

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 [X] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Berta Fogerson

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

Official School Name Margaret Talkington School for Young Women Leaders

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 415 North Ivory Avenue

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

City Lubbock State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79403-3411

County Lubbock County

Telephone (806) 219-2200 Fax (806) 766-1738

Web site/URL http://talkington.lubbockisd.org/ E-mail bfogerson@lubbockisd.org

Twitter Handle Facebook Page
https://twitter.com/Talkin https://www.facebook.com/talkingtonschoolforyoungw
gtonSywl omenleaders/?ref=hl 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*Dr. Berhl Robertson Jr. E-mail brobertson@lubbockisd.org

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

District Name Lubbock Independent School District Tel. (806) 219-0070

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

Date

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. Dan Pope

(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):
- 32 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 10 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 5 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 47 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	101	101
7	0	89	89
8	0	72	72
9	0	66	66
10	0	48	48
11	0	32	32
12 or higher	0	39	39
Total Students	0	447	447

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 16 % Black or African American
 - 42 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 38 % White
 - 4 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

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

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	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	20
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	417
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.048
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
2 Total number ELL

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

Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53 %
Total number students who qualify: 236

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
1 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
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 1 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
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	3
Classroom teachers	19
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

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 23:1

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	97%	97%	97%	97%	95%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	31
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	61%
Enrolled in a community college	29%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	10%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

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

Yes No X

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

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

Our mission is to empower young women leaders through rigorous college preparatory experiences, health awareness, commitment to service and personal accountability for lifelong success.

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

Applicants who have a desire to succeed and attend college undergo a rigorous admissions process that begins with the completion of the Talkington School Admission Application and must include a student's letter of interest, two teacher recommendations, a personal interview, recent report card grades reflecting a 3.0 GPA, attendance records, and the most recent State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores. The personal interview is conducted with students who meet the criteria for admission and requires students to speak to their long range goals, interests, and academic strengths. Applicants are accepted at every grade level with the majority of students applying during their 5th grade year for admission to Margaret Talkington School For Young Women Leaders (TSYWL) middle school. The campus accepts between 100 and 110 incoming 6th graders each year. Students are accepted at other grade levels depending on capacity, and they go through the same admission process. Economically disadvantaged students are given priority consideration and are the first to be accepted if they meet the criteria for admission. Any places left to be filled are then assigned to qualifying Lubbock ISD students with any remaining slots designated for out-of-district transfers.

PART III – SUMMARY

The Margaret Talkington School for Young Women Leaders (TSYWL) is a Lubbock ISD specialty school created to serve the needs of first-generation, college-bound, economically disadvantaged young women in the Lubbock ISD community. The school's core values include: college preparatory academics, leadership development through community service, and health and wellness. Talkington opened in the fall of 2008 with a small group of 6th and 7th graders and now serves 450 girls in grades 6-12. TSYWL is an outgrowth of a public/private partnership with the Lubbock ISD, the Dallas-based Young Women's Preparatory Network, and the local Advisory Board. This partnership provides resources which allow Talkington students to engage in a rigorous academic program and participate in experiential activities with a college-bound emphasis, enrichment classes, and extended-year summer learning projects that enhance the college preparatory curriculum.

Science, mathematics, engineering and technology (STEM) receive special emphasis in the Talkington college preparatory program. Pre-Advanced Placement classes make up the course offerings beginning in sixth grade in English, mathematics, science and social studies. Advanced Placement (AP) classes are offered beginning in 9th grade. Students have classroom access to laptop computers, iPads, and Chromebooks and teachers integrate technology in their lessons. Physical education courses, foreign language, and fine arts electives complete the curriculum.

The Talkington staff is made up of 28 instructors. They teach, counsel, support, coach academic competitions, and sponsor a myriad of clubs and organizations in order to make the school as appealing to students as a traditional school might be. Finding teachers to take on this type of professional responsibility has been the key to the many successes the school has experienced.

Talkington students have the opportunity to experience a challenging college-preparatory curriculum in a truly unique, single-gender learning environment. Effectively marketing the school and drawing the population of young women that would best be served have been pressing milestones that had to be overcome. However, having earned the highest number of Texas Education Agency's performance distinctions in the last two years and being cited as #13 on the Washington Post's list of most challenging schools in America have validated the school's mission and purpose, and growth is at an all-time high.

The staff also recognizes the importance of meeting the emotional, physical, social, and cultural needs of the students so as to build resilience and insure future success in college. Specific lessons to develop such skills are delivered during Student Advisory. Advisory lessons focus on physical, social, and emotional development. As part of a partnership with a local hospital and university, an approved curriculum is delivered and includes lessons pertaining to self-accountability, goal setting, identity, safety and security, relationships, body image, physical activity, peer pressure, and nutrition. Resilience, self-care, and overall wellness are considered critical components in the development of well-rounded students.

Cultural development takes place in several forms. Exposure to the work of renowned artists, authors, philanthropists, scientists, entertainers, etc. is provided through a university partnership. When such talents are secured to speak or perform at the college campus, TSYWL students are provided with free admission and field trips are organized allowing students to take advantage of these opportunities. Often, the university arranges for special performances to take place at the school providing exposure for all. In addition, cultural awareness is embedded in the school curriculum with a deliberate effort to teach tolerance and appreciation for the value of diversity.

Character building is part of the educational experience and involves developing social awareness through service learning. Each student is expected to complete a specific number of community service hours each year in order to remain in good standing. These efforts support the development of young women into confident self-advocates and community leaders.

The success of the TSYWL can be attributed to different variables which include: the local advisory board who funds and supports the enhancement programs that enrich the curriculum; the Traditions Committee,

whose members have put in place: Transition Ceremonies for 6th and 9th graders, Letter Jacket Convocation, a Class Ring Ceremony, and the College Signing Celebration; community partnerships, wherein local leaders and groups mentor our students to provide internship opportunities; a rigorous college preparatory curriculum supported by AP and pre-AP professional development for teachers; extended day tutorial and intervention opportunities for students needing academic support; and parent education seminars including financial aid nights designed to help parents navigate through the FAFSA.

TSYWL has graduated two cohorts of students. The school maintains a 100% graduation rate with 100% acceptance to a four-year university and academic scholarships totaling 2.5 million dollars. Because of the private non-profit partnership, students are afforded more opportunities than what they would receive at a traditional school including: a full-time college advisor, payment of dual credit, AP, SAT, and ACT fees, summer camp experiences, college visits, dual credit fees, and PSAT prep seminars. These benefits help to balance the level of opportunity for less fortunate young women who strive to achieve in spite of their economic standing.

The school mission is to empower young women leaders through rigorous college preparatory experiences, health awareness, commitment to service, and personal accountability for life-long success. For the last eight years, the leadership, staff, school district, and the Lubbock community have invested time and resources to make the school thrive. In 2015, Talkington earned seven distinctions from the Texas Education Agency, ranking the school as one of the top performers in the state.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The basis of Talkington’s core curriculum is the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which delineate the performance standards for Texas students. Because TSYWL is a college preparatory school, the level of course work that the students are expected to complete requires that the basic curriculum be enhanced so that students learn to think with complexity. These efforts have proven successful as indicated by student performance data on state assessments and nationally normed exams.

Talkington’s English courses have been vertically aligned using two primary components of the TEKS curriculum: the Year At a Glance and the Instructional Focus Document. The curriculum presents an integrated study of reading, writing, listening, speaking, oral and written conventions, and research. The reading program, involving novels of literary merit, both fiction and nonfiction, builds college readiness skills, and prepares students for the AP exams. Foundational skills are gained through whole-class modeling and student-driven cooperative learning. Students make connections across curriculum, discover relevance, benefit from high-level discussions and questioning, and engage in problem-solving. Socratic seminars are also conducted to help students gain a deeper understanding about the ideas and values in a text. Formative assessments, student performance reports, and Lexile scores provide data to differentiate instruction. A balanced-literacy approach allows for high achieving students to excel via independent study and accelerated learning projects, while struggling students are provided with small group instruction and extended day tutorial support until achievement gaps are closed.

Math courses are aligned with the TEKS as well as with the standards for higher mathematics such as College Board and the dual credit university curriculum. Math classes are designed to promote rigor and real-world application, and teachers use a variety of instructional strategies as well as methods of direct teach, peer collaboration, and group activities to develop the college-bound math student. The goal of the middle school curriculum is to develop numeracy skills as well as to promote critical thinking skills in a variety of settings. Accelerated learners benefit from this approach in that it allows them to develop Algebra I readiness skills by the end of 7th grade. Math placement exams are administered at the end of 6th grade, and students who are unable to demonstrate readiness are scheduled to a double-blocked mathematics course in the 7th and 8th grade. This allows them additional time to acquire skills at a less rigorous pace and provides teachers with more time for intervention. A summer bridge program is also offered to promote Algebra I readiness. At the high school level, compulsory courses are structured to teach the skills and topics that are necessary for success in advanced math classes. High performing students are challenged through AP and dual credit course offerings, and after school tutorial time is available three times a week to support both high-achieving and below-level students. In addition, access to online math tutoring programs is available to ALL students.

TSYWL’s science curriculum is TEKS-based at the pre-AP level. The AP science courses are taught using the College Board curriculum with supplemental resources derived from the National Math + Science Initiative. Science instruction is delivered using an inquiry based approach and through project based learning experiences. Students engage in science exploration using various forms of data analysis. They are charged with taking ownership of their learning, and they are provided the freedom to demonstrate their mastery of material through individual product development. This approach allows above-level learners to have the freedom to approach learning with greater depth, and below-level learners have the opportunity to master the required skills at an adequate pace. Interactive note-taking skills are taught beginning in 6th grade establishing the framework for building annual portfolios in science. Students conduct laboratory and field investigations and make informed decisions using scientific methods, critical thinking, and scientific problem-solving skills. Assessment data is used to determine who receives small group intervention during Academic Enhancement or in the after-school tutorial program.

The social studies curriculum is also TEKS-based and is designed so that students can develop critical thinking skills through the analysis of primary and secondary source documents. Historical research is conducted at each grade level, and students are challenged to work collaboratively through project based

learning experiences. These experiences are embedded in the middle school pre-AP courses with the intent of developing higher order thinking and higher level questioning skills. This approach to social studies instruction prepares above-level students for the transition to AP coursework in high school. High achieving students are provided support through peer tutoring and scheduled study group sessions on Saturday mornings. Struggling students taking pre-AP courses, and may opt into AP once they prove successful. These students also benefit from small group instruction, tutorials, and individual support during academic enhancement time.

Talkington's key core value is to promote college and career readiness for all students. In order to achieve this, the academic preparation of all students must be designed and delivered with this goal in mind. Authentic assessments are used to measure mastery of the standards. Supplemental resources are used to enhance the TEKS-based curriculum enabling students to experience a deeper understanding of core content. Technology access in the form of a one-to-one Chromebook initiative for students enrolled in two or more AP classes reinforces the skills required of a 21st Century learner. Dual credit College Algebra, psychology, and sociology allow students to navigate through college level courses providing another experience which reinforces the school's mission to educate all students to the highest levels in preparation for post-high school success.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

With college readiness being one of the primary core values at Talkington, it is understood that developing well-rounded students is also a crucial developmental responsibility of the school. In order to accomplish this, elective courses are offered to provide opportunities for students to explore interests in areas outside of the academic core. The menu of elective courses enhances the learning that takes place in core classes, and students benefit from the exposure to visual and performing arts, technology, and foreign language.

The Fine Arts Program at Talkington involves the study of dance, music, and the visual arts. The music program consists of orchestra, piano, and choir. The curriculum for these courses is delivered using the state TEKS framework and students in grades 6th – 12th are eligible to participate in one or more areas for as long as they choose. Students in the music program are engaged and motivated through active learning, critical thinking, and problem solving. Students in middle and high school programs develop foundational knowledge in music literacy, creative expression, historical and cultural relevance, and critical evaluation and response. Dance is offered in 7th -12th grades. As students master the fundamentals of dance, they learn performance skills required for more complex choreography. Dance techniques in contemporary and jazz styles, in addition to the interpretive movements of modern dance, are included as part of the curriculum. Technology is incorporated in each program to enhance learning, and the College Board curriculum is used as the basis for instruction in AP Music Theory. This course is available to advanced music students in any of the aforementioned genres beginning in 10th grade.

Promoting health and wellness is one of our school's core values, and physical education classes are offered in grades 6th – 12th. Classes are taught using the TEKS standards designed to help students lead an active and healthy lifestyle. Students may also choose to be in athletics and participate in competitive sports including volleyball and basketball. The health and wellness curriculum enhances the instruction presented in PE through interactive, school-wide lessons delivered throughout the year. This curriculum is designed to develop and improve resilience, promote and empower self-care, and educate our youth about personal health.

At TSYWL students are eligible to take up to six years of Spanish beginning in 6th grade. The curriculum offers students the opportunity to advance from Spanish I-A/B to Spanish IV-AP Language and Literature. Language acquisition skills include basic vocabulary phrases and grammar presented through speaking, listening, reading and writing exercises intended to meet the TEKS goals of communication, cultures, connections, and communities at the novice level. These same skills are reinforced at more advanced levels of language usage, with the purpose of developing a strong foundation for future AP testing. Student expectations become more rigorous as they learn to read excerpts from Spanish Literature and conduct a majority of the conversation and content discussion in the foreign language. The students at TSYWL are expected to take a minimum of three years of Spanish so as to earn an advanced high school diploma.

Talkington SYWL offers technology courses in 6th -12th grades and allows students to pursue studies in this field throughout their high school career. Instruction is based on the skills and standards delineated in the TEKS for technology. Middle school students have the opportunity to take three levels of Electronic Media and progressively master skills in the use of various programs. In these courses, students are exposed to industry standard techniques and are introduced to concepts and design standards that prepare them for high school classes. Beginning in 9th grade, Digital Interactive Multi-Media (DIMM) is offered allowing students to learn the fundamentals of entry level graphic and video design skills. Students work with industry standard software and equipment. In Advanced Graphic Design, students work with individuals in the community and receive “real world” experience by working with a community client. Talkington students also have access to laptops, Chromebooks, iPads, and Kindles in the classroom, and teachers access interactive programs which allow students to collaborate on projects improving research and communication skills.

As part of the college readiness and transition to college initiative, Talkington seniors are required to participate in Senior Seminar, a capstone course that merges TEKS-based skills with real world applications. Senior Project has four components: research, product, portfolio, and oral presentation. The research conducted is based on a student’s topic of choice, and the product phase of the project is executed in a collaborative partnership with a community mentor who has expertise in the area of study. The oral presentation is made before a committee of teachers and community leaders, and the portfolio is part of the visual component required for the oral presentation. In Senior Seminar, students complete the four components of the Senior Project and are provided guidance and opportunity to complete activities for post-secondary education, such as admission applications, college essays, scholarship searches, financial aid, and much more.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

At TSYWL, providing students with every opportunity to excel academically is important, and all decisions about instructional methodology and interventions are made based on formative and summative assessment data.

Increasing student engagement has been an ongoing instructional target on the campus. Professional development in lesson planning has provided teachers with a framework that has made them more deliberate about planning. The planning process includes: identifying the level of critical thinking involved in the lesson, the stimulus/activity that will best achieve the required level of learning, the instructional strategies that will be used, the evidence of learning, and the steps that will be taken to provide intervention for students who do not master the material. Thus, embedding opportunities in lessons for student led activities, peer tutoring, hands-on activities, group projects, interactive learning, and technology integration has been a critical component in planning effective lessons that will meet the needs of individual and diverse learners.

Intervention and support is available to all learners: both high achieving and low performing. An extended-day schedule is offered for one hour, three days a week. Teachers assign students to tutoring based on assessment data. Tier 3 students are identified and expected to attend small group sessions after school. Tier I and Tier 2 students are provided options to choose when to attend an after-school tutorial. Individualized academic support is also made available before school and during the Academic Enhancement time scheduled during the school day. Students in grades 7th and 8th who do not meet criteria on the Math Proficiency Exam are scheduled to a double-blocked math class in order to provide them more time to master material and gain foundation in math.

Small group intervention also takes place in all core areas throughout the instructional day in an effort to address the learning needs of both struggling and advanced learners. A variety of learning strategies, whole-class modeling, project-based learning, concept mapping, anchor charts, and Socratic seminars are instructional methods utilized for all levels of intervention and to meet the needs of diverse learners. These research-based practices provide teachers with a menu of resources to reach various types of learners. They can be modified to provide support for strugglers or to challenge advanced performers, and these strategies allow students to be exposed to content in ways that complement their learning styles. Technology enhances the learning process and allows students to engage in 21st Century learning, while teachers utilize online

classrooms to post notes, informational and instructional videos, resources, and content tutorials to support the learning for all students.

For the most part, the students at TSYWL are high achieving. All of these practices support the college readiness initiative and provide students with the resources and interventions needed to insure their academic growth.

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

Student performance at Talkington is evaluated using a variety of formative and summative measures. Data gleaned from the annual State and Federal Report Cards provide a comprehensive overview of how the campus is performing as a whole. While the annual STAAR results are an integral part of our campus goal setting endeavors, the college readiness component drives many of the curriculum and instructional decisions that are made on the campus.

In addition to the state assessment, student performance is evaluated via a series of local and nationally normed tests. At the district and campus level authentic formative assessments are in place to monitor progress on a daily basis. District assessments are administered every six weeks in all core areas. Reading proficiency is monitored through data analysis of Lexile scores and a Math Proficiency Exam is administered in 6th grade to assess Algebra I readiness. In order to assess the progress that students are making in the quest for admission to a four-year university, the PSAT is administered every year for students in 9th through 11th grade. SAT and ACT performance measures are evaluated annually to determine what adjustments need to be made in the curriculum to close achievement gaps that may derail students from earning the score that is required for admission into the college of their choice.

Upon examination of state assessment data, Talkington is a high performing campus with minimal (if any) performance gaps amongst special populations. However, two years ago the results of the annual data analysis process revealed a need to address instruction so as to increase performance on PSAT, SAT, ACT, and AP exams. The results gleaned from the data indicated that teachers needed to provide more opportunities for students to answer high level questions and engage in high-level work and discussion. The process brought about a significant shift in the levels of questioning and changed homework to more authentic assessment assignments. Also, a new curriculum for use in the junior level SAT/ACT Preparation Course was implemented and a PSAT Boot Camp for all high school students was scheduled as a bi-annual activity. As a result of these efforts, performance scores on college entrance exams are on the rise along with a significant increase in qualifying AP scores.

Student success can be attributed to the work of the dedicated staff and the commitment of the community and parents who support the academic mission of the school. Keeping parents informed of their student's progress is accomplished through various forms of communication. Both parents and students have access to the online gradebook, and grade reports are made available every three weeks in the forms of progress reports or report cards. Teachers communicate via email or telephone and clarify any questions that parents may have about their student's progress. State and Federal Report Cards are sent home with every student and posted on the school website to inform the community about student achievement. Email and a phone messenger system are used to provide parents with notification any time that information is being disseminated. Goals Nights, Open Houses, and Community Forums are hosted by the campus to provide opportunities for all stakeholders to learn how to interpret test results. Finally, parents, business partners, and community leaders serve on the Campus Performance Objective Committee wherein assessment results are reviewed and feedback is obtained and used in making future instructional decisions.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The foundation of the school's success is the exceptional staff that places a priority on building positive relationships with students and parents. In a recent Title I, survey parents consistently reported feeling welcomed at the school and students reported feeling comfortable talking with teachers and administrators. Many parent comments focused on the close relationship their students had with the staff.

Very low staff turnover and a family atmosphere within the staff is a strong indicator of the school's positive culture. Talkington teachers are supported and valued through local and state award nominations. Administrators work to give teachers the recognition they deserve by nominating them for various awards. Appreciation luncheons sponsored by the PTA and Advisory Board and celebrations hosted by the Morale Committee also foster this positive atmosphere. Each month nominations are submitted by staff members to select the Difference Maker of the month. The recipient receives special recognition and a gift for going the extra mile.

Teachers are also supported in their pursuit of professional growth. All teachers attend an AP Institute during the summer. Core teachers attend district sponsored content focus sessions to prepare for instruction each six weeks. Opportunities to attend state and national conferences are made available and funded.

Talkington's school culture reflects a collective value of high-quality academics. College flags are displayed outside all classroom doors as a reminder of the high expectations to attend and graduate from college. Weekly announcements are made to celebrate college acceptances and scholarship awards, and starting in the 7th grade, yearly trips are made to various universities to expose students to the college atmosphere. These opportunities help build relationships within the student groups and contribute to the positive culture. In addition to the college visits, many traditions are in place to support the high expectations. High school students attend special ceremonies in recognition of their accomplishments and dedication to excellence. Students are presented letter jackets for their academic and extra-curricular honors; they are presented their class rings during a ring ceremony and sign letters of intent with their respective colleges during the College Signing Ceremony.

Social and emotional support is fostered in many ways. The administrative and counseling teams have an open door policy for students, teachers and parents. Guidance lessons are delivered weekly by the Academic Enhancement teachers and are tailored to meet student needs. Each 6th grade student is paired with a high school student as part of the Big Sister/Little Sister program. Throughout the year, activities are planned to begin to build the sisterhood bond amongst students. Middle school students also have opportunities to attend small group sessions during lunch to provide social, emotional, and academic support during this crucial developmental stage.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Talkington understands and values the impact that parental and community support has on student success. The support and encouragement from all stakeholders keeps students motivated to do their best. Developing relationships with community partners has opened the door for providing students with real-world, hands-on, curricular activities. Through a partnership with the medical school, students have been able to organize an annual Health Fair for the campus. Another university partnership sponsors the health and wellness program designed to develop and improve resilience, promote and empower self-care, and educate and support wellness in youth.

In addition, the Junior League sponsors a program to develop self-confidence and leadership skills for 8th grade students, and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) has created a mother-daughter program designed to break down the myth and barriers to girls becoming first-generation college students. This year long program is available to 6th grade students.

TSYWL students are taught the importance of contributing to the community and helping others who are less fortunate. In collaboration with the local Volunteer Center, students have logged over 3000 volunteer hours this year. In addition to the many volunteer hours, student groups have hosted coat drives, canned food drives, jeans drives and participated in numerous other projects to benefit the community.

The school engages parents as partners in the schooling of their children in a variety of ways. Parents are encouraged to participate and join the PTSA organization, Legacy Booster Club, and Campus Performance Objective Committee. Parent input within these groups is valued and critical to the decision making process. During the school year, activities are planned to build relationships within the family unit. Family engagement occurs in yearly events including the Father/Daughter Dance, Mother/Daughter Tea, and the Fine Arts Spaghetti Dinner and Pancake Breakfast. Parents are able to stay informed about school events through the school's website, Facebook or Twitter pages, Open House, Goals Night, PTSA newsletter, phone calls/ emails, and parent-teacher conferences. Parents also have access to their child's grades through the school website gradebook portal.

Parents are encouraged to attend informational meetings led by the counselor and college advisor throughout the students' high school years. The counselor meets with each freshman's family to develop a four-year plan leading to college and career readiness. Parents are given guidance pertaining to college entrance requirements, scholarship applications and financial aid information in these personalized meetings.

Seniors are required to complete a capstone project before graduation. One component of the project requires each senior to work with a community mentor who specializes in an area related to the project. In addition, during the oral presentation phase of the project, parents and community partners serve in teams as members of the grading panels to evaluate the learning that has taken place throughout the year. The capstone project has been a success and emphasizes the benefits that result when school and community collaborate.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development opportunities are made available to all staff members in order to address district and campus goals. Each year, data from assessment results, surveys, program evaluations, etc. is examined, and a needs assessment is conducted on the campus. Strengths and challenges are identified by parents, teachers, and administrators. Goals are defined, and professional development needs are planned and scheduled. Building teacher learning capacity is of utmost importance, and the standard practice at the campus is to send a small team to learn, and then use the team to train everyone else.

District level professional development is determined using the same process as on the campus. STAAR Test assessment data is analyzed and correlations between the results and district-wide student performance are made in order to insure that the TEKS and the curriculum are aligned. District professional development initiatives are presented to administrators and Campus Academic Leaders (CALs) during a three-day Summer Leadership Institute, and then campus teams take the learning and deliver it at the campus level

Talkington professional development is categorized into two areas. The first category consists of training that has proven successful in the past, that supports the academic mission of the school, and that needs to be sustained. This includes annual seminars in: AP and pre-AP curriculum, working with families in poverty training, data interpretation, embedding rigor and relevance in lesson development, and effective instructional strategies.

The second campus professional development category involves new learning that is needed in order to address an instructional challenge that has been identified as a result of the data analysis process. Increasing student performance on nationally normed exams, college entrance exams, and AP exams has been a key challenge in recent years. Problems of practice that have been linked to this challenge have addressed: formulating and responding to higher-level questions, increasing student engagement, using technology to enhance the learning process, and increasing the use of academic vocabulary in writing

assignments. To address the aforementioned challenge, teachers have received training in high level questioning, cooperative learning strategies, technology use, lesson development, and increasing rigor. All professional development is carefully vetted to support the TEKS-based curriculum and to target the instructional needs defined by the campus.

Ongoing learning takes place in various forms. Administrators meet monthly at the district level as do CALs. New learning is then presented to teachers during content area or grade level PLC meetings. Teachers also receive district level support every six weeks at Content Area Focus Meetings at which time the TEKS curriculum standards are unpacked in preparation for lesson plan development.

The approach to professional development is effectively streamlined to create cohesiveness between district and campus goals. All stakeholders receive similar training suited to their respective roles---from district level Content Area Specialists, to administrators, to CALs, and to the teachers. The ultimate goal is for the professional learning experience to impact the instructional setting so that student performance can increase and gaps in learning can be obliterated.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy at TSYWL is reflected in the school motto: “Reject Average, Embrace Excellence.” A common assumption about working at a school like this is that the work load is minimal and requires little effort on the part of the campus leader, the staff, and even the students. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

At TSYWL, the attitude of support that comes from the leadership team and the willingness of campus leaders to perform the same tasks that are asked of the staff create an atmosphere of collaboration and a desire to perform beyond average expectations.

A shared-leadership approach to school governance is evident in the way that the decision-making structure is outlined. The voice of the many stakeholders who work on behalf of the school is evident in the various forms of campus leadership. The Campus Leadership Team consists of the principal, an associate principal, one assistant principal, a school-wide counselor, the college-bound advisor, and the Campus Academic Leaders from each of the core subjects. This team meets weekly to address campus issues that arise regarding curriculum, staff and parent concerns, programming, or any other campus related topics. The Campus Performance Objective Committee made up of administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders provides opportunity for parent and community voice as does the guidance of the TSYWL Advisory Board. Student input is initiated via the Principal’s Advisory Council established to address student-related issues and concerns. Having these leadership entities in place allows for a common vision to be communicated amongst the many factions connected to the school and creates a transparent network of communication between the campus and the community.

The Talkington principal is visionary and relies on input from teachers, parents, students, and community members to develop short and long-term goals for the campus. These goals are clearly communicated to all stakeholders and drive all decisions regarding policies, programs, and resources. The commitment to upholding the college readiness mission of the school is illustrated in the actions of the school leaders who support initiatives such as: SAT prep courses, AP training for all staff, language lab access for all students, one-to-one technology initiatives, exam fee waivers, extended day tutorial opportunities, no-cost summer enrichment programs, and resources to support health and wellness, leadership, and service learning opportunities.

When parents and students are asked what they like best about TSYWL, the most common answer is that they feel like they are part of a family. It takes a great deal more than average effort to accomplish excellence, and the leadership team at Talkington makes every effort to strive for excellence every day.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Talkington School for Young Women Leaders has matriculated two graduating classes with a 100% admission rate into a four-year university and \$2.5 million dollars in merit scholarships earned by forty-eight young women. These successes can be attributed to the one practice that distinguishes TSYWL as an outstanding school: the college readiness initiative.

Students at Talkington have the advantage of working with a full-time College Bound Advisor (CBA) whose time is dedicated to college placement and financial aid/scholarship assistance. The CBA initiates and facilitates the implementation of the college bound curriculum initiated in the sixth grade. Lessons range from goal setting to grant and scholarship preparation. The CBA also provides financial aid support to parents and insures that all stakeholders understand the academic preparation required to be accepted to a four-year university.

All course offerings are taught at the pre-AP level beginning in middle school. This allows students to build a solid academic foundation before entering high school. Upon transitioning to high school, the college readiness component is intensified. Students have some pre-AP options, but most courses are AP level. Students enrolled in AP courses are provided with the resources to cover the cost of the AP exams. This allows all students, regardless of economic status, the same opportunity to gain college credit at no cost to their families. The school currently offers fifteen AP and three dual credit courses--giving students the opportunity to earn a total of fifty-four hours of college credit.

An SAT prep course has been created to develop reading and mathematics skills required for attaining competitive PSAT and SAT scores. A math teacher and an English teacher are assigned to teach the course and students rotate between the two in order to receive simultaneous support in both areas. A viable curriculum is used as the framework for the class and students are taught exam techniques while taking an in depth look at the SAT and how scores translate into merit scholarships. The ACT Aspire online program is accessible to high school students to assist them in preparation for the ACT exam, and the cost of college entrance exams is paid by TSYWL. During the senior year, students are enrolled in a capstone class which prepares them for college research, internships, and developing oral presentation skills. It is a vital component of the transition to college initiative.

Preparing students to handle the social component of university life is supported by various college organizations that provide mentoring opportunities for TSYWL students. These groups address issues faced by underrepresented students and focus on women in leadership. They provide a support system for college-bound students, assist with SAT tutorials, and work on developing interest in the STEM field. Lastly, a university partnership with the Department of Institutional Diversity provides access to guest speakers, scholarship opportunities, and shadowing days for TSYWL students to preview college life.

Throughout the TSYWL school experience, students visit at least ten different types of universities. This exposure gives students the opportunity to explore options to determine which school is the best fit for them. TSYWL is proactive about its graduates being ready to be marketable freshmen for any university, and the college readiness programming makes it possible for Talkington graduates to fulfill this goal.