assessments are conducted using Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) three times a year, and grades three through five are assessed through the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) annually. All students use district-approved online programs for additional practice in all reading area standards.

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

The Montessori mathematics materials are sequenced and lend themselves to a student-centered approach. This allows students who perform below grade level in math to focus on their individual areas of need learning, and also the students performing above grade level, the ability to move forward at their own pace, beyond grade level expectations. Montessori math at Herfurth is a tactile experience for the students. The didactic materials guide the students to abstract understanding by solidifying the concepts with concrete materials. The primary goal of the math curriculum is for students to develop a mathematical mind. Dr. Maria Montessori designed the mathematics materials with the idea that children will learn the process of getting answers. Montessori math encompasses the following: quantity and numeration, place value, fractions, mathematical operations, time, money, measurement, and geometry. The same multi-sensory materials are used in both primary and upper elementary. The students’ familiarity transcends grade levels and allows a seamless transition into higher concepts of abstract thinking by connecting prior knowledge through exposure of the materials throughout grade levels. One example of this is the bead cabinet. The bead

cabinet is an eye-catching mathematics staple. It is a large, wooden cabinet filled with bright chains of hanging beads placed in order from one to 10, starting from right to left, and varying in color and length. Numbers one through 10 are represented by colors that are consistent across grade levels. An example is the 10-bead bar. Ten is represented by gold and is used across grade levels to represent the decimal system. At the primary level, the bead cabinet is used for linear counting, skip counting, rules of multiplication, exposure to the base 10 counting system, and squaring and cubing. In lower elementary, the bead cabinet is used to review skip counting, which then leads to multiplication, and further exposure of squaring and cubing. In upper elementary, the bead cabinet guides students to the abstraction of multiplication and divisibility, squaring and cubing of numbers, and different base counting systems. These beads also increase visual and spatial awareness. A student can visualize that seven is smaller than the cube of seven, 343. Students are also able to feel the difference in the weight of a seven-bead bar and a seven-cube. Traditional students follow a TEKS-based curriculum that teaches mathematical concepts through problem solving. The same problem-solving concepts are taught across grade levels for students to build upon each year. All traditional students are given 60 minutes of Tier 1 instruction and 60 minutes of intentional, small groups and structured math stations. The Tier 1 instruction consists of four components: fluency, concept development, independent problem set, and an exit ticket. Formative assessments are tracked in student individual work plans, the MAP test, and for grades three through five, district-mandated, curriculum-based assessments (CBAs). The summative assessment for grades three through five is the annual STAAR test. Students use online math programs and applications provided by the district to improve problem solving and mathematical reasoning.

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

The science curriculum at Herfurth encompasses experiences in Zoology, Botany, and Physical Sciences as early as the primary grade level. Zoology begins with living and non-living and progresses through animal classes. Students learn about the external parts of fish (i.e., amphibians, reptiles, dinosaurs, birds, insects, mammals, and humans), as well as vertebrates and invertebrates. In lower elementary, students go beyond the nomenclature with the definition and function of each external part. In upper elementary, students study the internal parts and have an in-depth study of invertebrates. Botany is introduced to students as early as preschool. Primary students learn the benefits humans gain from plants and are introduced to the parts of the plants. In lower elementary, students are presented with a deeper concept of Botany such as the function of roots, stems, leaves, and flowers. They learn to characterize plants by identifying their traits. Upper elementary students expand upon this and extend their science knowledge into physics and chemistry. They also combine both Zoology and Botany as a life science study, starting with the simplest living cell to more complex life. Upper elementary focuses on the process of organizing and categorizing life as well as the interdependence of all living things. The traditional students participate in a district-designed science curriculum. Instruction is 45 minutes, three times a week. Each year, students and teachers participate in the district-wide symposium, focusing on science, technology, engineering, art, and math challenges. Last year, third grade students were tasked with creating a new invention using recycled materials to better the environment. A team of two students from Herfurth won first place in this district-wide competition. Fourth and fifth grade students take multiple formative, normative, and summative assessments throughout the year in science, including Curriculum Based Assessments, MAP, and the STAAR test.

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

The Montessori geography curriculum spans two areas: physical geography and cultural geography. Physical geography explores the formation of the universe, Earth, and all of its physical properties. Cultural geography is the study of culture and human society. Herfurth students explore other countries, customs, food, music, climate, language, and animals, in order to build an awareness of the world around them. This raises students' consciousness about others and their customs in order to foster tolerance and compassion for all people. Geography and history is presented as early as age three. Students delve into greater depths about the world's cultures in each grade level. Students learn to value their own and their classmates' cultural heritage. Upper elementary students build a strong foundation of physical geography and history by studying ancient civilizations. Once students are familiar with the main ancient civilizations and requirements for researching, they continue with ancient civilizations that are connected to their area of study. Fourth grade students focus on Texas, and fifth grade students focus on the United States. The ancient civilizations lead to

Texas/US Native American cultures present today. An upper elementary concept applied in the classroom is to take knowledge of past events in history and understand how those events affect present-day circumstances. They also create in-depth studies and discussion about current events and how they may influence the future and the environment. Studying these concepts allow students to grow holistically as they work to become better citizens. The traditional students follow a TEKS-based curriculum designed by the Garland ISD Curriculum and Instruction department. Students participate in lessons designed for two 45-minute blocks of instruction each week. The units for kindergarten through 3rd grade include: communities, government and citizens, geography, culture, economics, and history. Social studies prepares students to be civically involved in the community and understand their role as global citizens.

**1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

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

Prekindergarten, (pre-K), students are grouped in primary classrooms with kindergarten students. They follow the above-mentioned Montessori curriculum with focus on sensorial and practical life exercises. Students learn practical life skills to develop their fine motor abilities, while sensorial learning is used to develop their visual and spatial awareness. The activities promote independence, build good work habits, and coordination of movement. Practical life activities aid growth and development of the students' intellect, ability to focus, and develop executive functioning skills. Students are able to apply the skills learned in practical life in purposeful classroom work that helps build a cohesive society within their learning environment. Sensorial is a staple in primary Montessori classrooms. The materials are meant to sharpen the five senses: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory. Visual awareness is developed through discrimination of color, size, and shape. Auditory awareness is developed through several materials. Students use materials to identify matching sounds. Tactile senses are developed through matching fabrics and different textures. Olfactory is developed through smelling jars. Lastly, Gustatory is developed through the many food preparation opportunities students are offered. Alignment is achieved naturally as the same materials are used from primary to upper elementary. Each year students use the same materials but in a more complex manner. Students' knowledge of practical life and the pre-K Montessori curriculum allow them to enter grades one through three with several school ready indicators. Students have a strong development of fine motor and self-regulation skills and are beginning to develop executive functioning skills. Evidence can be seen watching students during the three-hour work cycle as they self-monitor and manage their time to complete an appropriate number of works. The work cycle prepares students to enter the elementary grades with mastery of basic mathematics and foundational reading skills.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

**2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

The art program at Herfurth began in 2015. It focuses on the fine arts TEKS which cover the seven art elements and design principles. It teaches art history and creative skills, within an aligned scope and sequence. It also includes the connection between the arts, careers, and museum social etiquette. Students are able to participate in a variety of artistic experiences including, Art Club, Big Art Day, Art Night, and school-wide projects such as Stars of Hope and Dream Flags. These artistic opportunities are used to promote involvement that increases group cohesiveness, collaborative learning, and unity. In music, students have the opportunity to learn and play music from around the world. Children able to take these music skills and perform in after-school performances. Students perform a variety of pieces throughout the year. The music teacher hosts an honor choir composed of third through fifth graders. Students practice twice a week and perform for senior citizens in retirement homes, at the Rowlett Music Festival, and at the Galleria Dallas mall. The honor choir competes in an annual competition at the end of the year and has received superior ratings every year. Students participate in music and art twice a week for a total of 100 minutes each week.

## **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

Herfurth's Physical Education (PE) program helps students focus on fitness and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. The PE program is committed to improving each student's physical, social, emotional, and educational development by integrating health education, nutrition, safety, and respect for one's self and others. Herfurth's PE curriculum is directly aligned with the TEKS, which include movement, healthy habits, and social skills. Locomotor and nonlocomotor skills are introduced to maintain lifelong fitness. Spatial and body awareness are emphasized in order to maintain a physically & emotionally-safe environment. All students receive a minimum of 135 minutes per week of PE instruction by a certified PE teacher and assistant. Third through fifth grade students participate in the Cooper Institute Fitnessgram physical fitness assessment every year. This evaluation of health criteria is used to encourage progress towards reaching the optimum health fitness zone. Herfurth students participate in a variety of health programs including American Heart Association Jump Rope for Hearts, Turkey Trot, Field Day, and PE Fitness Night showcasing students' motor skills and cognitive concepts learned. The Turkey Trot is also used as a canned food drive to assist a local food pantry in time for Thanksgiving to promote giving back to the community.

## **2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

## **2d. Technology/library/media**

All Herfurth students visit the library 45 minutes weekly. The library not only incorporates strategies that boost reading engagement but it also combines different learning methods with literacy. The librarian has been awarded five grants which allow unique opportunities to students such as reading bikes. These pedal desks integrate physical activity, social emotional learning and reading. Students are able to exercise both their body and mind at the same time; thus, nurturing whole child development. Studies have shown that there are not only physical benefits when students have the ability to move throughout the school day, but it also helps to increase learning retention. Students are exposed to a variety of genres through a weekly read aloud provided by the librarian. The library offers literacy and science, technology, engineering, and math manipulatives. These manipulatives help connect learning to tangible objects so that the library can help reinforce classroom lessons using an engaging and multisensory method. These tactile tools further develop critical thinking skills, demonstrate concepts, motivate students to explore their creativity, but more importantly make learning fun. By offering these unique opportunities, the library has created an engaging learning space for all students to grow and learn, physically, emotionally and academically.

## **2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

Another core component of the Montessori curriculum is peace education. The focus is to equip students with the interpersonal skills needed to become a responsible member within the community in and out of school. The Peace Curriculum teaches tolerance and acceptance of differences in race, religion, and cultures. The primary goal is not just to create a well-rounded member of society, but to create a better society as a whole. In classrooms, students are not controlled by rewards and punishments. They are given "freedom within limits" with ground rules that must be honored: respect for yourself, respect for others, and respect for the environment. Each classroom houses a "peace area" which is a quiet space where students can de-escalate behavior independently or engage in a conflict-resolution conversation with another student. One of the most important aspects of the Montessori method is its mission to "educate the whole child." While they are learning math and language, they are also learning life skills such as conflict-resolution, empathy, independence, teamwork, and advocacy through lessons modeled by teachers. These are the skills that promote peace and will ultimately change the world for the better.

## **3. Academic Supports**

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

Students performing below grade level have a multitude of intervention supports on campus. Herfurth's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team meets three times a year with teachers to evaluate the progress or the lack of progress of each student. The MTSS team consists of the interventionist, administrators, instructional coach, and classroom teachers. As a committee, they determine the tier of instruction each student needs based on varied data. MTSS is a framework designed to meet the individual needs of students to increase academic achievement. If a student is classified as a tier three student in reading and/or math, the student receives intervention services from the campus interventionist. Services begin after the parent gives consent. The interventionist provides 30 minutes of intervention to groups of four to six students in reading and math throughout the day. Data from MAP, DIBELS, CBAs, and an online math assessment guides lesson planning in order to meet the needs of tier three students. After-school tutoring is offered to students performing below grade level. Teachers target students and teach rigorous differentiated lessons in a focused, small group, with the goal of closing the gaps for students. Tutoring is offered twice a week for 30 to 45 minutes. Special education students receive individual classroom accommodations throughout the day. Services are provided by special education teachers in the least restrictive environment. Students receive services in the resource classroom and/or in their general education classroom through inclusion support. Students served under 504 are provided services by the classroom and dyslexia teachers according to the student's individual accommodation plan which is updated annually. Along with these opportunities, Montessori classrooms are equipped with more than 400 multi-sensory materials and lessons, which allow teachers to remediate and accommodate continuously throughout the day.

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

Students in Garland ISD are identified as gifted and talented because they perform at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience or environment. These students show high-performance capabilities in a creative or artistic area and/or excel in a specific academic field. A gifted student is identified as academically gifted in math/science and/or academically gifted in English language arts & reading/social studies. Students in Garland ISD are identified as gifted based on state-approved math and reading achievement tests, state-approved ability tests, and parent and teacher surveys. Students identified as gifted have the opportunity to accelerate and expand their learning. More than 400 materials enable students the benefit of remaining with their peer group while being challenged beyond grade level expectations. Due to the multi-age, mixed ability classrooms, students performing above grade level have the opportunity to explore and learn above grade level content. Older students typically present high interest lessons to their younger peers. Students qualify for talented services by meeting exceptional criteria assessed in art and music. Visual arts qualification consists of a portfolio and an in-person assessment. Herfurth's art teacher collaborates with teachers to identify students who demonstrate exceptional talent in art. Staff collaborate and collect artwork for the student's portfolio. These identified talented artistic students complete the same projects as their peers in class but are given more opportunities to extend their creativity, allowing them to grow and think outside of the box. Musical qualification consists of performing in a vocal or instrumental performance and an in-person performance. Herfurth's music teacher differentiates by creating extensions of the regular music activities that challenge these talented students to push themselves. Each teacher is gifted and talented certified. This certification enables teachers to differentiate lessons with depth and complexity, while meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Dr. Maria Montessori developed the Montessori curriculum over 200 years ago while working with children who had intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Montessori curriculum is designed to help all children reach their full potential. The varying abilities created by grade-level grouping eliminates feelings of being academically ahead or behind in relation to peers. Individualized instruction allows students to progress at their own pace while being challenged at their appropriate level. Students who have been evaluated and identified with a disability have an Individual Evaluation Plan and receive services in their area of need daily. Disabilities served include autism, academic learning disabilities, speech language impairment, auditory impairment, emotional disturbance, and other health impairments such as ADHD. Herfurth has two certified special education teachers, an audiologist, an occupational therapist, as well as a

special education aide who provides both inclusion and pull-out services. Two certified academic language therapists are on staff to deliver the district dyslexia intervention program and to work alongside teachers to support the dyslexic students. A full time speech language pathologist provides speech therapy to the 67 students identified with a speech impairment. She also provides speech services for 11 autistic students. Goals are set and monitored for students receiving services for articulation, language and fluency disorders. Students receive speech therapy one to two times a week in a small group setting to support their communication skills in an academic setting. Students with language disorders get help developing expressive, receptive and social language skills. For students with articulation disorders, instruction focuses on how different speech sounds are produced and how to correctly make the sounds in their own speech. Fluency services help students learn about stuttering, how to be confident in their speech, and what strategies can be used to reduce tension while speaking.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

The one-way dual language program uses students' native language to develop grade-level content knowledge, while simultaneously developing the English language so students have full proficiency in both languages. The goals are for students to become bilingual and biliterate, achieve high academic achievement, and cross-cultural proficiency. Teachers use sheltered instruction strategies for emergent bilinguals in their content-area instruction. The two goals of sheltered instruction are to make content comprehensible and to develop academic language. Research-based practices are used in all grade levels and content areas to ensure Emergent Bilinguals are fully engaged in meaningful and rigorous learning. Newly enrolled students, who speak a language other than English at home, are administered a language proficiency test to determine English proficiency. In pre-K through first grade, only the oral language test is administered. Students in second through fifth grade are tested in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee, (LPAC), reviews all information and determines the initial instructional placement of the student in the appropriate program and determines the initial placement of the student with parent approval. The LPAC is composed of one administrator, one bilingual or ESL teacher, and one parent. There are three types of LPACs that require the full committee: beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of year (EOY). During BOY LPACs, the committee meets to review the newly enrolled students' language data, and recommend placement. Teachers decide on classroom accommodations for their emergent bilingual students. During the (MOY) LPACs, the committee meets to recommend language of assessment and accommodations needed for state testing. These recommendations are based on individual student needs and data. The (EOY) LPACs utilize the Emergent Bilingual/English Learner Reclassification Criteria Chart to determine appropriate reclassification or exit criteria for each student.

### **3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

The homeless, migrant, and military families participate in "other special population" conferences within the first two weeks of enrolling at Herfurth. They are provided detailed welcome packets with school information and resources for assistance and support. Families complete student residency questionnaires if they are experiencing hardship or needing assistance. The Garland/Rowlett/Sachse Giving Place was designed with the district homeless families in mind as well as families with hardships. Students identified with needing assistance with school uniforms, personal hygiene and/or school supplies are referred and receive assistance. In addition, the school counselor connects families in need with outside agencies to receive services such as Thanksgiving and other holiday meals and gifts. Military families are assisted with enrollment, finding local community resources and transitioning into the district by both the campus contact and the District Military Connected Liaison. The designated Herfurth Campus Champion, the counselor, assists foster students and parents with their educational needs. Kindergarten and first grade students are screened annually using DIBELS to identify which students may be at risk for dyslexia. If a student is flagged for having characteristics of dyslexia, a conference with the classroom teacher, administrator, dyslexia therapist, school counselor, and parent is held to determine if further testing is needed. If assessment reflects the student has dyslexia, they will begin receiving services provided by one of the two Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALT) housed on campus. The CALTs deliver a dyslexia intervention program provided by the school district, to the 56 students at Herfurth identified with dyslexia. They provide students with the tools they need to succeed by promoting self-advocacy and providing

scientifically proven evidence-based intervention. The goal is for every student with dyslexia to thrive academically and confidently through individual intervention support in their learning environment. Within the last year, 15 students have successfully exited the dyslexia program.



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

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

Teachers motivate and engage students through goal setting. Creating work plans allows students to set goals for completing work each day or week. Teachers hold students to high expectations to motivate them intrinsically. Many teachers have students graph their growth for the MAP assessment three times a year to visualize their growth. Goal setting teaches students to be accountable for their own learning. Much of the success at Herfurth Elementary can be attributed to students taking ownership of their own learning. For the 2021-2022 school year, Herfurth received an A accountability ranking. To celebrate and motivate students to perform well this year, Herfurth hosted an “Amazing A” party. Students who met their growth on the STAAR Interim test were given the opportunity to dunk the principal at the party. This encourages students to continue meeting academic goals.

Students are welcomed at the classroom door with a welcome ritual, which increases connectedness and a sense of belonging. The kindness pledge is displayed in the main hallway and in the classrooms to encourage a culture of kindness. The counselor shares kindness and social emotional learning (SEL) lessons and tips throughout the year to continue the students’ social emotional growth. Teachers choose their SEL lessons based on current classroom social emotional needs. Many classrooms partner to create buddies with students in other grade levels. This encourages social interaction with peers outside of the classroom and teaches leadership and listening skills. Small group counseling is provided by the school counselor. Students are chosen by their teachers to focus on specific social emotional deficits. An example of a small group is the anger group. The most recent survey shows an increase in students’ self-regulation after participating in the group.

The fourth and fifth grade students participate in Bronco TV, the morning announcements that are broadcast to all classrooms. Bronco TV student-newscasters write their own scripts each day to include the daily lunch menus, motivational quotes, and events that are happening during the week. This broadcasting experience exposes students to careers such as broadcasting and journalism. This develops students’ public speaking experience as well as the skills acquired to produce the daily segments. Fifth grade students take a field trip to the Garland ISD Gilbreath-Reed Career and Technical Center to explore the college and career opportunities provided by the district, which further promotes college and career readiness. Herfurth’s college week highlights different colleges and careers to show students the many options they have post high school.

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

When families, schools, and communities work together, academic success is increased. Herfurth Elementary holds many community building activities such as Porch Party, Spring Market, curriculum nights, Neighborhood Block Party, Veterans Day ceremonies, Field Day, and Celebration of Life. The Celebration of Life is used to honor student birthdays. Students carry a globe around the sun starting and stopping at their birth month to represent each year of their life on Earth. Parents are encouraged to attend and help tell the story of their child’s life.

Multiple communication strategies are used to keep the families informed, including a weekly parent newsletter, parent call-outs, and monthly home calendars. Classroom teachers use an online portfolio platform to communicate daily with parents and showcase classroom work. Students also have the opportunity to post their classwork throughout the day using technology devices to further engage families and showcase their works.

Many community partners support the campus throughout the year with acts of service. Herfurth has community partnerships with First Christian Church, Rest Haven Funeral Home, Life Message Resource Center, Chick-Fil-A, and MPACT Ministries, which works to unite churches, schools and communities. In addition, families and students participate in community service projects to give back and improve the lives of others. Herfurth’s food drive collected 784 pounds of food for the community food pantry. The sock drive

and toiletries drive also helped those in need.

Two of Herfurth's most impactful teams are the Campus Improvement Team (CIT) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The CIT is composed of parents, teachers, and business representatives within the community, as well as, one school district representative. The CIT meets four times a year and helps the principal set campus objectives and monitor the progress of each goal on this Campus Improvement Plan. PTA hosts a multitude of events at Herfurth and communicates with families through monthly bilingual newsletters and PTA meetings. Their activities include Paint Night, Parent Appreciation Day, Zumba, Reading for Treats, and Multicultural Night. One of their largest PTA events is the annual Pancakes with Santa that hosts approximately 500 Herfurth students and families, as well as community members and families outside of school. The local firemen help cook and serve pancakes and community vendors are part of the event. All events at Herfurth Elementary are focused on being student-centered. The goal is to allow entire families to be involved when possible, and to model the importance of family and community engagement.

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

The Herfurth team has embraced a culture of learning and professional growth. Each Montessori teacher on campus attends a rigorous, multi-year training to become Montessori certified through AMS. Through this training they learn and become familiarized with the Montessori philosophy, classroom, and materials. They also collaborate with adult learners from all over the state. Once the school year has started, there are several district wide professional development opportunities for teachers to gather ideas from other teachers within the district. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are held weekly for teams to collaborate, plan, and assist in reaching each other's full potential. This time is utilized to align the Montessori curriculum with the state standards to ensure student success on the state assessments. Many of the PLCs are also driven by the array of data teachers have access to which guides daily instruction.

Herfurth teachers are lifelong learners and participate in professional learning opportunities. Teachers have sought out more knowledge of the Science of Reading, behavior, and the Montessori method. Currently there are five staff members attending a two-year long foundational reading skills training. This training will equip them with further knowledge of the Science of Reading and how to better assist the early readers and struggling readers in their classrooms. The discipline team is composed of 10 staff members who participated in a year-long positive discipline book study and shared their findings with the staff during a professional development day. In addition to the discipline team, the GISD Special Education department has provided behavior training to the staff. The American Montessori Society hosts an annual conference which provides a variety of professional learning opportunities, such as positive discipline in a Montessori classroom to the Montessori approach and innovative technology. Each year, both administrators and at least one teacher per grade level travel and attend this conference to gather ideas to bring back to the staff.

The Herfurth Elementary sunshine committee focuses on increasing staff morale and supporting each other. The committee celebrates special events in staff lives like baby showers or wedding showers. The sunshine committee also supports staff through illnesses or loss in their families. For appreciation days, the sunshine committee recognizes these staff members by providing lunch from a restaurant of their choosing. The faculty Christmas party is also hosted by the sunshine committee as well as several potluck lunches for teacher community and fellowship.

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

Herfurth's leadership team is best known as servant leaders. They believe that by putting the needs of others first, they empower them and create the conditions for them to be at their best. When the staff and community observe the leadership team's actions of passion and commitment, they want to be connected to them. According to Ken Blanchard, "Servant-Leadership is all about making the goals clear, and then rolling your sleeves up and doing whatever it takes to help people win." The servant-leader creates a culture of trust, has an unselfish mindset, fosters leadership in others, and collaborates with others.

The principal and assistant principal's leadership philosophy aligns with this quote from Oprah Winfrey, NBRS 2023

“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people, for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.” The administrators build leadership capacity by actively listening, developing trust, and building relationships while guiding the teachers on how to use best practices in closing the gaps and ensuring student achievement.

The school counselor is dedicated to promoting a positive school environment while improving the academic, career and social emotional development of all students. She works with students individually and in small groups to meet students' individual social and emotional needs. She is the campus 504 coordinator and facilitates the evaluation, identification and support to students and families.

The instructional coach helps close the gaps in student learning and increases student achievement by: providing professional development aligned to campus needs and district initiatives, co-teachers with teachers, provides feedback from walk-throughs in coaching conferences, and ensures teachers are implementing strategies from the Texas Reading Academies.

Herfurth's office staff consists of the secretary, receptionist, and data clerk, who are the foundation of the school. They are hands on deck all day every day with a smile. As a team they take care of the attendance, answer questions and communicate with parents, provide teachers with support, help mentor students who are experiencing challenges, and step in to help wherever they are needed.

Lastly, the teachers take the time to build strong relationships with their students and families. They cultivate a love for learning for students and provide support to parents on ways to grow their child using Montessori methods. They meet weekly to assess data, work collaboratively to close gaps, and ensure success for all students.

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

Each morning the teachers host a welcoming ritual or morning meeting. Many of these meetings include a mood meter where teachers can get a sense of how students are feeling. Once the teacher has done the mood meter, students take over and lead the class through calendar and discussions. This is also a time where teachers focus on SEL lessons. The Montessori approach naturally creates a culturally responsive environment. The focus on cultural awareness shows that many students have a great understanding of the cultures around them. Many classrooms celebrate holidays around the world all year long as different cultures celebrate throughout the year. Students come from many diverse backgrounds and bring their own cultural knowledge to the classroom. While learning about different areas of the world, students experience the world with all five senses. Students listen or play music native to that culture, while tasting food from the culture. An example would be when the primary, lower, and upper elementary each selected a different continent to research, prepare visuals, and present. In art class, students created passports to be stamped as they visited each continent. Students lead this event by dressing up in native garb and sharing their creations and knowledge to families and students. The multicultural celebrations highlight the diversity of Herfurth Elementary, which further emphasizes Herfurth's mission to develop the whole child and global citizens.

Examples of culturally responsive teaching in the classrooms include the cultural curriculum, choice, and the peace curriculum. Allowing students to have a choice in their education guides students to their personal interest and strengths. The talent show showcases students' sense of identity, where they students perform dances and music from their cultures. One example is a group of students performing a Folklorico dance each year.

The many different cultures are highlighted in the school's trophy case. Throughout the year visitors can see it decorated in support of Hispanic Heritage month, Black History, Women's History Month, and other cultural awareness themes. Students research and celebrate the diverse cultures and contributions of heroes throughout these themes.

Each November, students have the opportunity to participate in the PTA Reflections contest, where they submit an original work aligned to the theme. This year's theme was “Show Your Voice” and many students

took the opportunity to showcase their talents and express themselves. Four Herfurth students advanced to the state level for this competition.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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Staying true to the Montessori philosophy of following the child, Herfurth teachers ensure each child's needs are met. This is accomplished through individualized student Montessori work plans. Students use this organizational planning tool and unique lesson plan to determine what assignments need to be completed. Students have freedom of choice for the order of their lessons; however, they have requirements for how many works to complete daily. These requirements are varied depending on the learning environment and each child's individual learning accommodations. Work plans are divided into different sections: language, math, and cultural, with subsections tailored to the curriculum. For each subsection, lessons are listed on each student's academic level. These lessons are aligned to state standards, differentiated, and varied. In utilizing work plans, students take initiative of their own education, self-monitor, and set goals of what they will learn and accomplish.

Individualized work plans are a student-centered approach, which is facilitated by the teacher. Herfurth teachers utilize knowledge of their students, based on observation and data, to guide and intentionally sequence instruction. This allows teachers to close students' gaps in knowledge and extend their learning. They monitor understanding through individual and small group lessons. While doing systematic check-ins, teachers are able to support, clarify, and provide feedback to the students, so that they may continue to move forward to the next lesson. Teachers observe, take anecdotal notes, and reteach to ensure student mastery has been achieved. Explicit and discreet checks for understanding allow teachers to ask probing questions and raise the rigor with higher level questioning. Students are independent learners, and their recipe for learning is carefully crafted by the teacher.

One of the benefits of the Montessori work plans is that they are intentionally designed to meet the many needs of each student. Each work plan is tailored to each student's academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. These plans also incorporate students' interest because teachers know their students in depth and understand that tying their learning to their interests increases engagement and understanding. Montessori work plans provide individualization on so many levels that teachers are able to close gaps, challenge students, and continuously grow each learner. This focus on growth and individualization culminated recently when Herfurth was recognized as being in the top one percent of schools in Texas for Closing the Gaps and an overall A accountability rating, as well as 3/3 domain ratings of A, for the 2021-2022 school year.