U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Project Chrysalis Middle School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4528 Leeland Street
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Houston   TX   77023-3047
City   State   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County HARRIS COUNTY

Telephone (713) 924-1700   Fax (713) 924-1704
Web site/URL
          https://www.houstonisd.org/chrysali
sms   E-mail   jcovarru@houstonisd.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*Dr. Grenita Lathan
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)   E-mail GLATHAN@houstonisd.org

District Name Houston Independent School District   Tel.   (713) 556-6000
I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

_____Date_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Diana Davila
(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. 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 2019 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 2013 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: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.

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

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   186 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   41 Middle/Junior high schools
                                          48 High schools
                                          5 K-12 schools

                                          280 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

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

   [X] Urban or large central city
   [ ] Suburban
   [ ] Rural or small city/town

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 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	54	51	105
7	38	50	88
8	32	54	86
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	124	155	279

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of   0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
    the school (if unknown, estimate):   2 % Asian
                                          1 % Black or African American
                                          96 % Hispanic or Latino
                                          0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
                                          1 % White
                                          0 % Two or more races
                                          100 % Total

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 1%

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.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	**Answer**
(1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	262
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 11 %
                                                         30 Total number ELL

    Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
    Spanish, Sinhalese (Sri Lanka)

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 76 %
        Total number students who qualify: 213

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.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 14

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

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   22:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	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 2018.

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

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
    Yes X   No

    If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2012

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

To provide multiple learning opportunities that empower students to become critical thinkers, independent problem solvers, and academically armed to be successful in a global world.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Project Chrysalis Middle School was designed as a small school alternative for the East End's children. The school has been housed on the Cage Elementary campus since 1995. Project Chrysalis has grown from a team-taught sixth and seventh grade class to an established middle school with 280 students and 16 faculty and staff members. It provides an extended year program, which emphasizes project-based and interdisciplinary learning. The vision is to develop scholars with both academic and emotional intelligence. The school has become a beacon of the East End Houston community as a place where students become their best and follow a path to success.

In 24 years, the focus of the school has shifted due to the changes and demands of the community. The school has embraced the transformation from a transitioning campus to an elite school in preparing the best scholars to enter the highest performing high schools in the Houston Independent School District. With this change in mind, the administration and faculty have met the challenge to make the curriculum highly rigorous to prepare the students for advance placement and dual credit courses in high school. Moreover, the students are offered a college-bound culture every year with several college visits and college-themed competitions. Students attend tours of the colleges and participate in informational sessions at each of these universities.

In a typical day, students start their morning with breakfast in advocacy period. During this class, students are able to turn in their homework for the day, get important school documents, and participate in character building lessons. In a regular day, students attend a five period day including content classes and one elective. The elective can be art, physical education or technology. After school, students participate in clubs that include intramural sports, yearbook, gardening, choir, band, drama, guitar, and girls' empowerment. Students may also use after-school time to complete their community service requirement. Each year, Project Chrysalis students must complete 20 hours of community service while parents need to complete 8 hours. The school provides various opportunities to complete this service with in-school events and also specific trips to non-profit organizations such as the Houston Food Bank or the Star of Hope Mission. Community service plays an integral role in developing well-rounded individuals and it strengthens the bonds between home, school and community.

The students are kept to the highest of standards because they leave prepared for high school and are college-bound. For the past decade, the campus has used the Academic Improvement Model (AIM) for prompt intervention. AIM is a discipline model that provides students with a structure to succeed academically, socially and behaviorally. The model consists of a tracking system for students' daily conduct with marks or demerits given in two categories: respect and responsibility. Respect marks refer to the behavioral infractions and responsibility marks are for organizational infractions. This system has proven to be our most effective tool in addressing behavior and academic issues proactively and creates an ideal Project Chrysalis student body.

After the 2012 National Blue Ribbon recognition, both the school and community had to come to terms with what the school could realistically offer the students. The school was attempting to provide a traditional school experience when its small size could not support that type of philosophy. Through Rice University and its College of Business, the administrative team engaged in a week long course on marketing. As part of the course, the team identified what the main focus of the school was: college-bound successful scholars. Once the focus was identified, resources and funds were directed towards the academic offerings. As the school's focus began to shift from a traditional middle school to a college-bound academy during the three-year implementation plan, the academic successes were prevalent, and the school stands again as a nominee for the National Blue Ribbon Award.

In 2018, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) passing rates for Project Chrysalis were 97% for reading, 97% for math, 92% for writing, 99% for science and 98% for social studies. Most impressively, 52% of the student population received a perfect or near perfect score on all tests taken. With such outstanding student performance scores on state assessments, Project Chrysalis remains a focal point in the community and continues to be recognized for these achievements. Last year

Project Chrysalis was one of 62 schools in the nation to be named a National Recognized Title I Campus. All stakeholders are proud of the accomplishments and continue to work hard to maintain the high standards.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

At Project Chrysalis, English language arts (ELA) teachers focus on the four domains of language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. They follow the seven ELA strands of the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) to teach all four domains. Teachers believe this approach is comprehensive and effective in assuring proper language acquisitions for all the students.

The reading domain is addressed through differentiated instruction. Higher readers are given more challenging novels to work with, while the lower readers are given intervention with grade-appropriate texts. Reading levels are determined based on the results from monthly reading screeners. With this data, seating arrangements are made accordingly, and daily assessments are provided to ensure monitoring of growth and proficiency. The types of texts studied include fiction, literary nonfiction, poetry, drama, informational texts, and paired texts.

Writing skills are approached through monthly practice in crafting a well-developed essay. Workshops are created to allow for peer review and peer editing. Grammar lessons are provided so that students can correct mechanics in their rough drafts. Students work on a variety of types of writing including expository, persuasive, personal narratives, short stories, and poetry. In 6th grade, the focus is on writing well-constructed paragraphs. In 7th grade, students use those well-constructed paragraphs to produce well-constructed essays. Finally, in 8th grade, students must master writing a high-school level essay of excellent quality.

Listening and speaking are practiced daily through both formal and informal discussions that are centered on assigned texts and independent reading books that students choose for themselves. Book talks are evident among students as they share their genuine interests in their choice of books with peers. In 8th grade, Socratic seminars are the culmination of 6th and 7th grade discussion practice. These seminars are practiced weekly with students to activate higher-level thinking skills for discussions over assigned texts. Students come prepared with questions to ask their peers and respond to the questions of others based on a Socratic Seminar question-stem sheet. Students are encouraged to read passages from texts aloud to the class and are corrected for pronunciation and fluency.

In addition to covering all domains, vocabulary is integrated with every ELA lesson whether it is through identifying new words based on context in passages or having a word of the day to focus on as a Do Now Activity. Word webs are also used for new vocabulary words and students are encouraged to break words down by their roots and affixes for meaning.

1b. Mathematics:

Since in 8th grade, a qualifying student may take algebra, our math teachers examine the vertical alignment of the math TEKS to match our curriculum to teach concepts in a progressive way leading to high math such as algebra. Moreover, all students are required to take Pre-AP mathematics courses in grades 6-8 at Project Chrysalis to ensure they meet this requirement for algebra in case they meet all other needed pre-requisites. In all grade levels, teachers also cover financial literacy with our students, not only because it is part of our TEKS, but also because it is crucial for our students to master financial skills that can have a profound effect in their future. Teachers trust that this rigorous math program prepares students for the challenging math courses in high school.

At PCMS, students are trained to think in different ways to solve math problems that make use of manipulatives, formulas, graphs or diagrams, equations, reasonable estimation, etc. Students are also given opportunities to write in math class. For example, for their exit ticket they may be asked to justify, explain or interpret their numeric answers using academic vocabulary related to the lesson. Working in pairs or

groups also allows students to think creatively and more deeply as they explore the details, the process, and the answers to a math problem.

For struggling students, the teachers get familiar with them using previous STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) results and diagnostic assessments at the beginning of the year. Teachers work with them in small-group instruction, weekday tutorials, and Saturday tutorials as needed. They constantly track their progress and use targeted, differentiated instruction to ensure their progress. In addition to classroom instruction and intervention, students are given opportunities to increase their learning using technology. Currently, students are regularly completing interactive math software lessons to fill math academic gaps. They are also required to attend, right after the end of the school year, a summer enrichment program for three weeks. This program is designed to fill gaps from the previous year and begin covering content for the following year.

1c. Science:

Since science is a subject area that many students struggle with, the old-school method of reading a book or answering questions is not effective to teach this content. It is with that in mind that our teachers bring science to life by using a variety of daily demonstrations to make instruction effective and learning long term. These demonstrations are meant to get students engaged in the lesson. The students are asked to make the connection between the demonstration and the objective using their critical thinking skills. Also, students are asked to write in their interactive notebooks daily to support the development of strong writing skills through content area.

In Texas, students are required to learn state-mandated curriculum that focuses on physical science in 6th grade and life science in 7th. In 8th grade, earth science is covered in addition to life and physical science. Though we use many instructional strategies for students' scientific learning, one of the most effective ways for students to retain science concepts is with hands-on labs. They are not just fun, but they are meaningful and analytical activities that take students' learning to a deeper level. For example, in the 6th grade science classroom, students racer hissing cockroaches and apply the concept of speed. In 7th grade, students complete labs such as DNA extraction and frog dissection. They also explore food web concepts when analyzing the contents of an owl pellet. In 8th grade, students apply concepts of force and motion in a water rocket launching lab. In addition to hand-on activities, technology is used to supplement the lessons. Interactive web-based simulation programs are used to reinforce concepts.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

Students in social studies are challenged at pre-advanced placement levels from sixth to eighth grade. In sixth, as required the TEKS, students study world cultures. TEKS are taught through art analysis, map skills, and integrated online lesson connected to places beyond the school's inner-city neighborhood. The 6th grade social studies course culminates in field trips to art museums and world-renowned universities local to our area. Seventh graders bring life to Texas history through technology and social media platforms. For example, students use computer-based programs to create dioramas of the Alamo. Concurrent with Texas independence, seventh graders experience a three-day field trip to San Antonio and Austin where they visit the Alamo, walk the halls of our state capitol, and take excursions to flagship universities.

When the students reach eighth grade, they learn about the founding of our country through document-based questions, extensive note-taking skills, and primary source document analysis. While preparing for nationally-recognized high schools with the expectation of college, the opportunity to trace the footsteps of our founding fathers is offered to the students. In Boston, Massachusetts, 8th grade students walk the Freedom Trail, dump tea into the Boston Harbor, and stand on the U.S.S. Constitution. While students live social studies, the teachers analyze data from classroom, district, and state testing to ensure the needs of all students are met, simultaneous with field experiences. District-provided data analysis systems facilitate and enhance our ability to ensure that students perform at or above lofty standards. Teachers use the data to identify struggling students and offer them before-school, lunchtime, or Saturday tutorial sessions to help them reach expected goals and beyond. All students graduate from Project Chrysalis well-prepared for

collegiate academics in social studies thanks to teachers' focus to provide students with challenging and enriching social studies experiences.

1e. For secondary schools:

Teachers use the curricula to support college and career readiness when having students employ literacy skills rigorously in their daily writing or when delivering presentations. Students are also asked to collaborate regularly with one another completing projects or lesson activities. Teachers know how important team work is in the workplace, so developing this skill at an early age is supported across contents. Furthermore, teachers design cross-curricular projects for students to complete twice a year. The projects are meant to develop problem-solving and critical-thinking while making connections between content areas. Teachers know that it is imperative for students to apply these skills with real-world scenarios where creative and innovative thinking is necessary.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

As part of the enhanced curriculum, students must take one year of art, two years of technology applications, and two years of physical education. In addition to these three classes, high-school credit Spanish I and AP Spanish are offered for the native Spanish speakers in the student body. Teachers also implement the Texas On Course curriculum with the 7th and 8th grade students to explore career choices and become well informed about college opportunities. In the course, students are asked to complete lessons on career exploration, personal graduation plans, and investigate high school endorsement options.

For our art curriculum, sixth graders at Project Chrysalis take a project-based visual art class in which mandated TEKS are covered in a fun, safe space where students can practice literary skills like writing, presenting, and discussing while creating a portfolio of diverse personal work they can be proud of.

In the visual art studio, students learn how to use a variety of art media including, but not limited to, watercolor, acrylic painting, collage, sculptural techniques and observational drawing. Each project is inspired by an art style or a specific artist so students can get a glimpse of art history. At the end of each project, students practice using their vocabulary by writing an artist statement and reflection explaining their creative choices and connecting them to the inspiration for the project. Additionally, students present their artwork to the class. During these presentations, students are expected to engage in discussions about each other's artwork by giving constructive feedback and specific praise. By practicing these conversations, students learn how to give and take criticism in an academic or professional atmosphere.

In physical education in 7th and 8th grade, teachers cover physical education TEKS while integrating content subjects whenever possible. For instance, students are expected to calculate their own body mass index (BMI) using their math skills. They use the calculated BMI for comparison with other students' BMI to understand where they stand across the nation. They also calculate their physical performance from the beginning to the end of the year, which may include number of curl ups and push-ups, mile running time, etc. Teachers also include health objectives in physical education and make connections to life science curriculum covered in 7th grade like the human body systems. Students get to assess how physical fitness correlates to all the systems of the body.

They physical education class goes beyond the classroom by offering intramural sports after school every day. These sports include basketball, baseball, soccer, field hockey (spring), volleyball (fall), and flag football. Sports are a great way to teach disciplined habits and good team work. Good sportsmanship carries to the collaborative work that students do daily in the classroom. This goes hand in hand with the school's commitment to develop well-rounded individuals.

In technology application, our 7th and 8th graders learn about keyboarding, word processing, presentation

design, and database creation as required by the TEKS. Students complete projects using a variety of applications and design presentation tools to enhance knowledge beyond their regular content classes. They are also using Google classrooms to introduce them to online-based learning. Through we have a specific class for students to learn about technology, we embed technology usage and application across the content. Teaches are continually exploring applications and programs that can enhance their own curriculum and develop students' ability to work with various technology equipment and tools.

From the moment our students set food on campus, teachers talk to them early and often about college. With that vision in place, homeroom classes research colleges around the nation. 6th graders research local universities, 7th graders research Texas universities outside the city, and 8th graders research Boston universities. Once the research is complete, students share their findings with their class. Students then vote to select a college that their class will represent the rest of the school year. Classes then compete against each other in an annual academic event in which classes share with the entire school the college they are representing and why they chose it. Teachers, administrators, and staff strive to provide a college-bound culture by offering opportunities like these in additional to several college visits that help students see themselves as college students in the future.

3. Special Populations:

Each school year starts by setting high expectations for all the students regardless of their performance subgroups or special population. Teachers and administrators can easily get down to the work of identifying, through various data systems, students who are above, at, or below academic levels that make reaching the academic goals a reality. Beginning-of-the year, middle-of-the year, district and teacher-made tests are some of the assessments teachers use to monitor all students' progress as the year goes by.

Teachers complete a data analysis form after each assessment. In the form, teachers not only look at those students who scored below expectations, but also at the lowest standards and most missed items that may indicate misconceptions. With all this information, they put action steps in place to implement new strategies to help students master the low standards and begin intervention of all subgroups. Intervention is focused on how to make all student subgroups make academic growth.

Within the classroom, teachers provide cooperative group learning experiences to provide struggling learners support from their peers. They also use a variety of strategies to check for understanding, such as the #hashtag reading strategy; response, reveal, and revise; and mind-map learning reflections. Across content, they rely heavily on visual learning through art, primary-source documents, appropriate social media, and web-based content. In addition to all these strategies, teachers have students use computer-adaptive programs to supplement daily instruction.

As part of the academic intervention, on-level students are offered Saturday tutorials to provide the extra support needed to reach the next level of achievement. The Saturday lessons are objective-driven to target students' short-term gaps in instruction with hands-on and engaging activities.

Struggling students attend before school or lunchtime tutorials as needed to hold them accountable and to provide one-on-one attention. These tutorials are targeting long-term academic gaps. The objectives targeted are below the student's grade level and the lessons are more individualized to help students reach grade level performance.

Additionally, since the student body consists of 64% gifted and talented (GT), teachers design personalized Gifted Education Plan (GEP). This plan is written to explain how the student's education will be differentiated based on past academic performance. In these plans, teachers offer GT students with content extensions through projects of their choice including but not limited to dioramas, mobiles, creating and delivering a presentation, creating assessments, projects, webpage design, video production.

For the 11% of the English language learners (ELLs), we implement the necessary modifications and use Sheltered Instruction in the content areas. Through sheltered instruction, we support the language acquisition in the content areas. Each student is required to write regularly in science, social studies and

math in their interactive notebooks. Foldables, graphic organizers, and other visual artifacts are also used to support our ELLs.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

The single greatest motivational factor for current students and teachers is the accomplishment of former students. There is nothing more powerful for a student or rewarding for a teacher than the presence of a former student fulfilling the requirements of student teaching in the classroom. Bulletin boards provide evidence of the belief that we instill in our students and the rewards they attain. The ability to point to a college graduation invitation or share a social media post from students near and far, from Brown and Georgetown to University of Houston and Texas A&M, is evidence of what we tell our students every day. Hard work pays and we believe in you!

As further evidence of our culture of college and beyond, we work with colleagues in the elementary and middle school who are former students. Those teachers are living examples and valuable resources. They share a complete understanding of the struggles and triumphs along the path to higher education and rewarding careers. For veteran teachers and administrators, words do little justice to describe the gift of sitting next to, in a team meeting, a treasured student who once sat in front of you.

Project Chrysalis administrators and teachers provide support and encouragement for one another in numerous ways. From fabulous lunches and hand-made tamales to thoughtful gifts and words of encouragement, we are reminded constantly of our value to the team. There are never-ending gestures that brighten every day, but there is a simple, common bond that provides the foundation of the culture of high expectations for teachers and students.

Students are supported socially and emotionally through daily advocacy classes, Student Council, and Girls Club. Students attend advocacy classes every morning with the same teacher throughout the school year. This teacher is their homeroom teacher who becomes knowledgeable about them and their daily situations. Homeroom teachers quickly communicate with the administrative staff to report any emotional/social situation that may need closer attention from a counseling staff member. Students are able to communicate with administration via their elected student council member. The council has provided the student body with a voice to share concerns about their well-being and making the culture more positive for them. Since student council was established in 2015, the students have designed their school logos and school uniforms, established flexible seating during lunchtime, organized several extra-curricular activities and coordinated food drives in collaboration with the Houston Food Bank.

Lastly, Project Chrysalis offers a young women's empowerment club called Girls Club. This club is open 7th and 8th grade girls who are interested in women's empowerment and spreading positivity across the campus. During their weekly meetings, the girls discuss topics of their choice. Some of the topics that are up for discussion include healthy self-esteem, effective communication, promoting positivity and what makes an empowered leader. Girls club has affected other girls who are not members keep the peace and positivity between girls. Furthermore, it has encouraged other girls to be empowered leaders in school.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

Project Chrysalis Middle School has one of the most at-risk student populations, yet the campus strives to build a strong home-school connection.

One of the initiatives is to provide a free breakfast to each child at school. The goals of the Free Breakfast Program are twofold, increase student attendance and ensure that every child has a nutritious meal to prepare him/her for learning throughout the school day. The underlying benefits include parents bringing their children to school on time and the parents having a chance to informally interact with teachers and staff.

Due to the large number of Spanish-speaking parents, all written communication is provided in Spanish and

English. This helps the parents gain clarity and understanding about what their children are doing in school. It also brings a stronger sense of safety and well-being when the parents know that they will be able to reach an adult in a timely manner who will understand and help them with their concerns.

During school programs and parent meetings, Project Chrysalis provides translators to facilitate dialogue knowing that open communication is imperative to student success and parent involvement. We engage parents in academics through literacy, math and science nights. Parents and students explore the world of literacy, mathematics and science through interactive booths where both the parent and the child read, solve problems, and perform experiments using everyday household items. All of the instructions are in English and Spanish. Students benefit from the concept being reinforced, while parents gain confidence and are less intimidated when helping their children with homework outside of the campus.

Beyond strategies and skills, a strong community partnership with parents has been developed at Project Chrysalis. Through communication applications, email, phone calls and parent meetings, the faculty and administration are in constant contact with families keeping them informed of the needs and successes of their child.

In addition, Project Chrysalis offers various volunteer opportunities for parents during the school day through the Parent Room. Parents can be seen creating decorations for classrooms, taking ESL classes, preparing to chaperone class field trips and engaging with students as classroom support. The ESL classes help them acquire the language they need to be able to help their children at home. As the content becomes more complex and difficult, the parent remains confident in knowing that he/she can communicate with the teacher to find out what their child is learning.

As parents, students, teachers and administrators are integral parts of a fluid team, all Project Chrysalis stakeholders aim to produce high-performing well-rounded students who develop to their fullest potential.

3. **Professional Development:**

The ease of accessibility of professional development opportunities for Project Chrysalis teachers and administrators ensures that every person on campus can choose a wide variety of tailor-fit experiences. Houston Independent School District provides online access to professional development through the in-district professional development platform. There, teachers and administrators can select online or face-to-face courses sorted by topic, objective, skill, and/or subject. Even the face-to-face and on campus options are linked to the platform to ensure the ability to monitor progress, hours, and potential needs for enrichment.

Online offerings allow teachers and administrators to access the courses anytime and anywhere. Most often, Project Chrysalis employees choose the electronic option for yearly updates for topics like bullying, health awareness, and employee relations. School personnel are afforded a time slot during in-service or may complete courses at home.

The focus of the on-campus professional development is the motivational and team building aspects of maintaining a high performing campus like Project Chrysalis. This past summer, employees participated in diversity training to better understand the challenges students face. As a bonding and eye-opening experience, the faculty participated in a modified Master Chef competition with minimal tools and supplies. While the activity provided endless laughter and team building experience, it also drove home the point of what it is like for a student to approach a seemingly monumental challenge with limited tools and resources.

Content specific or topic driven professional development takes place during the school year as the need arises. Again, teachers and administrators have the option of searching for an objective in the online platform and choosing electronic or face-to-face. Immediate assistance is found electronically, while nationally renowned options like Lead4Ward take place in person. Lead4Ward offers broad topics such as year-end reviews, and objective-based topics such as teaching the difficult Early Republic section of 8th grade social studies.

While Houston ISD requires staff to participate in at least 45 hours of professional development, teachers and administrators at Project Chrysalis go above and beyond the requirement. The majority of the staff participates in travel experiences provided by groups such as Fund for Teachers and National Endowment of Humanities. These experiences take place in the summer and allow staff to participate in rewarding adventures, while bringing an unknown part of the world back to share with our students, creating a culture of lifelong learning.

4. School Leadership:

At Project Chrysalis, the school's leadership philosophy is to serve students and teachers to ensure academic success. The administrative team believes in serving teachers in a capacity to assist this goal. The principal, the assistant principal, the dean of instruction, and our grade level chairs make up the school's leadership team. The grade level chairs meet bi-weekly with their teams to discuss academic and behavior issues. This ensures constant and consistent monitoring of their students' progress during the school year. Situations that otherwise would have gone unnoticed are addressed in a timely manner; thus, helping students improve their behavior and academic standing. In addition to grade-level meetings, faculty meeting with the dean of instruction take place bi-weekly to share school announcements, calendar updates, and discuss school-wide initiatives and programs being implemented. The continuous collaboration between administration and faculty make the support needed for teachers prompt and ongoing.

The administrators diligently monitor attendance, grades, conduct, and assessments regularly throughout the year. For example, attendance is verified weekly and checked with the school's registrar. This process results in maintaining a nearly 99% attendance rate. Grades are monitored every four weeks with progress reports and report cards. The reports also include the student's conduct. Lastly, assessment results are monitored during data analysis meetings, which take place every three to four weeks. At each meeting, the teacher and the dean of instruction identify and discuss the objectives not mastered and the students in need of intervention. The outcome of the meeting is to find the next steps for intervention and finalize a timeline for such intervention.

Lastly, administrators are responsible for overseeing the school wide discipline management system that monitors the students' respect and responsibility weekly. The system is used to monitor homework submission and behavior on a weekly basis. With this tool, parents are also notified if their child is struggling and what kind of support they may provide at home to get the student back on track.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

There are so many best practices that make Project Chrysalis Middle School a successful campus. However, the solitary factor is the school commitment to Data Driven Instruction.

Prior to the beginning of the school year, teachers are required to review student data from the previous year. Based on the data, the teacher places the students into Tier I, Tier II or Tier III. Throughout the school year, the teacher will assess students every three weeks and analyze the results by completing a school-created data reflection form.

As a result of their reflection, the teacher will create an instructional plan for their class. Students are then grouped based on objectives needing mastery and receive intervention. The continual analysis of the data and the constant changes in the planning and delivery of the instruction increases the total number of students who reach mastery level of the essential knowledge and skills.

For students who are having ongoing difficulty in various objectives, a team meeting is held with all of the student's content teachers, administrators, parents and student. A discussion is held on how best to support the student and a contract is developed among the student, parent and school. Every person has a role to play in order to assure that the student will reach higher academic levels of success. A follow-up meeting is held 2 months later with the parent and student to discuss the progress the student has made. If necessary, a new contract is developed to support the student. This constant data mindset assures that each student is getting their instructional needs met and that they are kept on track to meet or exceed academic standards.