

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Young Women's Leadership Academy
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2123 West Huisache Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City San Antonio State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 78201-4809

County Bexar County

Telephone (210) 438-6525 Fax (210) 228-3194

Web site/URL https://schools.saisd.net/page/023.homepage/ E-mail dmclerran1@saisd.net

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Pedro Martinez E-mail pmartinez1@saisd.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name San Antonio Independent School District Tel. (210) 554-2280

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

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

Date _____

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

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

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

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature 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 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
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 current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

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

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 67 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 9 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 22 High schools
 - 2 K-12 schools
- 100 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

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

- Urban (city or town)
 Suburban
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of 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	125	125
7	0	119	119
8	0	110	110
9	0	71	71
10	0	59	59
11	0	62	62
12 or higher	0	45	45
Total Students	0	591	591

*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):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1.9 % Asian
 - 2.4 % Black or African American
 - 88.2 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0.2 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 5.3 % White
 - 1.7 % 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 2019 - 2020 school year: 2%

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 <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	12
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	12
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	591
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

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

Spanish, Greek, Hindi

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %

0 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 49 %

Total number students who qualify: 289

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %
3 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. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</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: 11
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. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	33
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	0
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.	4

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	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
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 2020.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	45
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	89%
Enrolled in a community college	11%
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 No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2015

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

To support single-gender, college preparatory, public education for young women to receive the academic skills to achieve success in college and life by thinking critically, leading purposefully, and living healthy and responsible lives.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

In 2020-2021, we started school virtually. By October, we began phasing in students with 10% of students on campus and all CDC guidelines in effect. In January, we phased in another wave of students up to 30%. As vaccination distribution started in San Antonio, we were able to increase to our current 40%. Currently, we are in a hybrid instructional model and expect to move to 100% in person in August. The middle school grades have more students in person than the high school grades. Teachers in middle school have all continued in hybrid model, while some high school teachers have periods with all students in virtual setting.

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

We are a choice school and parents apply to attend. They are selected through priority zones that start with economically-disadvantaged as priority one; the next priority zone is students who live within a three-mile radius of the school; then those who live within the school district; and those who have a sibling already enrolled in our school.

PART III - SUMMARY

The Young Women's Leadership Academy (YWLA) was established in 2008 as the first all-girls public school in San Antonio, Texas, and as an internal charter school within the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD). SAISD is one of 19 school districts in Bexar County, which boasts a population of nearly two million. Rooted in the urban center of the city, all schools in SAISD are Title 1 schools with a multitude of challenges.

YWLA offers a college preparatory education for young women, from mostly economically-disadvantaged homes, who seek to earn a university degree. As part of a network of sister schools in Texas, YWLA is committed to the core values of college preparation, leadership development, and health and wellness. The educational philosophy that drives YWLA is grounded in a growth mindset.

Teachers focus on facilitating learning opportunities that push all students to experience individual growth annually. Students, who enter YWLA below grade level in the sixth-grade, experience on-going academic and personal growth throughout their years at YWLA.

Academically, teachers address all learning styles through innovative instructional methods that focus on higher level reasoning skills. Writing across the curriculum and full technology integration have been instrumental in developing student academic skills. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program has been implemented schoolwide to develop students' college readiness skills including how to study, how to actively read, take notes, how to collaborate and manage time. During COVID, teachers quickly moved to find digital apps and platforms that facilitated student collaboration. Teachers use Peardeck and Jamboard, along with the ubiquitous Zoom break out rooms to provide students a venue where they can work in groups and provide feedback to one another and question each other's thinking to achieve a shared goal.

Emotionally, teachers have implemented several strategies to refine students' emotional skills through activities that allow them to communicate, self-regulate, and evaluate their thoughts and feelings. Warm-ups with the Rhithm App, mindfulness, reflection, and exit ticket opportunities all engage students and teachers in creating the best environment for learning. Additionally, administration enlisted the support of our parent councils to support our students' SEL well-being. Parent councils coordinated Trivia Nights and other social events using school Zoom accounts for students to strengthen their bonds with each other during COVID. Teachers joined students in these social hours after school and an added benefit was that parents also had fun with these events.

Physically, our campus has opened more areas for students to learn in a variety of environments. An increase in sitting areas and ergonomic furniture allows teachers to transition instruction easily from teacher-centered to student-centered. Students can easily find areas to collaborate and study throughout the campus. Furthermore, increased course offerings in our fine arts program have allowed students to explore more areas beyond the core content. Within COVID physical distancing guidelines, spaces within the teachers' work room, cafeteria, auditorium, and stage were converted into learning spaces to ensure teachers and students had the safe space to learn and to ensure the spirit and focus of each course was respected and not compromised.

Socially, students have over 20 clubs and organizations to participate in outside of instructional time. Many of these clubs are student-created and range from environmental interests to social justice and leadership focus. Students are also required to complete 100 hours of community service as part of YWLA graduation requirements. Many students begin serving their community as early as the sixth grade and opportunities are regularly announced and posted for them. During COVID, students learned to pivot, like their teachers, to meet these requirements. High school students provided tutoring to middle schools via virtual platforms to earn service hours and others involved in non-school organizations provided debate skills training virtually.

Culturally, YWLA dedicates itself to excellence in all areas. Students excel in the classroom with a desire to learn and attain the skills necessary for college and life. Students excel outside of the classroom through the

many opportunities they embrace, like peer-mentoring sessions, district, regional, state, and national competitions like Science Fair, History Fair, and biomedical research programs. Students pursue independent learning experiences because of the example set by older students. YWLA faculty members have been recognized for their dedication to student learning with teaching awards from city agencies, professional and civic organizations, and educational grants. In the past 8 years, YWLA teachers have been selected as district level Teachers of the Year 6 out of 8 times. Parents model high expectations as they help invigorate school life through their active participation in parent organizations such as Parent Class Councils, PTSA, Athletic Booster Club, and Campus Leadership Team. Equally important, YWLA leadership has sustained this synergistic effect through their empowering guidance to succeed. During COVID, administration tapped into parent groups to help organize student events and enlisted student leaders to provide how-to workshops for navigating new virtual meeting systems for parents. YWLA students are empowered to positively impact their school community by supporting parents, teachers, and administrators.

YWLA has been built with a constant determination to improve. This growth mindset aligns with the campus mantra of “good, better, best”—moving toward the next level of success and not becoming complacent. Evaluating the effectiveness of systems and programs occurs with the goal of refining practices to better serve all stakeholders’ needs. Surveys provide stakeholder feedback, and this feedback helps identify target areas for improvement.

In response to COVID 19, all stakeholders provided input on the new instructional program. A hybrid instructional format surfaced after teachers and parents worked with administration to create an A/B block schedule alternating the Friday schedule to modify the afternoon classes providing time for content area teachers to meet in professional learning communities to evaluate data and plan instruction. This productive time has also helped teachers plan instruction for the extended school intercession weeks and Saturday schools.

With the changing social climate, teachers and administration have also created the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion committee and the SEL committee to implement a more diverse and culturally responsive environment. These committees have initiated several events such as drive thru celebrations, virtual ceremonies for Hispanic Heritage and Black History Month, and SEL home visits to struggling students for encouragement and motivation. Course offerings now include Women in Literature and will include Mexican American Studies for the upcoming year. These instructional decisions commit to expose our students to diverse course offerings to prepare all students to be critical thinkers ready to question and change social injustices.

Along with the consistent achievement of our students, we leveraged the 2015 National Blue Ribbon recognition to recruit new students. This national recognition affirms the commitment and dedication of students and teachers at YWLA. Parents express more confidence in an instructional program that is established and recognized by different city, state, and national distinctions. Additionally, when digital devices were needed and funds were low, school administrators applied for grants to address this need. We proudly included our 2015 National Blue Ribbon recognition to assure foundations recognized that YWLA students had a pattern of academic success that was anchored in rigorous expectations for all. Our students have also leveraged the 2015 recognition as seniors applying for scholarships. This current graduating cohort has earned over 15.8 million dollars in merit and need based scholarships. Identifying YWLA as a National Blue Ribbon school provides added value to their applications. Additionally, in 2013, YWLA was recognized as the #1 middle school; and recognized as #1 high school program in Texas by Children at Risk organization for high student performance. Since 2018, the US News and World Report recognized YWLA as the top school in America and most recently in 2020, the Jay Mathews Challenge Index ranked YWLA #27 nationally as one of the Top 300 Schools.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

YWLA teachers have the autonomy to create their own curriculum. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the foundation for lessons, but teachers supplement this core with National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) and College Board materials. As our school district moved to full virtual and then a hybrid model of instruction, teachers used old technology like document cameras to provide clearer modeling of problem solving for students and use new technology like meeting rooms to maintain student collaborative opportunities for discussion and planning.

YWLA's English courses have been vertically aligned utilizing a text-based approach purposefully relying upon anchor texts as the core content. Assignments transitioned from paper form to Google Classroom, then to Canvas, where they have been tailored to fit an online format including access to digital resources and texts. Content includes a dynamic blend of the classical foundations of early literary canons while also making room for a diversity of voices and issues that have arisen so forcefully in student lives today. Teachers differentiate lessons with annotation guides that allow them to build on their specific skill level. Middle school students use teacher guided dialectical journals to ensure students extract meaningful textual evidence. As they advance each year, students become completely independent in supplying all components of the journal, as well as theme, and then synthesizing their original journal entries into fully developed compositions. Interventions are created throughout the year after close analysis of diagnostic testing and midterm data. Teachers strategically use the asynchronous, or independent phase of class instruction to meet with small groups and individuals who may be struggling with organizational skills or homework completion.

All math courses offered are Pre-AP, which is vertically aligned to the standards for AP Calculus and AP Statistics. The SAISD pacing calendar, course books, and district-approved online learning management systems (Imagine Math, Delta Math) are used as a foundation of what is taught. The shift to Canvas has allowed for the expansion of learning strategies such as the flipped classroom, guided asynchronous lessons and practice, digital interactive notebooks, and backwards mapping. In addition, communication practices have become more immediate in regard to performance feedback, inquiry, and assessments. Students engage in a variety of methods to assess their learning such as projects, break out rooms, hands-on activities, interactive digital activities and platforms, and technology. The department's goal is not to teach short cuts, but to make sure the students understand why they are learning the process thus enhancing and deepening their understanding of the topics. Data from assessments is tracked to identify trends and the potential need for whole-class and re-teach sessions. Students also track their progress to self-identify their areas of improvement, as well as to highlight their strengths.

The science department vertically aligns their curriculum based on TEKS standards including the National Math and Science Initiative and Advanced Placement curriculum. Data from previous years is reviewed to identify areas of improvement and to determine how mastery is defined for each exam. Teachers have increased 'chunking' of instruction to permit a shorter period of synchronous instruction followed by a period of asynchronous instruction, practice, and reinforcement. Students may participate in class verbally, text a response to the teacher's cell phone, comment in a Zoom chat, or add to a live group document allowing to reach the varied learning styles and introverted students. Virtual escape rooms, online labs, video demonstrations, slides, e-journals, and virtual manipulatives, FlipGrid virtual presentations and discussions, Canvas tools, virtual science fair and energy summit tools, SEL and the Rhythm app have all been utilized to create a technology infused learning environment. A STEAM approach to content-based learning and meaningful formative and summative assessments along with technology contribute to a solid approach that engages students in learning.

The Social Studies department vertically aligns their curriculum with state and AP standards to develop strong content familiarity along with writing and analytical skill development. Online platforms such as Zoom, Padlet, Canvas, Google Forms, and Pear Deck have been integrated to scaffold these essential skills such as document analysis, maps, graphs, charts, formulating an argument, understanding change over time, how to compare and contrast, and how to create arguments using textual evidence. Teachers analyze

multiple samples of student work to identify areas of refinement and areas of reinforcement. Teachers incorporate a broad range of differentiated instructional practices to support diverse learners such as sentence stems and chunked reading in the lower grades to model appropriate writing. In a virtual setting, teachers offer night school, Saturday school, tutoring and interventions, extracurricular activities, and competitions. Students are directed to these opportunities based on assessments such as diagnostic tests, exit tickets, unit exams, nine weeks exams, and semester exams.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

College and career readiness is the essential foundation upon which our curriculum is built. All core subjects are offered at the Pre-AP level to middle school students which then transitions to AP courses for high school students beginning in ninth grade. This provides students with the opportunity to engage with rigorous course material at the college level throughout high school. Currently, we offer 15 AP courses. When possible, dual credit courses are layered into the AP course so that students are taking both at the same time, thereby increasing the likelihood of receiving college credit. When offering dual credit courses, we are strategic in selecting courses that will most benefit our students in college by focusing on credits that will address the standard university core curriculum requirements. Due to our limited staff size, some courses are offered as hybrid dual enrollment courses where students engage online with a college professor for their lecture while receiving assignment support from our campus teacher. This has allowed us to offer college algebra and computer science college courses.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students utilize the YWLA Fine Arts offerings to extend their knowledge of core content disciplines in a visual, kinesthetic, or auditory dimension. Fine Arts offerings include Art (6th-12th), Choir (6-12th), Dance (7th-12th), Theatre Arts (6-12th), and a newly developed Orchestra program (6th-10th). Middle school students can take multiple fine arts courses, while high school students opt to follow a more structured pathway through one discipline, though they are free to pursue multiple art forms. Each discipline has adapted to the online environment in different ways; theatre arts, dance, and choir have held virtual performances, while art has held supply distribution days to ensure students have needed art materials at home.

Through physical education, students develop teamwork and leadership skills, strategic thinking, abstract thinking, and learn to overcome obstacles. PE integrates core content disciplines, as well as technology, into the curriculum. All 6th, 7th, and 9th grade students are required to take PE. Athletics is offered to 7th-12th grade students who wish to join a formal competitive school team. YWLA competes in the state competitive league in volleyball, soccer, basketball, track, and cross country. In remote learning, students have completed workouts together during synchronous online classes. Due to lack of equipment at home, students have created their own weights and equipment to use for class.

The YWLA Foreign Language department consists of a rigorous sequence of courses in Spanish that runs from Spanish 1 to AP Spanish Literature. Students are eligible to enroll in Spanish courses in 7th grade. A Spanish placement test is also offered each year, which allows students to start at the course level that matches their level of fluency. All high school students are required to take three years of Spanish for graduation from YWLA. At the Spanish 3 level, students are able to take the course as dual credit and earn 6 hours of college credit in intermediate Spanish. All Spanish courses ensure that students are learning the connections between communication and complexity of culture through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In the online learning environment, students work collaboratively in small groups to engage in the content and practice speaking skills.

YWLA's technology courses focus on engineering and computer science. Engineering is an important part of the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and our engineering pipeline is guided by

an engaging curriculum aimed to promote students' interest in STEM fields. In 7th and 8th grade, students can take Principles of Information Technology and robotics. We offer two high school pathways to industry-level certifications. Students can take Principles of Applied Engineering followed by Engineering Design, which prepares them to sit for the AutoCAD certification. Computer science-focused students can take a dual enrollment computer science course through UT Austin, which is followed by a coding course that prepares them for CompTIA or Python certification. YWLA also offers a robust high school robotics program which competes in FIRST Robotics Competition each year. Online learning has been challenging for engineering students who are used to building and testing designs; they have naturally shifted toward an emphasis on collaborative design, where in-person students have become the "hands" of the group in physically assembling items for projects.

3. Academic Supports:

The teachers at YWLA are data-driven in their instructional and intervention practices. With a range of students scoring at, below, or above grade level within one classroom, teachers must tailor instruction with differentiated supports and strategies while maintaining rigorous, on-grade level instruction. Teachers identify the specific skills and standards that each individual student needs and provide targeted instruction to address those areas with students during their conference periods and after school. This year, instruction is broken into synchronous and asynchronous instruction, providing teachers the opportunity to pull small groups during the asynchronous time to meet their needs and provide additional support. Teachers also utilized the intercession weeks planned into our district calendar to provide in-person instruction to students who are struggling with remote learning.

YWLA provides Special Education services to three current students. Each student has an IEP and is provided with support from our Special Education teacher during synchronous and asynchronous time. Teachers participate in the student's ARDs and contingency ARDs to advocate for their students and encourage them to use their own voice to advocate for their needs. Teachers then implement their IEPs with fidelity. During the pandemic, there has been an increase in students in need of additional support. Students are identified and discussed at the grade-level Professional Learning Communities and evaluated through the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Teachers review data, work samples, and observational data to discuss a student's strengths and challenges in academics and behavior. Teachers then create an action plan with accommodations and supports that they can provide each student. If a student needs a referral for 504 or Special Education services, the committee proceeds with requesting an evaluation.

At YWLA, a 504 plan or a 504/dyslexia plan gives students with disabilities/ impairments that affect major life activities a legal right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), which applies to academic, nonacademic (recess, lunch, and assemblies), and after school activities. Teachers are trained on the implementation of accommodations at the beginning of the year and monitor their progress and effectiveness by utilizing an accommodations data tracker form every nine weeks. Teachers actively engage in communication about the use of accommodations with the students. This empowers a safe space of collaboration and increases the effectiveness of its implementation. There are currently 21 students protected under section 504 at YWLA. One student with a visual impairment, six students with a 504/dyslexia plan, and 14 students with a 504 plan.

Five of the six English teachers at YWLA are ESL certified, with one utilizing a waiver while she earns certification this school year. As our program has grown and encouraged the English department to become ESL Certified, the number of ELL students receiving ESL services has increased from 0% to 83%. In 2018, 0% of ELLs mastered the English I EOC, compared to 30% of all English I testers. We addressed the gap by expanding our ESL program and implementing the

strategies from the 7 Steps of a Language Rich Interactive Classroom and saw an increase to 90% of ELLs mastering the English I EOC compared to 68% of all students who took the exam.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

Classical music playing in the school lobby and college flags hanging in the halls set a different tone for learning aligned to the school mission of college readiness and high expectations. A commitment to meeting students where they are and ensuring academic and personal growth, is evident as you walk by each classroom and students are engaged in hands-on learning and student led classroom discussions. Teachers collaborate with both grade level and subject teams to monitor student data, which drives instruction and interventions. The sixth-grade team holds periodic sleepover-style night schools on Friday evenings to reach students who have not demonstrated mastery on specific learning objectives. High school teachers hold Saturday school sessions to re-teach and re-assess students who are struggling with mastery of concepts. During COVID, these sessions continued remotely and teachers provided more individual sessions during after school tutoring as student's navigated new home responsibilities that kept them from participating in intervention sessions. In the remote learning environment, teachers have worked to maintain high expectations for student learning. They have embraced technology to provide consistent opportunities to address content mastery, while also finding ways to provide interventions that are effective.

Through mindfulness activities integrated into the advisory classes, students can gain a better understanding of self-awareness and self-management. The YWLA counselors provide guidance lessons to develop students' self-regulation and goal setting skills. Social emotional learning (SEL) extends beyond the counselors, to include teachers as well. In advisory classes, teachers lead students through mindfulness activities, which extend to their core classes. Teachers have learned to "read the room" and respond to student needs by leading mindfulness activities that teach students to center themselves before moving forward into a stressful exam or just to start class with a fresh perspective.

Providing counseling support has been a challenge in the remote learning environment, but teachers and counselors have utilized technology to understand where students are emotionally and to connect with them for supportive services. Our campus has been able to use an app called Rhithm, which asks students to answer a handful of questions about how they are feeling in that moment. This data is then transmitted to the counselor and teacher, which allows them to provide immediate support to students who indicate that they are not doing well emotionally.

Student social growth is supported through collaborative work in their courses, as well as special programming and extracurricular activities. Students develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills by practicing conflict management/resolution, reflection, as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. High school students serve as a mentor to sixth graders to ensure a smooth transition to YWLA.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck at the core of our way of life as a school community, the YWLA team came together to ensure that our parents never lacked information, resources, or the opportunity to stay engaged. While our schools were closed for the end of the 20-21 spring semester, our Family Engagement Specialist hosted a series of weekly meetings and workshops for parents. This was a time for us to come together with parents to answer questions, hear parent concerns, and ultimately, gather virtually to learn about one thing every week that had the potential to turn the loneliness and frustration everyone was feeling into a positive and empowering tool to get them through troubling times.

Since then, and to the extent we have been able to virtually, we have continued to host our school's innovative parent engagement activities. We adapted to a virtual environment and have been able to connect with more parents than ever before through zoom, where it is much easier to accommodate our parents who live outside of the district or have demanding work and childcare barriers. We meet with parents every two weeks to bring them COVID-19 news, district phase-in updates, and an array of workshop topics that are not only designed to support parents in learning at home, but to engage them in important conversations to have with their children. In addition to these live and recorded sessions that are made possible by community

partners who present and assist, we communicate with our families in weekly bulletins, text messages, and personal phone calls. We use those bulletins, not only to inform parents but to celebrate our students, check-in on their wellness, and provide them with COVID information in the city - like testing sites, health clinics, insurance information, and COVID vaccine rollouts. There is a steady and constant stream of communication that has allowed our school to maintain its vibrant and engaged community.

Moreover, our staff have done everything possible to ensure that all our students are celebrated in safe and innovative ways. Over the years, these types of student celebrations have become momentous and symbolic reminders of every student's commitment to their growth, learning, and path to college success.

We are fortunate to have committed community partners who helped us rise to the challenge of supporting our students and families this year. Our gracious partners this year included a major grocery store and churches that provided our families with food items and meals periodically to alleviate some of the stressors that families have been put through during the pandemic - namely suffering the loss of jobs and more recently, the Texas Winter Storm. The American Heart Association donated "Heart-Healthy Boxes" for our students that included produce items to support access to healthy food. Our main priority with expanding these partnerships has been getting much-needed resources to our families directly. We have delivered items and hosted Distribution Days so that all our students, in-person or remote, have access to them.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Beginning during the Spring Break of 2020 when our district and state went into a lock down, teachers were included in the planning discussions and what virtual learning would look like at YWLA prior to the district decision to transition to virtual learning for the remainder of the 2020 school year. Department chairs gathered ideas and questions from their teachers and the leadership team met with all departments to brainstorm ideas for scheduling, curriculum, SEL support for students and staff, instructional methods, facilitating parent communication, and resources needed. Multiple communication platforms were used to support teachers such as an online communication board where teachers posted questions and administration answered, recurring "office hour" Zoom sessions where teachers shared challenges and concerns, and planning sessions with teachers about the 2021 school year professional development topics.

Building capacity for administrators focuses on providing specific, frequent, and timely feedback to teachers on their instructional practices in which teachers discover how data aligns to their instructional practices and what changes need to be made that will leverage gains in student learning.

Building capacity among teachers has primarily included professional development with the hybrid method of instruction that incorporates synchronous and asynchronous content. Our professional development structure includes a community-building Zoom platform that provides an overview of the themes and norms for the day, a menu of live sessions presented by administrators, teacher leaders, or district leaders, in combination with asynchronous, pre-recorded sessions that allow teachers the flexibility of completing within the development day. Additionally, teachers either seeking or encouraged to extend their professional learning are mentored by administrators and provided opportunities to present professional development to staff on topics such as building a professional learning community, social emotional learning for students, and increased learning of digital platforms.

Professional Learning Communities provide teachers time weekly during the school week to collaborate on instruction and methods to best support student needs. Teachers are also able to use the time to attend professional development offered by the district, meet as teams, and provide student interventions. Additionally, our auxiliary team meets on a regular basis to create strategic partnerships by grade level on providing support to teachers in facilitating parent communication on welfare, technology, and academic needs.

Specifically, for first-year or teachers that are new to YWLA, a New Cardinal Cohort meets on a monthly basis to review topics that serve to benefit student learning on topics such as lesson planning, data collection and analysis by both the teacher and students, and strategic creation of tutoring and intervention.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership philosophy of the YWLA is one of shared leadership. We believe that when stakeholders participate and empower others to sit at the decision-making table, achieving shared goals occurs more naturally and more effectively. Since 2018, the YWLA became part of a network of schools. The school principal became a network principal; the assistant principal became an associate principal, stepping in when the network principal is off campus to manage the day-to-day responsibilities; a governing board with the Young Women's Preparatory Network was established to provide governance directly over network schools in tandem with the public school district. The YWLA has had an advisory board that supports the school in raising funds for academic enhancements like science fair competitions and college field trips. On campus, the administrative team includes essential team members, like the associate principal, counseling team, testing coordinator, school secretary and college counselor. They plan, organize, and decide what will happen and how for the upcoming week. On the Campus Leadership Team (CLT), parents, students, community members, teachers, administrative, and clerical staff are represented. Through CLT, any member can propose an amendment to a campus policy and procedure. Students are often presenting to CLT to advocate for changes. To change policy or procedures established by the district, CLT will approach the network principal who will propose it to the governing board and the district school board. The guiding question for all decisions is, "What is best for students?" Changes to testing schedules, to funding expenses, and what time students will eat during testing, are all answered with that guiding question. During COVID, administrators reviewed CDC COVID guidelines, by walking through each procedure and then communicated it succinctly to faculty, staff, and parents. In preparation for instructional needs during COVID, teachers were asked to provide what new materials or equipment they needed to ensure all students received what they need to succeed academically and socio-emotionally. Administrators also had to work more closely with support staff like custodial team, school nurse, bus drivers, and cafeteria team. The strict guidelines for disinfecting to keep all safe required administrators to shift into coordinators of services on campus, especially when COVID testing started on campus. Initially, administrators conducted these tests and then it shifted to an outside provider. All these adjustments were made in response to, "What is best for our students?"

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

Multiple committees have been established on campus such as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, Social Emotional Learning committee, and the Anti-Racism Teacher book club. These committees aim to set targeted goals such as planning events, surveying the campus community, and supporting ideas to ensure that students, families, and staff feel the YWLA learning environment is sensitive to their learning and cultural needs.

Teachers and students have felt empowered to express their cultural identity through a variety of events including Art exhibitions, Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, and Women's History Month celebrations. A monthly library newsletter is also distributed to the campus community highlighting these types of cultural celebrations with additional resources and events. Students have been encouraged to form clubs and groups that express their ideas and projects concerning their personal cultural values. Some of these projects include proposing inclusion of the LGBTQ community into the school district's nondiscrimination policy, establishing an LGBTQ campus club, and learning about different cultural practices and beliefs around the world through the Cultural Diversity Club. The student-created newspaper has also been a platform for students to share their diverse thoughts and experiences.

In the classroom, teachers are culturally responsive through purposeful lessons incorporating regular opportunities for student voices, thoughts, ideas, and actions to empower their purpose for learning. Content area teachers have expanded their texts to encompass different perspectives and diversity narratives. They have ensured that their curriculum highlights the voices and experiences of marginalized groups and created assessments that allow for evidence of learning beyond the types of restrictive assessments such as multiple choice and fill in the blank instead creating a

mixed type of assessment where students can also track their own personal learning and growth.

Parent engagement sessions are provided monthly to help increase opportunities of support for students and communities. Principal coffee events provide guest speakers to inform parents about topics such as how to help your daughter with virtual learning, cyber-bullying and digital integrity awareness, and test taking strategies. A periodic campus newsletter is sent to parents and staff, which includes campus events such as the Ransomed Life program and the Women in STEM speaker series. Administration also disseminates opportunities for teachers the district provides such as the district Equity and Justice speaker series events.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

With the shift in format to hybrid instruction in March 2020, the priorities of our campus required a shift from providing a quality academic instructional program to ensuring the socio-emotional well-being of our students was addressed. Teachers immediately reported how students' lives had changed because of COVID--no longer able to escape the responsibilities of home, students now found themselves as care providers for younger siblings and older grandparents, and as teachers monitoring student engagement for younger siblings, or as cooks for themselves and extended family members. On new role for our students was as advocates for their parents who did not know how to navigate information systems relaying COVID information from city and health officials. The demands on our young women amplified and we knew we had to shift our focus to supporting our students with all that we could socio-emotionally. To maintain the strong student-teacher bonds that we pride ourselves on, we started having "drive through" celebrations to bring our families to school for quick check-ins disguised as celebrations. During one of our first drive through celebrations in May 2020, we celebrated our graduating seniors with their alumni shirts, their awards and scholarship notifications, and the ubiquitous yard sign celebrating their graduation. We continued with our summer distribution of awards and popsicles for our younger students. Teachers and all staff were in attendance to share their love and support with our students and families in our parking lot. Throughout the summer, we welcomed our incoming sixth grade students with an orientation choice board and distribution of summer homework. We pivoted into having our traditional induction ceremonies as drive through events, too, as the school year started. Seniors had their Ring Ceremony, 8th grade students had their Pink Rose Ceremony, and Science Fair winners received their white lab coats in a drive through ceremony. Students felt connected to their school family once again. We believe that healthy students make stronger learners. The focus on SEL paid off. Our parents repeatedly expressed their gratitude for giving them and their daughters these memories. A simple shift in traditions maintained the heart strings engaged and strong. By having the parents come up for these drive through ceremonies, we strategically connected with families we needed to inform of academic struggles their daughter may have been experiencing. Our students' socio-emotional well-being improves with their connection to their teachers and classmates. This strategy paid dividends for all involved.