

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Barbara Brinkley-Lopez  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Transmountain Early College High School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 9570 Gateway North Boulevard  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City El Paso State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 79924-6800

County EL Paso

Telephone (915) 236-5000 Fax (915) 751-2011

Web site/URL https://www.episd.org/tmechs E-mail bblopez@episd.org

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. Juan Cabrera E-mail superintendent@episd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name EL Paso Independent School District Tel. (915) 230-2000

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. Bob Geske  
(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**

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2020 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2014 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. 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

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 52 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 15 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 13 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 80 TOTAL

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

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the 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	38	68	106
10	50	65	115
11	31	61	92
12 or higher	45	58	103
<b>Total Students</b>	164	252	416

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2.4 % Asian
  - 4.6 % Black or African American
  - 77.6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.5 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 12.5 % White
  - 2.4 % 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 2018 - 2019 school year: 7%

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

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

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	5
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	24
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	29
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	416
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

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

Spanish, Vietnamese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 10 %  
41 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 54 %

Total number students who qualify: 223

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %  
6 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.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>2</u> Autism                  | <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>1</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	24
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school 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 17:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	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 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	104
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	93%
Enrolled in a community college	4%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
Other	0%

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

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2014

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

ALL Transmountain Early College High School (TMECHS) graduates will have the skills and confidence needed to successfully transition to a 4-year university, a work setting in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) related fields, or military service. To this end, TMECHS will provide a STEM-focused curriculum, while incorporating numerous creative arts opportunities, and the opportunity to earn an associate degree from El Paso Community College within four years of high school.

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

Transmountain ECHS admits up to 125 freshmen each year. For admissions, TMECHS uses a performance-blind, open-access lottery system that encourages and considers applications from all students residing in El Paso County. All applicants, therefore, have equal opportunity for acceptance, regardless of background or academic performance.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

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Transmountain Early College High School (TMECHS) is located in El Paso, Texas, one of the largest urban border cities along the Texas-Mexico border. El Paso, as well as the cities of Las Cruces, New Mexico and Juarez, Mexico converge along the Rio Grande River and the Franklin Mountain range, creating a region known as Paso Del Norte, often called the Borderplex. El Paso is proudly the home of Fort Bliss, one of the largest military complexes of the United States Army. The Borderplex encompasses an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse community, with a Hispanic population exceeding 82%. Historically, the Borderplex community had been challenged by high rates of unemployment and poverty as well as low rates of post-secondary education and job-ready, skilled individuals. TMECHS's student population is largely consistent with the demographics represented within El Paso, however, the school's target population consists of low socio-economic status, first generation college goers, under-served populations, and at-risk students. TMECHS is a Title I school with open enrollment; it is a school of choice which seeks to positively impact the community by addressing these challenges.

TMECHS was established in 2008 as the third early college high school in El Paso County. The campus instituted a curricular focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). TMECHS positions students ahead of the curve in an increasingly complicated world by developing their critical thinking, communication, collaboration, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. In the time since the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools award, TMECHS has refined the overarching focus for its curriculum, evolving it into a science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) program.

Additionally, TMECHS has increased by 23% the number of students graduating from El Paso Community College (EPCC) within 4 years of high school. Ninety percent of TMECHS students graduate with an associates of science degree from EPCC, with an additional 5% graduating with the associates of arts degree.

One hundred percent of students graduate with a Texas high school diploma and endorsements in multidisciplinary studies and STEM. All college expenses are shared by the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) and EPCC.

TMECHS is a stand-alone early college high school located on EPCC's Transmountain campus. The close proximity to the EPCC campus provides students with ease of access to the college's courses, instructors, and services. The positioning of TMECHS on an EPCC campus facilitates a unique, collaborative effort between EPISD and a local institution of higher education (IHE). TMECHS incorporates a unique bell schedule which is tailored to align with EPCC's course schedule of one-hour classes on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Tuesday and Thursday classes meet for 90 minutes. Embedded in the schedule are weekly advisory periods, providing additional instructional time in campus-taught courses. TMECHS students may earn 60 college credits between the on-campus dual credit (DC) courses and the EPCC course offerings. TMECHS educators strategically design campus-based courses to be more challenging while maintaining curricular alignment with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Earning National Blue Ribbon recognition in 2014 validated our campus and encouraged the expansion of educational and interest/skills-based opportunities. Examples of this expansion within the core curriculum include students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses in English, social studies, and mathematics. TMECHS increased dual credit offerings in Geology, United States Government, and Economics. In 2018, TMECHS partnered with the University of Texas at Austin (UTA) in two fields of study. Firstly, in partnering with UTA's On-Ramps Program, TMECHS students earn both a fifth science credit and college credit in Geosciences. Secondly, TMECHS partnered with UTA's Cockrell School of Engineering "Engineer Your World" program. This particular partnership supported the campus's implementation of its engineering program in which students earn UTA credit.

TMECHS prides itself on being an academically oriented, safe school with high expectations for all students. These expectations extend beyond the academics by embedding social/emotional learning activities within all classrooms. TMECHS teachers are trained on specific strategies addressing students'

social skills and emotional well-being via professional learning workshops. Examples include exercises in breathing and meditation techniques which help students in stress relief. All students are encouraged to embrace life-long learning and to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education, military enlistment, and 21st century jobs.

TMECHS leadership maintains a philosophy of shared decision-making through distributed responsibilities and high expectations for all. Collaboration, community, voice, and individuality are celebrated. All TMECHS stakeholders work together to create and maintain a positive climate and a rigorous, engaging academic culture. TMECHS's 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools award clearly brought with it a stronger community awareness and interest of the school. Current families participate at a much higher rate during parent-teacher events, student performances, and community events. Recruitment efforts have resulted in an increasing applicant pool each year. Students' association with this award-winning school encourages a greater sense of self-efficacy and pride, which translates to increased motivation in completing the full college degree. In turn, graduation rates have increased, as have the numbers of students attending the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) during their senior year of high school.

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

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

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

Common threads running across the core curriculum at TMECHS are one-to-one technology and faculty use of active learning and blended learning strategies. All teachers and students are provided with Apple MacBooks. The use of technology supports a combination of traditional and innovative teaching strategies, collaborative projects, labs, and other experiential learning.

In active learning, TMECHS students are engaged in the learning process in group activities centered around writing, talking, problem solving, or reflecting. Results of active learning strategies include an increase in content knowledge, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, as well as more positive attitudes towards learning. Additionally, both students and instructors report increased enthusiasm for classroom learning experiences and more time spent on supporting students' individual needs.

Blended learning combines web-based content and face-to-face instruction in the classroom. Students are given some control over the time, place, pace, or path of the online instruction. Several types of digital or web-based media are used to facilitate blended learning, such as video-recorded lectures, webinars, and podcasts. This hybrid learning strategy assists TMECHS in creating additional personalized learning experiences while increasing student responsibility for their academic success. Because most online content is always available, flexibility is built into this instructional model for students to catch up easily in the event of absences from the school day. Blended learning naturally requires a certain level of students' self-governance, which has translated well across all subjects.

Departmental teachers meet twice per week during protected time built into the instructional day. Within these professional learning communities, teachers are able to plan lessons together, share best practices and analyze student data from school or district created assessments and released state exams. TMECHS is a data-driven campus and recognizes the importance of data-driven decision-making in furthering student successes. Additionally, this protected time is used for vertical alignment and professional development, specifically with regard to technology and district initiatives.

### **1b.** Reading/English language arts

The TMECHS English language arts (ELA) department focuses on serving all students through a rigorous, yet differentiated educational experience, accommodating students' diverse learning styles and abilities. Teachers address students' varying reading and writing ability levels by empowering them to achieve far beyond their own expectations. All teachers are certified in English as a second language (ESL) and gifted & talented (GT) instruction.

Dedicated, focused teachers purposefully deliver the enhanced district-developed curriculum in Pre-AP English I, Pre-AP English II, Dual Credit English III and AP English IV, thus engaging and challenging students, yet still meeting the needs of all students. The English curriculum also includes electives of Literary Genres, Bible as Literature and Analysis of Visual Media to support students' literacy skills.

ELA teachers use state assessments, PSAT/SAT, and TSI data to identify areas of weakness across grade levels and with individual students. Targeted interventions are then created and implemented. As an example, if data analysis indicates a large percentage of questions addressing particular TEKS readiness standards are incorrectly answered, teachers will initiate whole-class re-teaching of the specific standards. Other interventions, such as web-based lessons targeting specific concepts, may be assigned to students showing weakness in a given area. In either case, implemented interventions are data-driven and based on students' needs.

ELA teachers incorporate writing as a learning strategy in all classrooms. Students can develop their ideas,

critical thinking abilities, and writing skills by taking time daily to write in low-stakes exercises. Students are able to experiment with written language, to increase their fluency and mastery of written conventions, and actively engage in thinking about concepts. Equity within the classroom is enhanced since students have time to try out their ideas in non-evaluated group activities before they present to the class or turn in assignments. Teachers often use some form of individual writing assignment as a formative assessment and as a way to scaffold mid- and high-stakes writing assignments. Through this method, students feel less threatened to express themselves and are able to share their learning with classmates.

ELA teachers compile and create instructional materials for the TSI Reading exam. Teachers utilize this curriculum to teach incoming ninth grade students prior to testing. This stream-lined curriculum supports struggling readers, easing the transition from lower to higher lexile levels. Additional resources teachers utilize are web-based programs which differentiate instruction and facilitate test mastery leading to dual credit course enrollment. Students may access the online resources at home; additional time students apply to studying has proven to increase TSI scores.

ELA teachers regularly utilize technology and online subscriptions in classrooms. The online learning management system used in EPISD is Schoology, in which students and parents may view course syllabi and assignment information. TMECHS reading classes commonly utilize two web-based programs geared to remediation and skill -building; Edgenuity and Achieve 3000 provide lessons tailored to individual student reading levels, incrementally increasing lexile levels as students successfully complete lessons. Freshmen and sophomore English teachers have found the Study Island program useful as a means to differentiate by accelerating instruction for higher achieving students.

### **1c. Mathematics**

TMECHS Math curriculum is provided at advanced levels to include: Pre-AP Algebra I, Pre-AP Geometry, Pre-AP Algebra II, Dual Credit Pre-Calculus I & II, and Dual Credit Calculus I. Additional available math elective classes include Statistics, AP Statistics and AP Computer Science. Rigorous curriculum is developed and delivered from the beginning stages of high school to prepare students for college readiness and successful outcomes on state assessments, TSI, PSAT/SAT, and the respective AP exams. Mathematics courses are designed to help build analytical and reasoning skills. These skills are key as they promote logical and critical thinking abilities, skills which are crucial for present and future career opportunities.

TMECHS math teachers foster individualized and collaborative learning in the classroom to spark group conversations and enable peer-to- peer shared learning. Individualized learning is supplemented with programs such as Schoology, WebAssign, Edgenuity, and Kuta online subscriptions, which provide differentiation for each student's skill level. Additional individualized assistance is provided before and after school in scheduled tutorials. Math teachers use state assessments, PSAT/SAT, and TSI data to identify areas of weakness, inform instruction, and drive targeted interventions. Opportunities for summative assessments are regularly provided to help students clarify misconceptions and diminish negative attitudes towards mathematics.

Acceleration in courses is part of the mathematical culture at TMECHS, where the vast majority of students successfully complete three dual credit courses through Calculus I, resulting in a 90% associates of science graduation rate. Incorporated in classes are social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, which promote a safe environment in which students are comfortable asking questions and seeking additional assistance.

Students become self aware of their learning by assessing their own strengths and weaknesses. They also develop decision-making skills to evaluate consequences of their actions. Due to the high standards required for college-level math courses, students learn to manage stress and build relationships with one another.

Moreover, students work in teams, which encourages greater retention of information and promote higher order thinking for all. Examples include project-based learning (PBL) activities in which students collaborate on various projects, often involving 3-D designing and printing, and participation in the EPCC Honors Program. With the completion of 15 college math hours and a departmentally reviewed individual project, students have the opportunity to graduate with honors in their EPCC associates degree.

Students who are academically advanced apply for membership in Mu Alpha Theta, a national honor society which promotes interest and guides students to careers in mathematics. As members, students participate in community service by volunteering their time to provide tutoring for local elementary and middle school students. At the national level, Mu Alpha Theta sponsors a video competition each year and across all chapters. In 2018, TMECHS students proudly won 1st place in this national competition.

As proof of academic excellence, TMECHS has surpassed expectations and all other district schools on the Algebra 1 state assessment scores in 2018 and 2019. Since 2018, TMECHS PSAT/SAT math scores exceed district and state scores. Additionally, over the past three years, TMECHS has greatly increased the number of students who compete and place in the University Interscholastic League (UIL) categories of Number Sense, Calculator Applications, Mathematics, and Computer Science.

#### **1d. Science**

TMECHS sciences inspire future scientists with high expectations and rigorous, interactive instruction. Students enroll in courses typically considered above grade levels (i.e., freshmen dual credit (DC) Biology and upper class DC Chemistry, DC Geology, or UTA OnRamps Geoscience).

Additional science courses include Pre-AP Chemistry, Forensics and Pre-AP Physics.

Science teachers support an inquiry-based approach and differentiate instruction through hands-on experiences, Socratic seminars, flipped classrooms, guided inquiry, and problem-based learning activities. Teachers collaborate across science disciplines to show direct relationships and integrated experiences, leading to greater mastery. Investigative labs include frequent technology use of laptops, handheld spectrometers, and software. Students develop and implement solutions to solve given problems; planned, engaging activities create exposure and interest in scientific career fields. Examples include presentations by expert speakers as well as field trips to the Department of Public Safety's Crime Lab and geologically rich sites. Additionally, TMECHS partners with the University of Alabama in Huntsville's STEM outreach program entitled "Innovative System Project for the Increased Recruitment of Emerging STEM Students" (InSPIRESS), in which students collaborate with UAH students in developing and designing a scientific payload to be accommodated on a spacecraft in the UAHuntsville IPT project.

In an effort to improve student learning and instructional practices, teachers continually analyze assessment data such as midterm and final exams. Additional, varied assessments capture a complete picture of student mastery; assessments range from solving fictional crime scenes to biology dissections, to geology sketch tests, and performing laboratories. Students who struggle with comprehension or performance receive one-on-one assistance, leading to their understanding of the "what and why" of incorrect responses. Teachers and students analyze thought processes and engage in a systematic action plan to ensure greater mastery levels. Accelerated science students are encouraged to join UIL competitions and the Technology Student Association (TSA). TMECHS's TSA team earned 2nd place state recognition in 2019 and continued on to the national competition. Two TMECHS students who attended the 2019 Texas State Science Fair continued on to the International Science Fair for Science and Engineering.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

TMECHS's social studies curriculum provides learning experiences in an active and rigorous manner which emphasize meaningful learning, critical thinking, investigative research, and collaboration. Freshmen students take Pre-AP World Geography or AP Human Geography through which the foundation of high expectations and rigor are set. Sophomore students complete a semester of World History which is paired with DC World History in second semester. Curriculum at each grade level incorporates document-based questions, thematic essays, primary source analysis, cross-curricular PBL, and other research-oriented lessons to provide students with greater depth of knowledge and fluidity in historical contexts. Upper class students experience the high rigor of college-level courses supported by TMECHS teachers, all of whom hold masters degrees in their respective content areas. Juniors and seniors complete dual credit courses in

United States (US) History, US Government, and economics to satisfy both Texas high school graduation and EPCC degree plan requirements. World religion and debate classes round out the social studies curriculum.

Quarterly common assessments are used to drive instruction in preparation for state assessments and inform re-teach practices across grade levels. These assessments are campus created to ensure alignment of dual credit curriculum with the tested TEKS, as the two are frequently not aligned. TMECHS boasts the highest US History scores in the city with 100% passing and 80% mastery rates, directly attributable to teaching modalities and, partially, to the enhanced learning environment of comfortable learning spaces designed to facilitate collaboration and creativity. TMECHS boldly moved forward with the decision to refurbish this classroom with 21st Century “learning-friendly” furniture, including soft-seating options and customizable workstations. Students were afforded choice in seating arrangements according to individual preference.

Civic engagement and a sense of community are supported by strong student participation in voter registration, blood-donor events, food and clothing drives, and community service efforts benefiting local non-profit organizations.

TMECHS students compete in World Quest events to demonstrate knowledge of current affairs, National History Day, and High Q competitions in Current Events, Geography, US Government, US History, and World History.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

TMECHS designs curriculum and sequences courses to support college and career readiness (CCR) by increasing the number of students seeking and completing a post-secondary education. All students meet the state’s CCR definition by virtue of the course work they complete by graduation. Over 95% of TMECHS students successfully participate in post-secondary educational opportunities upon graduation with the associates in science or arts. Students exhibit mastery of knowledge and skills in core academic disciplines, as well as the soft skills necessary for success in negotiation, presentation, teamwork, and debate. All TMECHS seniors enroll in AP English IV and take college-level mathematics, history, and science.

College curriculum combined with courses in creative arts and engineering creates a strong foundation for the rigor of university work for those students pursuing a bachelors degree. TMECHS prepares students to meet with success in the global, competitive 21st century workforce by ensuring skills most in demand are embedded throughout the curriculum. These skills include both written and verbal communication, critical thinking, the ability to develop informed arguments, and analysis of information and data. The ability to collaborate, communicate, and present information effectively, as well as the ability to use research in making informed judgments, is also among the critical skills that TMECHS students cultivate as they work through their academic endeavors. TMECHS uses a multifaceted approach to the programs available for CCR supports. This includes college visits from all over the state and country, participation in the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrar and Admissions Offices (TACRAO) college fair, military presentations across all branches of service, and partnerships with the community and higher educational organizations to create internship opportunities. The majority of TMECHS students continue on to universities; others successfully join the military or start a career using the associate's degree earned during their high school years.

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

### **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

TMECHS non-core curriculum offerings include courses in fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education (PE), technology, engineering, communications, journalism, and business. Fine arts courses, available to all grade levels, have an average enrollment of 340 students each semester in band, orchestra, art, theater arts, dance, piano, and guitar. TMECHS fine arts expanded three years ago to include the non-instrumental arts. Teachers of Theater and Media, Arts and Media, and Dance and Media utilize and enhance curriculum developed by the Texas Cultural Trust, which combines each art form with digital

media and technology. TMECHS received a grant from the Texas Cultural Trust for i-Pads, tripods, and microphones in the amount of \$3300.00 to support this innovative program. In 2019, art students created an installation chosen as the first exhibit for display in the new EPISD Art Space. Dance and Media students partnered with EPCC's Student Government Association and the Children's Miracle Network dance marathon; this effort raised over \$8000.00 benefiting the charity.

TEKS-aligned fine arts courses meet three times weekly. All students are required to complete one year of a fine art; additional years are considered elective choices. Fine arts students perform in multiple recitals yearly, some of which are collaborative efforts with other schools. Shows exhibit students' creation and performance of musical scores, choreography, stage set-up, and audio/visual elements. These students also perform in pep rallies and seasonal festivals open to the community. Fine arts students have performed for El Paso Zoo events, senior citizen organizations, and local competitions. TMECHS UIL music competitors proceeded to state finals over the past three years.

TMECHS's TEKS-aligned business courses prepare students for today's careers by providing necessary computer literacy skill sets. Business Information Management (BIM) has approximately 105 freshmen enrolled and focuses on developing students' proficiencies in Microsoft Office platforms such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Students are required to complete one year of BIM in which they develop professional communication skills and creativity as they learn varying methods of researching, gathering, and reporting information. BIM students also compete yearly in UTEP's College of Business's Skov Essay Competition.

The Money Matters elective yearly serves approximately 50 students and focuses on the basics of personal financial literacy. Curriculum includes supply and demand, markets, negotiations, home lease/purchase, monthly budget creation, filing taxes, and paycheck literacy.

In the journalism and yearbook electives, students plan, develop, and create entire publications yearly. Students learn about publication design elements, photography and layouts, and conducting interviews. They ensure professional end products by following business protocols and meeting deadlines. Journalism and yearbook courses each serve approximately 30 students yearly.

TMECHS developed a 4-year, coherent sequence, TEKS-aligned engineering pathway in 2017 beginning with Principles of Applied Engineering. As sophomores, aspiring engineers enroll in Engineering Design and Presentation I. Juniors take Digital Electronics, and seniors complete the pathway in Engineering Design and Problem Solving. Course design scaffolds learning to facilitate knowledge and skill development required in future courses. The Engineering Design and Problem-Solving course is a dual enrollment partnership with UTA's Engineer Your World program. The expanding engineering program currently serves approximately 120 aspiring student engineers.

TMECHS's languages other than English (LOTE) offerings include Spanish 1 through AP Spanish 5, and three years of French. Additionally, AP Computer Science, offered in 2020, counts as both LOTE and math credit. Spanish courses serve 250 students across grade levels, with 47 students enrolled in AP Spanish; 24 students take French courses. All students take two years of LOTE courses; additional LOTE courses count as elective credits.

Health curriculum covers the health triangle, anatomy and physiology, illness and infectious disease, and current health and wellness trends. This required, one-semester course yearly serves approximately 100 students. Physical education (PE) curriculum includes Outdoor Adventure, Individual Sports, and Aerobic Activity. Five physical fitness components addressed include cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. PE is available to all grades, providing a physical outlet for students taking TMECHS's challenging, accelerated coursework. Yearly PE enrollment averages 120 students, although only one year is required. In 2015 and 2016, TMECHS's health and PE programs received national recognition by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the Let's Move! Active Schools program.

program and career exploration, research of financial aid, and skills associated with success in a college-going culture. Yearly enrollment is at approximately 110 students.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

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

TMECHS's incoming freshmen participate in a two-week Summer Bridge program which focuses on preparation for and testing of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) reading exam for college placement. The program's second focus is on cohesive team-building skills and social-emotional maturation to encourage student success in TMECHS's college-going culture. Summer Bridge student passing rate on the TSI reading exam stands at an impressive 73%. TMECHS has discovered that reading comprehension is key to success in all content areas. Those students who pass the TSI reading exam begin taking dual credit courses in freshman year with DC Biology and DC College Transition. Students who are not college ready before 9th grade (TSI non-passers) have a Reading class built into their schedule. Additionally, students who have not passed the English language arts (ELA) state assessments in grades 8-10 also take the Reading class in which instruction is differentiated to meet each student's specific needs. Reading skills are enhanced through the use of technology-based programs and tiered instructional practices. Students enrolled in the Reading classes have demonstrated a remarkable 100% pass rate upon the first retake of their respective ELA state assessments.

TMECHS initiates Tier 3 interventions with students who are failing core classes. An example would be the individualized tutoring sessions held daily before and after school. TMECHS teachers frequently contact parents of struggling students before final grades are calculated, and they provide ample opportunity to all lower-performing students to master course content. Additionally, schoolwide progress reports are created and reviewed every three weeks throughout the school year. Campus administration and counselors regularly review student progress, and block meetings are held for students failing two or more classes. Block meetings consist of the student, the parent, teachers, a counselor and an administrator joining together to devise a plan of action ensuring the student's future academic success. Detailed tutoring schedules are outlined for struggling students and include before- and after-school tutoring in the respective teachers' classrooms.

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

TMECHS works with students performing above grade level in a variety of ways such as project-based learning (PBL) opportunities, extension lessons, and competitive academics. Within classrooms, teachers create learning environments allowing for differentiation in instructional approaches based on students' academic interests and performance levels. Voice and choice among these high performing students is vital to maintaining engagement and enhancing learning, as exemplified by their individually chosen, interest-based PBL topics. Students working above grade level expand their knowledge and understanding of various topics through their own research, problem solving, and creativity.

TMECHS teachers create cross-curricular PBL activities by combining multiple content areas, allowing for student exploration of academic content, and providing opportunities for students to practice the soft skills inherent in successful group work. These soft skills address students' ability to communicate effectively among group members and enhance their presentation skills. For example, freshmen biology, business and geography student groups learned about biomes, climate and geographical context, and then created travel brochures and PowerPoints which they presented to classes and faculty. Within PBL groups, high achieving students are typically assigned leadership and mentorship roles; they are also responsible for ensuring the quality of the group's finished products.

Academic extensions to learning for students who quickly master course material and wish to challenge themselves include technology-supported research opportunities such as online science labs. Additional opportunities for these high achievers include voluntary participation in EPCC's Honor Graduate program and UTEP's 9-hour scholarship. Students earning EPCC Honor Graduate distinction complete faculty-reviewed research projects in five DC math or science courses. Accelerated students who qualify for

UTEP's 9 tuition-free hours have graduated from EPCC by fall semester of their senior year.

Students performing above grade level in particular content areas are encouraged to participate in activities that expand subject knowledge and increase exposure to career fields. As an example, students interested in science fields have the opportunity to work with the UTEP/EPCC Building Scholars program, in which students develop collaborative relationships among these institutions' scientists and experts, as they conduct innovative, biomedical research. Additionally, high achieving students' participation is encouraged in academic competitions such as UIL and Academic Decathlon.

**3c.** Special education

**3d.** ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

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

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

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

TMECHS is committed to motivating and engaging students by enriching their academic, social, and emotional growth. This engagement begins during Summer Bridge activities prior to enrollment and continues through students' high school tenure. TMECHS leadership and faculty believe in the power of social learning; therefore, they model the school's core values of diversity, integrity, respect, trust, and excellence. These values are observable throughout the campus daily as they are demonstrated by faculty and students alike. Indeed, positive campus culture may be evidenced by the yearly attendance average upwards of 97%, as well as a very low discipline referral rate. Students believe that their acceptance at TMECHS and the opportunity for free college credit is a privilege, rather than a constitutional right. This belief drives their behavior, and incoming students quickly learn to mimic the attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by the adults and upper class students, resulting in greater acceptance and tolerance of individual differences and a lack of bullying incidents.

TMECHS educators diligently work with different groups of students to cover important core material while embedding collaborative team-work strategies, resulting in a unified campus mentality of success for all. The campus maintains a family-like feel and supports each student's sense of belonging by encouraging relationship-building and involvement in extracurricular clubs and organizations. Extracurricular participation has proven to improve student-to-student and adult-to-student relationships. Additionally, extracurricular involvement motivates students to succeed academically and supports their belief that they can rely on their peers and teachers for any needed support.

The small student population at TMECHS facilitates the formation of bonds among students and teachers, an experience which may not be available to students enrolled in large, traditional high schools. These relationships and the campus's concern for the development of the whole child contributes to the overall perception of a safe, inviting, and engaging school environment.

An important part of students' social growth involves the many opportunities for participation in clubs, activities, and social events at the school. TMECHS does not offer UIL competitive sports, although students may participate in intramural soccer, basketball, and volleyball. Sports participation fosters students' sense of sportsmanship and camaraderie as they compete with other local early college high schools. Teacher-sponsored clubs and organizations are many, yet they are student-driven and often student-initiated. Among many others, TMECHS clubs include Student Council, Gay-Straight Alliance, Technology Student Association, UIL academic and music competitions, Maverick KRU (knowledge, respect and unity) Dance team, Youth for Christ, Community Service Club, National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, and the Gamers' Group.

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

From its inception in 2008, TMECHS has been actively involved in community and family engagement. In recent years, TMECHS committed to garnering more support and involvement from its parents and surrounding community, which has resulted in positive outcomes in participation rates and community awareness, and exposure to STEM fields. A sense of community is fostered as all stakeholders congregate on campus for special events or parent meetings. Interactions among campus faculty, students, and their families provide students with the strong support network necessary for their academic successes.

TMECHS hosts a Fall Festival and a Spring STEAM Fiesta, annual free events which are open to the community, and at which campus clubs provide a variety of activities for different age groups. Among these activities are a haunted house, carnival games, costume contests, cake walks, trick-or-treating, face-painting, jumping balloons, and cultural experiences such as the All Things Asian booth. Entertainment is provided by student performers, and on-site food trucks ensure an enjoyable experience for all. These festivals have each brought in over 530 people as evidenced by sign-in sheets. Students enjoy showcasing their talents and school to their families and the public. Parental involvement in these events translates to stronger

relationships with school personnel and ultimately greater support of students' academic expectations.

TMECHS is committed to maintaining a culture of inclusivity by organizing events celebrating many different cultures such as a Black History Month Open-Mic night. These events bring together faculty, students, parents, and community members. The high stakeholder participation positively impacts students' attitudes about the school and their academics.

TMECHS is dedicated to giving back to the community and those who are in need. In 2019, TMECHS hosted a shoe drive in which new and gently used shoes were donated to benefit individuals in third-world countries. This effort resulted in a donation of over 450 pairs of shoes. TMECHS also organized a sock drive, in which the PTSA sold unique socks; for each pair sold, an additional pair was donated to a local non-profit organization assisting needy families. TMECHS holds food and clothing drives annually as well as blood drives open to faculty and adult students. This dedication to bettering the lives of not only students, but of people everywhere, is a common value held by all of TMECHS.

In the 2019-2020 school year, TMECHS's Parent, Teacher, Student Association (PTSA) grew to 101 members, a 47% increase from the previous year's membership. The student membership has increased dramatically, and 100% of the faculty are members. This active involvement of parents and students at the high school level makes TMECHS a stand-out when compared to other local high schools.

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

TMECHS is a small, interlinked community which is constantly nourished through community-building and professional learning opportunities. Ongoing community-building creates strong, positive relationships within the campus and with community partners, and it contributes to the success of our students. For example, TMECHS holds monthly potlucks at which all personnel enjoy the dishes brought by each and enjoy conversations with others. These potlucks allow for congregational celebrations of birthdays, personal special events, and sharing of time which results in a more empathetic, cohesive, and united staff.

Professional development is an important part of the campus's creation, maintenance, and advancement. TMECHS's administrative team and the Campus Improvement Team collaborate to develop the plan for professional development (PD). Numerous local and non-local PD opportunities are provided throughout the year for all staff members with the goal of improving overall campus performance. Teachers seek out training to meet specific departmental needs or for personal growth. Examples include the EPCC Departmental Workshop, Social-Emotional Learning Workshops, Best and Most Powerful Strategies for Teaching World Languages, Texas-STEM Conference, Educate Texas Leadership Conference, and 504 Compliance Workshops. Conference attendance is school funded and increases the capacity of all educators and administrators, as evidenced by campus's yearly increase in state accountability ratings. Campus level training is based on district initiatives, faculty input, and campus data reviews. Training involving district initiatives is primarily shared with campus educators by the Active Learning Leader (ALL), campus administrators, and teacher leaders. To this end, it is vital that campus administrators engage in their own professional development to ensure positive outcomes in student learning, teacher effectiveness, campus operations, and compliance with federal, state, and district regulations.

Training opportunities include active and blended learning strategies, processes for improving student learning outcomes, and technology training. Data-driven training is determined based on standardized test scores, grades, behavioral data, and stakeholder surveys. Departmental training occurs once a week during scheduled PLC periods. Teachers often request specific training to address areas of need within their discipline. Requested training examples include the math department requesting a "Writing Across the Curriculum" training and the science department requesting training on the TEKS Resource System. A district technology specialist works with the campus monthly to help teachers complete Apple certifications for the schoolwide goal of earning the Apple school distinction. The wide range of professional learning opportunities benefits students in various manners. Foremost is the example set by campus administration and teachers to be lifelong learners. TMECHS educators believe that continued professional development is integral to highly effective practices; their dedication to professional standards makes this an exciting and rewarding educational community.

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

TMECHS leadership can best be described as a combination of democratic leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership; it is characterized by leadership development across the campus, high expectations, and a shared vision for success. TMECHS leadership uses a participative, shared style in which the faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members take a role in all decision-making processes.

These shared decision-making processes allow the leadership team to work in a supportive role, facilitating and maintaining effective school operations. Campus leaders encourage, inspire, and motivate faculty to innovate and create change that will help grow and shape the future success of TMECHS. Because leadership feels a strong sense of caring and responsibility for staff members, high priority is placed on their personal and professional development to develop expertise and improve performance.

The leadership team at TMECHS is comprised of the principal, one assistant principal, two counselors, a College and Career Readiness Coordinator (CCRC), and an Active Learning Leader (ALL) or campus instructional coach. This team works closely with the Campus Improvement Team (CIT) composed of members from all stakeholder groups including EPCC representation. The CIT meets each spring to create the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) for the upcoming school year. This plan is based on EPISD's District Improvement Plan (DIP) and the campus's Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), ensuring compliance with all district policies, strategic initiatives, and vision. The CIP outlines the budget and determines programs and services to purchase or support in the new school year. The CIP lists the campus personnel who are responsible to oversee each goal and objective. With CIT approval, TMECHS has enhanced students' STEAM-focused options, specifically in engineering and creative arts. Enhancements arose from the re-evaluation of programs offered at TMECHS and shared decisions in an effort to grow these programs. Additionally, the CIT meets monthly to review campus updates and status regarding the progression of programs and initiatives. Decisions made direct the purchase of technology for the campus's programs, both existing and new. New technology purchases included 70-inch interactive panels for every classroom, teacher laptops to support the use of the interactive panels as well as the required, adaptive technology for connection and maximizing of usage. Other technology purchases include TI InSpire calculators for engineering, math and science classes, and sound/ light equipment for the dance and theater courses. These technology supports give the students at TMECHS up-to-date equipment and resources to engage student learning and enhance the quality of their education.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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TMECHS stakeholders understand the need of all students to have balance across the academic, social, and emotional areas of life. In such a rigorous and academically-advanced setting, TMECHS students need additional support and education in both character skills and soft skills if they are to graduate from high school and EPCC and continue to meet with success post-high school. This overarching philosophy of growing the whole child is fundamental to the high success rates of our students and overall campus success.

TMECHS holds a mandatory Summer Bridge program each summer for its incoming freshman cohort. The program is strategically developed to include intensive reading instruction facilitating high (70%+) Reading TSI passing rates, as well as a variety of activities addressing positive character traits, effective teamwork, and communication skill-building. Students quickly realize that the high expectations held by the campus are related to both academics and behaviors. Indeed, the TMECHS Summer Bridge is the campus's key strategy as it lays the foundation for successful student outcomes.

As students begin their TMECHS experience, they are expected to embrace the campus's core values and maintain them throughout their educational career. The values of diversity, integrity, respect, trust, and excellence are instilled in students starting in Summer Bridge. Visible in every classroom are posters displaying these core values. During Summer Bridge, campus leadership discusses these positive character traits with all students, providing specific examples as to why their embodiment is important. Students learn that they are now part of the TMECHS family, a family who stands up for one another and contributes to the success of every individual. Embedded teamwork activities instill a sense of belonging, self-responsibility, and responsibility to others among our students who hail from different parts of the city. Acceptance and tolerance of others' differences are celebrated, as students with varying ability levels recognize that every individual is an important member of our family. Furthermore, all faculty and student mentors possess and demonstrate behaviors consistent with these values, thus perpetuating the perception of the positive and supportive campus climate.

The vast majority of freshmen successfully internalize these fundamental values as evidenced by a yearly discipline referral rate in the single digits and the 97% yearly attendance rate. TMECHS staff members work individually or with small groups of students who struggle in adopting behaviors leading to their own success or the success of others. TMECHS faculty and staff believe that all students have the capacity to reach their goals, and that no student should "fall through the cracks."