

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Greg Freeman

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

Official School Name Kerr High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 8150 Howell Sugar Land Road

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

City Houston State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77083-5712

County Harris County

Telephone (281) 983-8484 Fax (281) 983-8014

Web site/URL http://www.aliefisd.net/kerr E-mail greg.freeman@aliefisd.net

Twitter Handle

https://twitter.com/AliefKerr Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. HD Chambers E-mail HD.Chambers@aliefisd.net

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

District Name Alief ISD Tel. (281) 498-8110

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 Mrs. Ann Williams

(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, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be 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.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
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. 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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

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

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	106	119	225
10	92	119	211
11	95	95	190
12 or higher	87	96	183
Total Students	380	429	809

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 64 % Asian
 - 12 % Black or African American
 - 20 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 4 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 1%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	787
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.005
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %
6 Total number ELL

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

Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 61 %
Total number students who qualify: 493

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
4 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 1 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 1 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 7
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	39
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals	18
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 21:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	99%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	185
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	56%
Enrolled in a community college	32%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	12%

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

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2010

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

Kerr High School gives students the freedom and responsibility to take control of learning and develop skills necessary for success in post-secondary education and beyond.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend. Students must live in the Alief Independent School District attendance zone and complete an application to attend Kerr High School. Students are chosen based upon grades, attendance, discipline history, standardized test scores, teacher/counselor recommendations, and a short written response by both student and parent.

PART III – SUMMARY

Kerr High School is a non-traditional public school of choice located in the Alief Independent School District in Houston, Texas. Founded in 1994, Kerr was created to provide an alternative to the traditional classroom by giving students the freedom and responsibility to take control of their learning while developing the critical thinking, social, and academic skills necessary for success in post-secondary endeavors.

As a Title I school district, Alief serves the most ethnically diverse community of its size in the state. Virtually every culture is represented in its 48,000 student enrollment; more than 80 languages and dialects are spoken. Approximately 800 students in grades nine through 12 attend Kerr. About 61 percent of Kerr's students are low-income and 15 percent are at-risk of dropping out. At some point, 66 percent have been identified as limited English proficient. Kerr's enrollment reflects diversity in ethnicity, beliefs, and culture (20% Hispanic, 12% African-American, 64% Asian, 4% white); many students are children of first-generation immigrants.

Since 2008-09, Kerr has achieved the Texas Education Agency's highest accountability rating. In 2015, Kerr earned all seven distinction designations on the Texas Education Agency School report card for Academic Achievement in Reading/ELA, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Top 25% Student Progress, Top 25% Closing Performance Gaps, Top 25% Post-secondary Readiness, and met all eligible measures of state system safeguards for federal accountability. Annually since 2010, Kerr has been named a top five Houston-area school by the education advocacy group Children At-Risk.

The Kerr experience begins with the accelerated block schedule. Similar to college, students take four different one-credit courses during each 18-week semester. The day starts with a 25-minute multi-grade level advisory and is divided into four 90-minute class periods. Students have the flexibility to follow their schedules or switch classes depending on learning demands.

Kerr is structured around a powerful motivational strategy: student ownership of learning through self-management and choice. As students are offered opportunities to take ownership of their learning, they are more engaged and take responsibility for their education. Student self-management and choice are incorporated into the school's culture. Curriculum is delivered via learning guides. Students choose the order, activities, and pace of their learning within teacher-determined time frames. Teachers provide seminars with focus lessons and guided practice; however, the majority of time available to students is for collaborative and independent work.

Collaborative learning is an integral part of student self-management. The school is physically divided into large centers for each curriculum department. In each center, there are students from all grade and academic course levels, similar to a one room schoolhouse. Centers are designed for small group work with areas designated for seminars or individual study. This design encourages students to choose their approach to learning. It fosters collaboration and student talk while offering options for individual work or teacher-led seminars. Collaboration is also encouraged within the curriculum; teachers design activities that require paired and small group interaction.

Responsibility and self-management are further supported by the resources available to students as well as campus communication. The web-based learning management system offers students the option of working from anywhere and at any time. They have access to online instructional support, learning guides, and resources that meet their individual learning needs. Students must use peers, teachers and outside resources to be successful. School communication mimics the type used in college and the professional world. Students must learn to check emails, electronic calendars, discussion boards, text alerts, and social media in order to develop the skills required to be responsible and self-managing.

Students have access to a robust counseling and fitness program for socio-emotional and physical growth. In addition to academic counselors, students have access to a Special Programs counselor who works with students individually and in small groups to address students' socio-emotional needs. A College Access counselor is provided to help students navigate the complex pathways from high school to college. Physical growth is encouraged through open access to the fitness center for all students throughout the school day. This provides students the opportunity to continue working on the goals established in their fitness courses.

Success of Kerr's approach is evidenced by statistics from the National Student Clearinghouse. Kerr's seven-year average of students enrolling in college the first year after high school graduation is 90 percent. The average persistence rate (college retention rate after the first collegiate year) over the last six years is 96 percent.

Receiving the 2010 Blue Ribbon Award validated efforts internally and legitimized the value of the Kerr experience externally. Having a nationally recognized school affirmed the efforts of students and staff while revitalizing its presence in the district and community. This recognition gave families within the community the incentive to stay and attracted those outside the district to move into Alief for the opportunity to attend Kerr.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Kerr High School’s curriculum offers on-level, Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP), Advanced Placement (AP), and dual enrollment courses aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. AP courses also meet College Board’s Advanced Placement standards while dual enrollment courses adhere to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board standards. To help students become self-managing learners, curriculum is delivered through learning guides, giving students the freedom to work at a pace appropriate for their levels of understanding and to choose when and where academic work occurs. The learning guides are developed using district curriculum guides aligned to the TEKS. The effectiveness of addressing state and national standards through the learning guides is analyzed using data from campus, state, and national assessments. This analysis leads to revisions and updates to ensure the learning guides meet these standards.

In English/Language Arts, emphasis is on research-driven, student-centered activities, grammar, and both classic and modern literature. Most students read at grade level, so the curriculum focus is on strengthening thinking, reasoning, and communication skills through discussions, presentations, research, and writing. Students learn to take Cornell Notes for seminars, summary writing, and study. Writing workshops are offered to strengthen communication skills. Peer-editing and collaboration involve students in all stages of the writing process. In order to improve writing skills, students identified with below average skills are provided peer and online tutorials as well as individualized feedback from staff on essays and responses. Students with high academic skills strengthen these skills by providing peer-editing and feedback to students in lower level courses and are encouraged to complete Pre-AP/AP courses which support growth through a more challenging curriculum.

Math department teachers work collaboratively to create learning guides which provide a balanced math program that develops students’ competencies and basic skills as well as the capacity to reason analytically and apply problem solving skills to new situations. Teachers working together as a team allows vertical alignment of curriculum ensuring there are no gaps in mathematical skill attainment from one level to the next. Most students are above level in math and take algebra or geometry in middle school. They are enrolled in Pre-AP courses which focus on the math skills needed to continue along a track towards AP Calculus and/or AP Statistics. Blended learning programs are used to accommodate different learning styles and allow for interactive, online tutorials and practice. The instructional program also integrates calculator, computer, reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Student pullouts allow teachers to work with small groups in need of extra instruction and reinforcement while students identified with low math skills are encouraged to attend after school tutorials and given extra assistance using technology, study groups, peer tutors, and one-on-one instruction.

Science curriculum is lab-based with virtual, hands-on, and field studies allowing students to inquire and explore topics in all content areas. The department’s focus is on creating holistic connections between science courses and college/career readiness that support and challenge all levels of students. Students work in collaborative, mixed-ability level small groups and teacher-led seminars are provided throughout the day in response to student needs. Direct exploration is supplemented with online resources and “science teacher on-demand,” a series of instructional videos produced by faculty and other educators. Online access to all materials is also available to students. Struggling students get additional help during class or after school and are offered alternative assignments, labs, and assessments to relearn and demonstrate mastery of the curriculum. High achieving students enrolled in the Pre-AP/AP learning track are provided with additional labs and learning experiences in preparation for AP testing.

Social studies curriculum emphasizes writing, research, and critical thinking skills to help students develop a general understanding and appreciation of social studies concepts. These skills are developed through self-study, collaboration, performance tasks, project based learning, document-based questioning, simulation activities, and one-on-one instruction. To address the unique needs of the struggling learners, instructors reinforce content using different instructional strategies. These interventions include teacher generated study guides, student study groups, the use of various online academic resources and abundant opportunities for

face-to-face tutorials. Students with high academic skills are able to extend understanding with project based learning opportunities and the option of taking additional advanced courses.

1.a. Kerr's focus on college readiness has proven effective in preparing graduates for college. Because the core curriculum provides a rigorous academic foundation, most students take Pre-AP and AP courses, and the instructional delivery method prepares students to be self-managing, they have the academic knowledge and behavioral skills needed to be successful in college. This is evidenced by a large percent of students scoring at the post-secondary readiness level on all state and national assessments, 90 percent of students enrolling in college the first year after high school, and 96 percent returning for their sophomore year.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The Visual and Performing Arts department includes band, orchestra, choir, theatre, art, and speech and debate. Every student must have a fine arts credit for graduation. However, over 80 percent of Kerr students are actively involved in visual or performing arts beyond the minimum high school credit. Each department participates in at least four competitions or performances yearly. Instruction is delivered through a variety of methods including teacher and peer critique, observation, modeling, and web-based instruction. The work is highly academic and performance-based. Examples include: incorporating research projects with theatre performances, journaling, in-depth analysis, and project evaluation in art classes, and studying current/past events for use in debates. Students incorporate skills from multiple academic areas into performances and productions. The Visual and Performing Arts department builds the curriculum on the TEKS essential skills and knowledge but also educates beyond those expectations, giving students college and professional level experience. The willingness to set higher expectations allows students to be far more prepared for college programs and the professional arenas.

Kerr's Health and Fitness Program is offered to all students and utilizes research that indicates exercise promotes cognitive function, boosts scores, and supports learning. The fitness program enhances the acquisition of the knowledge and skills in all curriculum areas using action-based learning. Fitness courses follow a blended learning model, integrating student and teacher-led instruction, online learning guides, and state-of-the-art fitness and technological tools to meet state curriculum standards. Attitudes toward fitness and nutrition are transformed by providing an up-to-date facility, action-based learning curriculum, and various activity choices. With a facility that has a health club appeal, students are immersed in an atmosphere that promotes healthier choices. Not only is the curriculum focused on action-based learning and its benefit to cognitive function, students are also encouraged to make healthy nutritional choices. The "Healthy Snack Bar" provides students and staff the opportunity to apply healthy principles in their everyday food choices. Healthy habits are instilled by combining nutritional science, facilities which allow students a variety of activity choices, and a fun, supportive environment.

Foreign language offerings in the classroom include on-level Spanish I/II, Pre-AP Spanish III, and AP Spanish IV/VI courses. All students must earn at least two foreign language credits in order to graduate. Curriculum is based on the Texas 5 Cs: Communication, Connections, Cultures, Communities, and Comparisons. Instruction is delivered through multi-modal activities: flipped and blended learning, audio CDs, board and card games, presentations, and one-on-one conversations with teachers encouraging students to practice their target languages at every opportunity possible. Additional languages offered through distance learning include American Sign Language, French, German, Latin, and Chinese, depending on student demand and course availability.

Technology/Career-Technology Education (CTE) courses are offered to students in all grade levels and upon graduation, all students take at least one CTE or other technology course in computer science, computer applications, or digital art and media. Technology application TEKS are taught and reinforced across the curriculum with a focus on college and career readiness. These skills are embedded in all curriculum areas with students using an online learning management system that provides 24/7 access to curriculum and assignments, school provided email, cloud storage with the ability to collaborate, and research tools and resources. Kerr's technology courses focus on learning about hardware components, information input skills, laws, issues, and ethics in societal use of technology, research skills, and collaboration in order to deliver products in a variety of media formats. Classes teach skills in web design,

computer programming, digital media, video technology, business and finance, accounting, desktop publishing, animation, robotics, and Microsoft Office. The CTE department provides opportunities for students to earn certification in several programs including Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Master. A variety of devices including desktops, laptops, tablets, and Chromebooks as well as students' personal devices, ensure that technology is available on demand. Students also participate in state and national competitions through the Future Business Leaders of America chapter, Microsoft, National Center for Women and Information Technology, and student publication contests.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Kerr's instructional framework focuses on student-driven learning. Course content is delivered using teacher created learning guides. These guides deliver a rigorous curriculum while emphasizing the use of self-management skills and student choice. Learning guides are developed so students can choose from a variety of instructional methods, resources, and technologies. The arrangement of the academic center promotes working in small groups, which fosters collaboration, peer teaching, and student talk. Learners, however, are free to work individually. The teacher's role is to act as a resource for the learner by offering periodic large group seminars, small group discussions, and individual conferences. Independent study, one-to-one coaching, and peer tutoring are at the heart of Kerr's program. Learning guides create a culture of continual differentiation by giving students the ability to choose the instructional method, resources, and setting.

With the introduction of a learning management system seven years ago, blended learning is now commonplace. Teachers create a 24/7 learning experience by placing learning guides, calendars, and resources online. Using this blended system has opened up new resources and options; students have on demand instruction and remediation at their fingertips.

Transitioning from a traditional classroom to a self-managed environment is difficult for even the strongest student. Advisors, interventionists, and counselors create a campus intervention plan that supports this transition. The first line of intervention is the advisor who meets daily with students, tracks academic progress, and communicates with parents. Counselors and interventionists monitor individual student progress every three weeks. Struggling students are identified and guided through a continuum of customized interventions including peer/adult mentors, targeted conferencing, counseling groups, and tutorials.

A variety of resources are available to students beyond those interventions. The Good Habits after school program offers group seminars and individual sessions for those having difficulty learning self-management skills. Topics include organization, study skills, test anxiety, and procrastination. In preparation for the college experience, the after school program also offers students the opportunity to create study groups. Content teachers monitor the study groups and are available for assistance and tutorials.

With the use of learning guides, blended learning, and interventions, the number of students failing one or more courses has been reduced by 13 percent since 2010. Using this approach, there has been a 10 percent increase in the number of A's and B's earned over the last five years. Individualizing resources and interventions improves the outcomes for all learners.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Kerr uses a continuous improvement process to monitor and improve instruction and student learning. Results from a variety of sources are used to begin this improvement process. The assessment data comes from teacher developed campus assessments, state End of Course (EOC) exams, Advanced Placement tests, and the PSAT/SAT results. Data from these assessments are used to create campus-wide goals in the Campus Action Plan (CAP). In the fall, departments create goals aligned to the CAP using campus and departmental assessment results. They identify instructional strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to address areas of concern or improve areas of strength. Every nine weeks, departments use a formative review process which looks at new data to determine progress towards goals and effectiveness of strategies.

Teachers capitalize on the accelerated block schedule by analyzing fall state testing and campus course data to modify curriculum and interventions before spring testing and courses begin. In Algebra I, for example, the results of the EOC exam indicated solving linear equations was an area of weakness. Teachers identified where linear equations were addressed in the curriculum, created new activities, and provided additional resources in the learning guide to help students develop those necessary skills. Creating a culture using this improvement process has allowed Kerr's teachers to continually improve instruction in order to maintain a high level of student performance.

Kerr shares assessment results and their meaning with its stakeholders in a variety of ways. Beginning each school year, the principal communicates results from the prior year's assessments with students. Sharing this knowledge sets a standard of high expectations and underscores the value of putting effort into becoming self-managed learners. An explanation of how assessment results drive the creation of campus goals in the CAP is reviewed with Shared Decision Making Committee each fall. Through the district's home access portal, all students and parents have online access to local, state, and national assessment results. PSAT, SAT, and AP scores are also accessible online to parents, students, and staff through the College Board's website. Progress reports are sent home every three weeks, and report cards are mailed home every nine weeks. Kerr's staff conducts a public hearing to present Kerr's state accountability report card, providing detailed information and explanation of campus, state and national assessment results. For parents unable to attend, the report card is also available on the campus website.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Kerr High School's focus on student ownership of learning, a powerful engagement and motivational strategy, creates a culture structured around trust, responsibility, and self-management. This allows for student choice and independence in all aspects of school life. Students are given this freedom while being held accountable for productivity and progress. Developing skills that allow students a successful transition to and retention in college is the goal.

The transition to a learning experience that focuses on student responsibility and self-management is often challenging. It requires positive, supportive relationships between staff and students. At the core is the advisory program which allows teachers time to build positive relationships with individual students. Beginning each school day with a supportive adult and close-knit group of peers helps students develop the trust necessary to take risks and grow academically and emotionally. The flexible structure of the academic centers and ease of access to support staff stimulates interaction between students and adults. These on-going conversations ensure individual needs are quickly identified and addressed.

Students are offered a variety of positive leadership opportunities fostering diversity of thought and emotional growth. For instance, No Tiger Left Behind pairs freshmen with upper-class mentors to assist in the high school transition. Mentors are trained to build relationships and help freshmen develop the psycho-social and behavioral skills that support academic success. The many clubs and organizations offered at Kerr are run by students with teacher guidance. Providing students the opportunity to develop leadership skills and positive relationships with both adults and peers creates an environment that encourages personal growth.

The ownership extended to students is also given to the staff. Teachers are treated as professionals with the freedom to identify concerns, make decisions, and solve problems. The administration encourages teachers to implement new ideas and has the patience to allow these ideas to grow. The Kerr campus as a whole and individual departments continually look at data to identify strengths and areas of concern. Once these areas are targeted, teachers are empowered to make decisions in instructional design, delivery, and assessment. Weekly, students are released an hour early, allowing teacher collaboration in Professional Learning Communities and conversations centered on identifying and solving problems. Working together reviewing student results and determining courses of action extends teachers' ownership of instruction and student achievement.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Preparing college-ready students is Kerr's mission, and involving as many stakeholders as possible supports this goal. From business partners, community members, college representatives, parents, and students, to campus and district staff, stakeholders work together in the pursuit of student success.

Kerr utilizes a thorough, annual survey to shape the Campus Action Plan and the corresponding community and family engagement efforts. Data from this survey is used by campus committees to target and shape family and community programs. The core committee is the Shared Decision Making Committee (SDC) which empowers many different stakeholders. This committee is actively involved in the planning and operations of the school and its programs. It molds the Campus Action Plan and reviews the strategies for family and community engagement.

The Family and Community Engagement Committee coordinates the campus programs to engage, involve, and support outside stakeholders and maintains data to guide decision making. Promoting programs such as evening and weekend outreach with the local YMCA, parent breakfast events, evening sessions, and business partner activities, ensures district initiatives and family/student needs are met. A great deal of Family and Community Engagement Committee's focus involves the support and development of the college bound culture. Kerr offers students and families full-time access to an on campus college center and

designated college access counselor. FAFSA assistance, career counseling, Texas Success Initiative-Accuplacer testing, and scholarship application assistance are offered regularly in the center. A variety of online resources are available to support family college planning. Counselors team with students and parents during yearly, individual conferences to ensure continual progress towards post-high school goals.

The high success rate of Kerr students in college enables a partnership with a large and diverse list of institutions of higher education. Working with higher education partners to provide college field trips, FAFSA presentations, professor visits, virtual tours, mobile testing and admissions programs, and on campus college representatives, students and families are supported in making informed decisions about college.

Focusing on the skills and information parents need in order to support their child's college education lays the foundation for the relationships needed to ensure student success at Kerr and beyond.

3. Professional Development:

Professional Development (PD) is an important focus of the Alief Independent School District; teachers' contracts include 14 hours for individual PD during the year. District-wide training focuses on state curriculum standards, vertically aligning curriculum K-12, instructional methodology, safe and civil schools, and technology.

Most of Kerr's faculty is Gifted-Talented (GT) certified. Teachers attend Advanced Placement (AP) and GT institutes and workshops offered by the district, Region 4 Educational Service Center, and Houston Area GT Co-op to maintain proficiency and learn new strategies. These strategies are applied in all courses to increase instructional rigor and address AP exams. Teachers are required to complete at least three hours of yearly technology training. The district required Level I technology proficiency has been attained by one hundred percent of Kerr's staff.

Campus-based PD begins with the Campus Action Plan to ensure activities are aligned with state academic standards and support student achievement. Data is analyzed by the leadership team, campus committees, and content departments to identify areas of strength and concerns to be addressed through PD. Based upon this analysis, funding for PD is allocated using both local and Title I monies. Every nine weeks, current data is reviewed to see if the strategies developed in the action plan are effectively meeting student needs. After this review, new strategies are often created which lead to new PD. This process ensures that the PD offered supports the staff in meeting the ever changing needs of students and promotes student growth and achievement.

An example of this process is the utilization of district surveys given to parents, students, and staff. After results were analyzed, building effective relationships was identified as a need. Campus PD addressed this area of concern by implementing strategies with students during advisory and improving staff communication with parents. Effectiveness of the strategies was measured by collecting feedback to identify the need for further PD.

The enhancement of student and staff technology skills is another point of emphasis for Kerr's PD. A major focus has been the development of communication and collaboration tools within the online environment and use of learning management systems to allow students 24/7 access to curriculum, resources and course management tools (calendars, discussion boards, and email). Kerr's staff has been able to implement a technology-rich environment using these skills which have given students the opportunity to strengthen online skills needed for college.

4. School Leadership:

Kerr's leadership philosophy stems from the belief that success is obtained through shared responsibility and decision making. The small size of the school allows all stakeholders opportunities to participate. The principal and assistant principal guide and support the staff in making decisions and implementing programs aligned with Kerr's mission, values, and goals.

The leadership team (counselors, administration, interventionists, media/technology integrators) meets weekly to share information, analyze problems, review student achievement, and collaborate on solutions. This variety of voices brings diverse perspectives to discussions. The frequency of the meetings ensures quick responses to problems, frequent implementation of new ideas, and a common understanding of Kerr's direction. These meetings are open to all staff and minutes are shared online.

The principal meets monthly with content department chairs to discuss campus curriculum, instruction, student achievement data, and to exchange information from district level meetings and departmental professional learning communities. Department chairs share this information and lead discussions centered on student learning with content team members. This two-way communication promotes teacher-driven strategies which meet campus needs and are aligned with Kerr's mission.

Kerr's SDC, composed of staff, parents, students, and community members, is an active part of the leadership structure. This committee reviews and approves the Campus Action Plan which sets goals, lists strategies, and allocates resources aligned to Kerr's focus on student achievement. Along with the leadership team, this committee quarterly evaluates student achievement data to monitor Kerr's progress towards meeting goals established by the CAP. SDC's involvement in this leadership process ensures campus goals, programs, and resources are focused on student success and Kerr is held accountable for making progress towards campus goals.

Students are an integral part of the campus leadership. Student Council and National Honor Society presidents are actively involved in the SDC. Students also serve with staff and administration on committees addressing campus policies and Safe School initiatives. Monthly, student club and organization leadership meet with the principal over lunch, offering suggestions and providing feedback on campus issues. Student officers work closely with staff sponsors to plan and implement school activities and events.

Campus leadership focuses policies, programs, resources, and stakeholders on student achievement. As stakeholders are offered opportunity to take leadership responsibility, they become more engaged and invested in Kerr's success. By sharing the responsibility for achieving Kerr's mission and goals, staff, students, and parents join the administration as an integral part of Kerr's leadership structure.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Kerr High School boasts not only an outstanding college enrollment rate (six year average of 90 percent), but a remarkable college persistence rate from freshman to sophomore years of 96 percent during this same time period. Kerr's instructional approach using learning guides is one practice leading to this success.

Students arrive at Kerr already successful in a traditional learning environment. By moving out of comfort zones and immersion in a self-directed environment with learning guides and minimal teacher-led instruction, they are prepared for the challenges that await them post high school. Students quickly realize that in order to be successful, they must take ownership of their learning, develop personal management skills, and work collaboratively.

Through learning guides, Kerr's staff gives students the freedom, trust, and responsibility to make choices about learning which leads to the development of student ownership of learning and personal management skills. Students determine how to utilize time throughout the day. They also make choices about learning in ways unique to their interests, learning styles, and strengths. Learning to make appropriate choices of how, where, and when to learn, while meeting high academic standards, is critical for success in college. Students also develop the personal management skills such as organization, time management, and problem solving that will successfully transition them into college. They must meet deadlines, take the initiative to check online course calendars and syllabi, locate resources and information, and communicate with teachers and staff online and face-to-face. Because students must be active participants in learning, they take ownership of their educational progression.

Learning to work collaboratively proves essential, and students must develop this skill in order to be academically successful not only at Kerr, but in real work situations. Kerr's physical and curricular design fosters collaboration and student talk while offering options for individual study. Students have the opportunity to participate in one-to-one, small group, and large group study sessions with adults and peers to enhance learning. This collaborative effort creates a rich, motivating learning experience.

Learning guides provide student ownership of learning and develop personal management skills. Working in a variety of collaborative settings allows students to develop the skills necessary for academic progression through high school while preparing for college success.