

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Houston Gateway Academy Inc Elite College Prep  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 7310 Bowie Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Houston      State TX      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77012-2904

County Harris County

Telephone (832) 649-2701      Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL <https://www.hgaschools.org/>      E-mail penningf@hgaschools.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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)      Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Francisco Penning      E-mail penningf@hgaschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Houston Gateway Academy Inc.      Tel. (832) 649-2701

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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)      Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Gil Ramon  
(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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)      Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2023 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 2018 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2022.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 or 2022.
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. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. 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.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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**Data should be provided for the current school year (2022-2023) unless otherwise stated.**

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

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

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for 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 in the school as of October 1, 2022 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 Students
PreK	75
K	61
1	66
2	49
3	55
4	55
5	55
6	64
7	55
8	46
9	0
10	0
11	0
12 or higher	0
Total Students	581

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

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0.2 % Asian
  - 2.8 % Black or African American
  - 95.6 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0.9 % White
  - 0.5 % 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 2021 - 2022 school year: 6%

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, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2021 until the end of the 2021-2022 school year	21
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	35
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021	597
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

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

Spanish

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 89 %

Total number students who qualify: 519

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP: 4 %  
Total number of students served 23

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 with an IEP should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>2</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>16</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>8</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. Students receiving special education services with a 504: 2 %  
Total number of students served: 9

10. Number of years the principal has been in the position at this school: 8

11. 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	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	23
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	6
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	8
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

12. 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 25:1

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

Required Information	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	98%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

14. **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 2022.

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%

15. 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.

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

Houston Gateway Academy is committed to excellence in education! We believe that it is up to us to prepare and equip every single one of our scholars to successfully attend and graduate from a four-year university.

17. Provide a URL link to the school's nondiscrimination policy.

<https://rb.gy/xnf4u>

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

Admission and enrollment of students is open to anyone who reside within the charter geographical boundaries. Once all enrollment spots have been filled, the applicants are placed on a waiting list in the order in which they were received. If a vacancy arises before the commencement of the school year, the applicant on the waiting list will be automatically admitted. HGA notifies applicants on the waiting list by phone, email or mailed letter.

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Houston Gateway Academy, Inc. – Elite College Prep (HGA) is an open enrollment charter school enhancing and expanding the lives of low-income children and families by providing a first-generation supreme charter school educational program for prekindergarten (Pre-K) through eighth grade in southeast Houston. The school is committed to excellence in education and the goal is to prepare and equip scholars to successfully attend and graduate from a four-year university. The mission is achievable as the scholars begin their journey in Pre-K, taking a strong step in education and quickly adapting to the demands of high-quality instruction.

The unique and highly effective school model has the essential components that fully support and push academic rigor, equity, and innovation. The first essential component is the dual language program provided for scholars starting in Pre-K until they exit in first grade. Strong academic results in both languages are evidence that our bilingual and biliterate approach works. Next, is a mandatory extended day for all scholars in grades Pre-K through eighth with school hours of 7:45 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. to include a thirty-minute dinner program as compared to surrounding neighborhood schools that dismiss two hours earlier. Third, the school follows the state developed curriculum Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and fully complies with all academic accountability requirements that include participation in the state mandated exams. Fourth, there is data tracking in place for all scholars so that teachers can monitor progress and drive instruction. The teacher tracks data from beginning of the year diagnostic assessments, mid year benchmarks in December, weekly assessments, reading running records, PSAT, and SAT. Fifth, there is ongoing professional development provided to all stakeholders based on areas of need, which the school collaborates with the area's education service center. Sixth, ongoing coaching support is vital in which regular classroom visits take place to provide feedback that target precise praise, areas of improvement, and action steps, but also includes opportunities for modeling and practice. This practice allows HGA to retain quality teachers who are committed to the vision, mission, and school culture. Seventh, hiring co-teachers to be assigned to teachers that have a track record of success so they can acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be effective teachers when enrollment increases. Eighth, is strong parental involvement. HGA establishes solid and long-lasting relationships with parents and proactively takes necessary steps to engage them in their child's educational journey. The school does this by providing home visits to all scholars prior to each academic year, offering parenting and counseling sessions led by the school's counselor each month, taking opportunities to host community events and volunteer opportunities, scheduling nine-week ending open house events, and keeping parents well informed through mass communication and monthly newsletters. The last essential component is character development. Strong emphasis is placed on modeling and teaching scholars HGA's core values: High Expectations, Grit, and Achievement. Additionally, the character traits that are emphasized during the school year are Courage, Optimism, Uniqueness, Growth Mindset, Assertiveness, Resilience, and Service. Scholars who personify HGA's core values are recognized within their homeroom class with the honor of being dubbed "Scholar of the Month."

HGA is mission driven and maintains the highest expectations for scholars and colleagues. The belief is that everyone deserves to go to college and the teachers and staff ensure the scholars are well prepared. Grit is defined as perseverance, determination, resilience, and passion for long-term goals despite experiences with failure and adversity, so HGA believes that it is essential for the school to succeed. As a high performing charter school, there are many ambitions. HGA is driven to succeed on a global level, and the school is determined to accomplish all goals regardless of obstacles.

The school believes that in order for scholars to succeed in school, college, and life, HGA must devote quality time to equip them with the academic knowledge and skills they need to conquer obstacles, achieve goals, and promote a growth mindset. HGA's job is to encourage and challenge scholars to reach their full potential academically. This is why every employee on the team intentionally practices positive framing and other ways to help scholars believe in themselves and in their immense potential to succeed. HGA believes the scholars need motivation and encouragement to succeed and be resilient.

HGA's teachers are like none other, as they are committed to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of their scholars without excuses. The selfless commitment and service demonstrated by teachers help scholars

and parents gain the trust, respect, and support of the teachers and staff. Teachers work with scholars during their planning period, after school, and Saturdays to provide individualized instruction to meet the needs of all scholars. The teachers are recognized for their exemplary work and going beyond the call of duty through acknowledgement of meaningful contributions for outstanding performance.

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

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

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

HGA applies a rigorous, comprehensive approach to its Reading Language Arts (RLA) program. Scholars are prepared to read, write, and think critically from the earliest grade levels in order to develop exemplary leadership skills that will enable them to succeed at the post-secondary level as well as in life. HGA's RLA curriculum aligns with the specific learning directives of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as found in the TEKS objectives and standards. Student mastery of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is of the utmost importance in all academic and pedagogical decisions. Empirical and demonstrable RLA data are analyzed and evaluated at every level in order to actualize a truly scholar-focused, evidence-based approach. The tangible, individual success of all scholars is foundational to HGA's essential elements of instruction. HGA selects RLA resources/materials that align with TEA standards, which provide a rigorous approach in developing logical, rhetorical, and semantic skills. Administrators and teachers are always open-minded to change and intentionally flexible when RLA instruction and performance standards require immediate modifications, adaptations, and/or individual interventions. RLA teachers supplement textbook selections with grade-appropriate classical and modern literary works that align with both state standards as well as collegiate expectations for the future success of HGA graduates. This type of RLA approach provides a foundational desire for life-long reading, writing, and thinking. Scholars' progress and achievement are measured through consistent monitoring as teachers assess skill assimilation and application on a daily basis. At every level of cognition, positive reinforcement supports and accelerates student development. Daily and weekly formative assessments in both reading and writing are critical components that lead to final success in the annual summative assessment (STAAR). Benchmark and checkpoint assessments are given at various times during the academic year. Scholars' writing samples from previous grade levels are collected and evaluated at the beginning of the academic year. Scholars are immersed in activities that guide and develop their skills in narrative, expository, and persuasive writing. HGA encourages and cultivates a cross-curricular, synergistic approach between teachers at every grade level. RLA teachers contribute to and glean from their colleagues across all subject areas in order to deliver a holistic learning approach that both deepens and enhances exposure to classic, modern, and technical literature from every sphere of human knowledge and experience. Scholars develop their comprehension, reasoning, and communication skills through lively classroom discussions and peer analysis. Through a conceptual introduction, teachers emphasize vocabulary, activate scholars' prior knowledge, incorporate connections to self, text, and world, and utilize think alouds. The think alouds allows teachers to articulate and model thinking.

The teachers strategically utilize real-time technology to deliver various assignments and assessments. Electronic applications allow teachers to view the progress of individual scholars and entire classes. For HGA, technological immersion is essential to a high level of scholar engagement and achievement. HGA has exponentially increased technologically supported activities, assignments, and assessments. HGA leverages various hardware and software that enhances and complements the RLA curriculum.

#### **1b. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The mathematics curriculum at HGA is designed to align with the TEKS, while promoting critical thinking skills to all scholars. The goal is to provide scholars with rigorous lessons that intrigue curiosity, encourage connection building, and promote independent thoughts. The mission is not to train scholars to regurgitate information, but to provide a nurturing environment where scholars feel free to make connections to their learning, absorb knowledge at a comfortable pace, and challenge what is taught through deeper questioning and research.

All educators follow the Essential Elements of Instruction as part of the teaching culture at HGA, which encourages educators to always provide instruction with the end in mind. Each grade level follows the same pacing guide and has access to the same resources, so planning is mainly centered on dissecting the TEKS,

and ensuring the provided resources are sufficient in supporting scholar achievement. Once planning is finalized, the instructional portion is broken up into three components. The first component revolves around direct instruction from the teacher. The instructor in this phase is responsible for teaching the intended content by providing multiple examples of what scholars may see, frontloading common misconceptions that may occur as scholars work independently, and modeling how scholars should go about processing mathematical concepts and problem solving when certain question types arise. Once direct instruction is completed, the teacher engages scholars by repeating the previous phase with them through guided instruction. Through guidance, teachers can gauge whether the scholars comprehend what was taught, if any scholars are struggling, or if the lesson needs to be retaught from another vantage point. The third phase is then to release the reins to the scholars through independent practice. While scholars are working independently, the instructor observes how scholars are performing on their own and can decide whether or not further instruction is needed. The teachers are trained to do effective checking for understanding to capture data. Once scholars have demonstrated growth and retention, the teacher will provide all scholars with a formative assessment that focuses on those specific TEKS. Afterwards, teachers can then analyze the resulting data to determine whether scholars need more enrichment, or if the class is ready to move on to the next content area.

Because HGA is a data driven school, teachers determine during the planning phase how to differentiate instruction so high-achieving scholars can flourish while lower performing scholars are given the time and opportunities to advance. Once the data from formative assessments has been calculated and analyzed, the method of intervention for lower achieving scholars is up to the teacher's discretion. The most commonly used method is providing after-school or mid-day tutorials, while some conduct online meetings or provide online resources as assistance. As for the higher achieving scholars, in an effort to reward their accomplishments and nurture their advanced minds, teachers allow these scholars opportunities for self-paced learning where scholars can use the school's technology to study content even further.

#### **1c. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

HGA is an educational institution where learning is gauged by how thoroughly scholars know grade leveled content; not how well information can be memorized and recited. Science is a repetitive subject that grows increasingly more challenging the further up the academic ladder scholars climb. Because of this, the science curriculum is particularly rigorous so scholars can gain and retain information that can be referred to for years to come.

The science curriculum at HGA is designed to align with the TEKS. Each teacher has access to the same course structure and is provided with the same educational resources, but instructors have the freedom to decide how the content should be explained or presented within the Essential Elements of Instruction. Because a significant portion of the scholar population learned English as a second language, HGA places tremendous emphasis on linking science vocabulary development with critical thinking practices. Part of the school culture is ensuring each classroom has an interactive word wall. Teachers use displayed vocabulary terms either to review older concepts or to introduce newer terms associated with current lessons. Another critical part of the science curriculum is providing students with tactile resources and activities so real-world connections can be made with instructed concepts. Cross-curricular instruction is another large component of HGA's science curriculum. Scholars not only have to prove comprehension of knowledge through assessments, but they are also encouraged to express academic thoughts through written responses, oral descriptions, and everyday examples.

Once instructors have gone through all steps of the Essential Elements of Instruction, the formative assessment is given and analyzed with the instructional team. Teachers look for trends in the data to determine if there are particular TEKS that need re-teaching, if the educational resources were effective, and if there are scholars in need of further intervention.

#### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

The social studies curriculum at HGA aligns with the standards found in the TEKS. HGA uses a variety of nationally and internationally recognized resources and methodologies to develop the requisite

comprehension and application of the various elements of social studies from a global, national, regional, and local perspective. TEKS aligned assessments are administered both during and after the completion of each intensive lesson and unit of study. Daily and weekly formative assessments are administered to check for understanding and confirm scholars' success. Personal, societal, and intertextual real-world connections strengthen and compliment all that is taught in the social studies classroom. Each branch of the study of human society (history, culture, geography, government, and economics) are analyzed both individually and collectively. Upon the personal experience of every scholar, World, United States, and Texas History are explored and analyzed, with emphasis, on the direct relevance of each subject. The cross-curricular emphasis of HGA's faculty encourages the broad development of scholars, making them well prepared for college and future vocational opportunities. Synergism is applied in all areas of social studies as well as with other disciplines at every grade level. The utilization of outstanding technology and applications acutely enhance learning in each aspect of social studies. Scholar led, team-based experiences are used to support and strengthen the growth and cognitive maturation of each scholar. Scholars engage in activities that maximize their ability to communicate what they learn in social studies through advanced written, oral, and visual forms. Analysis of both primary and secondary sources across each aspect and level of social studies is vital to exemplary results. The consistent data-driven approach at HGA guides and empowers ultimate success regarding content apprehension and STAAR assessment results.

#### **1e. For schools that serve grades 7-12:**

College and career readiness skills are arguably some of the most important things that are worked on at HGA. Scholars start working on these goals as soon as they reach middle school. The middle school scholars develop their critical thinking skills through group projects, peer collaboration, practical learning activities, research writing, and exploring career paths. The teachers model and emphasize literacy skills for scholars to communicate effectively, and to write clearly and expressively. The strong foundation of knowledge and intellectual skills will serve equally well for scholars entering college or the workforce.

HGA is very intentional in promoting and encouraging eighth graders to pursue high school credit classes. All high school courses taken in middle school are represented on the official transcript and calculated in the high school grade point average. To have the opportunity to take part in high school courses, scholars are expected to have solid study habits in their assigned rigorous classes, time-management skills, and exhibit overall good character in and outside the classroom.

The goal is to build a stronger foundation for college and career readiness through Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) preparation, college fairs, industry visits, and military officials on campus to expose the middle school scholars in discovering future pathways. These fairs introduce scholars to finding a passion, reinforce the goal to become a college graduate, and finding a successful career path. Additionally, by participating in extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs, scholars learn teamwork, develop leadership abilities, demonstrate excellent communication and social skills, sportsmanship, build confidence, time management and decision-making skills, which are all skills that will benefit them in life. The goal is to prepare our scholars to be successful beyond high school, whether it is to enroll in college, enlist in the military, or obtain full time employment.

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

Early childhood education is core to the educational development of a child. Not only do the standards in education set a baseline for schools, but it is also key to promoting the desire for furthering education as scholars develop. When a child begins their educational journey at such a young age, expectations to reach certain academic milestones ranging in developmental goals, social interaction, early math skills, and opportunities for social development are quickly introduced. At HGA, scholars are given opportunities to enhance their learning through daily experiences such as, but not limited to, a four-year-old having the ability to recite his/her ABC's or mastering identifying numbers in order. These are just two examples quickly assessed at HGA.

Preschool curricula are key to giving a child basic skills that will allow them to progress throughout their developmental journey. As early as three and four years of age, scholars can obtain, demonstrate, and master

various skills aligned to increase his/her learning. As the brain begins to develop, preschool curricula not only teach a child pre-readiness skills in basic reading, science, math, and social studies, but also teach socialization, problem solving, team building, and communicative skills. At HGA, scholars are encouraged to master goals and expected to gain the knowledge that stems from the basic learning taught in preschool. When a child lacks knowledge introduced in these early years, they are significantly more likely to struggle versus their peers. A child who comes to school knowing the expectations that they must meet are more likely to succeed later in life. This is not limited to the classroom, but also the world that surrounds them. Preschool education at HGA instills the tools for success at an age in which a child is still developing and gaining knowledge from everything around them.

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

### **2a. Arts (visual and/or performing)**

HGA follows the TEKS, a state developed curriculum, and fully complies with all academic accountability requirements for each subject of the core curriculum. The school also places strong emphasis on other curricular areas including technology, physical education, and visual arts. Scholars enrolled in grade levels Pre-K3 – 8th grade participate for 45 minutes, four times a week, in technology, physical education, and visual arts classes. Throughout each school year, emphasis is placed on modeling and teaching scholars HGA's core values: High Expectations, Grit, Achievement, Courage, Optimism, Uniqueness, Growth Mindset, Assertiveness, Resilience, and Service. Scholars who personify HGA's core values are recognized within their homeroom class with the honor of being dubbed "Scholar of the Month."

Visual arts is an essential part of education at HGA. It supports the scholar's development and enrichment of creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills while also fostering an appreciation for the arts. Scholars at HGA learn the basic techniques of drawing, sketching, and shading. While the TEKS provide a framework for teaching visual arts, it is important to incorporate opportunities for creativity into lesson planning. Teachers at HGA incorporate visual arts in the classroom through art projects, associated with core curriculum lessons, by including creativity and expression in the criterion of the grading rubric. In the process of completing such projects, scholars may use photographs and images that relate to the instructed content. Several materials and media are used during the practical application of the arts. Some creative representations of artistic application include making prints, paintings, collages, and videos. Scholars are able to pursue artistic interests and experiment with creating. Art assignments are frequently driven by scholars' interests and scholars are able to assist the teacher in choosing the art activities and school wide video projects that will have a lasting impact on furthering their artistic abilities. The goal is to provide all scholars with skills and resources they can use to express themselves, their feelings, and their aspirations for this world. Scholars love attending art class and enjoy creating and exploring while simultaneously learning.

### **2b. Physical education/health/nutrition**

There are many goals for inclusion of physical education in primary and secondary schools. These goals include development of motor skills, gaining knowledge and behaviors of healthy living, physical fitness, sportsmanship, emotional growth, and social skills. Benefits of physical education are twofold. The first benefit is that when scholars are involved in physical activity, this improves their alertness and ability to engage in the instructional learning of the classroom. The second benefit is that it gives the school the opportunity to align with what is expected by parents, medical associations, and child health professional organizations to support fitness of scholars.

Healthy eating knowledge is emphasized at HGA and scholars are taught skills to help them choose healthy meal options and healthy behaviors through the physical education curriculum. Nutrition education is essential for scholars to understand the importance of a healthy and balanced diet. During lunch, nutrition posters that are displayed throughout the cafeteria serve as reminders to scholars about the importance of making healthy meal choices. During the After School Program (ASP), scholars also participate in the Dinner Program that provides nutritious meals created to expose scholars to a variety of healthy foods while

teaching them how to make healthier choices. Scholars are taught the science behind nutrition, exercise, and active living that improves their knowledge and overall health during the general education class. Physical Education (PE) and nutrition are incorporated daily and important subjects that support TEKS in the classroom. PE is promoted and integrated with other subject areas in the classroom by including stretching, dancing, and fun physical activities. For example, when teaching math, specifically the unit covering the concept of types of lines and types of angles, scholars may stand up and model each angle by rotating their body with their arms in the position of each angle. Health information is provided to scholars through various means. There is didactic teaching during PE classroom instruction that utilizes a curriculum that is aligned with state standards. Additionally, learning is enhanced with the incorporation of active video games and interactive computer applications such as dance apps, movement apps, and sports apps.

**2c. Foreign language(s), if offered (if not offered, leave blank)**

**2d. Technology/library/media**

According to the TEKS, scholars should be able to use basic technological resources and understand the corresponding vocabulary. Creativity and innovation flourishes in the learning environment with the use of technology and media at HGA. Technological practice in the classrooms includes use of personal iPads assigned to each scholar, and use of Promethean boards, overhead projectors, cell phones, and laptops assigned to the teachers. Although Promethean boards, projectors, cell phones, and laptops are assigned solely to teachers, the scholars still benefit from learning through these modes of technology. These resources enhance the learning experiences for scholars in the classroom by allowing them to learn at the pace of the modern world and prepare them for a more technologically advanced future. HGA also incorporates technology and media through educational software, interactive learning games, and with the assignment of online resources and homework assignments to support the scholars' learning. It is evident that the use of a multi-method and integrated learning system supports a structured curriculum aligned with the TEKS. Incorporating technology in the teaching model or learning framework aids in the ease of access to valuable information regarding the TEKS and other facets of the lesson. Traditional textbooks and paper based reading are being replaced by search engines and electronic books. In today's society, scholars are able to access technological devices such as cell phones, tablets, etc. at a young age. It is vital that teachers instill in scholars the proper care and attention that is required regarding the handling of such devices. Internet safety security protocol is stressed at any given opportunity during web-based assignments. Scholars are taught about targeted advertisements, spam, and honorable search engine practices aligned with school guidelines. HGA's scholars benefit from the inclusion of technology, physical education, and visual arts curriculum because it prepares them to thrive and assimilate into current and future society.

**2e. Any other interesting or innovative curriculum programs you would like to share**

**3. Academic Supports**

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

HGA prides itself on its mission statement, which includes providing a rigorous academic curriculum to all scholars, regardless of the level they are performing at currently. HGA's teachers and administrators work together to gather data from numerous sources such as previous STAAR scores, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores, benchmark assessments that students take at the beginning, middle, and end of the year, as well as school-implemented TEKS trackers. After the data is analyzed and processed, teachers identify the strengths and areas of concern for scholars. Teachers focus on those scholars that need additional mentoring and intervention.

HGA's principals regularly meet with teachers to discuss scholars' performance and create individualized intervention plans for scholars performing below grade level. These plans may include additional tutorials,

individualized assignments, and assessments designed to track the scholars' progress. Scholars can be grouped based on performance levels to allow the teachers to better cater to their needs. Teachers also routinely communicate with parents to ensure that they are actively involved in the scholars' success.

In the classroom, teachers are consistently implementing technology use. Technology is used daily through Promethean boards that are in each classroom. The interactive aspect of the Promethean board makes for a useful tool in keeping struggling scholars engaged and alert. Along with this, iPad and various platforms are used that can be tailored to the scholars' specific needs. This also allows teachers to continuously capture data and update any academic intervention plans that are in place.

Aside from academic acknowledgments, there are also opportunities for scholars to be rewarded for putting forth their best efforts. All scholars are eligible to be nominated for "Scholar of the Month," based on HGA's character traits. HGA recognizes that scholar morale and positive framing play a crucial part in scholars' success.

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

HGA's high level of rigor in the classroom starts in elementary school. Because of this, HGA serves many scholars that perform above grade level. The objective for any HGA scholar is ultimately to end up at a competitive four-year college. For this goal to be achieved, teachers must consistently challenge and nurture those above-grade-level scholars. Through data collection, HGA can accurately identify those students from an early age whose minds need to be challenged and nurtured.

Along with HGA's implemented curriculum, teachers can create lesson plans that include differentiation and enrichment exercises for scholars that are quickly mastering the weekly TEKS. Scholars that have mastered TEKS concepts are encouraged to peer mentor other classmates that may be struggling. In addition, those scholars excelling in the classroom can use technology to do their own research on further topics. This kind of peer mentoring and self-paced research provides great opportunities to deepen their understanding. The use of technology in the classroom allows teachers to monitor scholars' progress and challenge them accordingly. Middle school scholars are required to take the (PSAT) to be adequately prepared for the coming grades. HGA's middle school scholars that are excelling also have the opportunity to take high-school level classes for credit. These higher-level classes provide nurturing and challenges that keep scholars' minds sharp.

HGA recognizes that in order to excel academically, scholars must be challenged outside of the classroom as well. Exceptional scholars are also encouraged to join HGA's school programs. HGA offers programs such as band and chess club. Both of which are great ways to expand scholars' creativity and critical thinking. HGA makes it a priority to acknowledge those scholars that are consistently excelling academically. Whether that be with award certificates for honor roll or treats for those scholars with 90s and above.

### **3c. Students with disabilities:**

Houston Gateway Academy provides resources for diverse areas of disabilities such as life skills, content mastery, and resources serviced through the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Life skills scholars are exposed to a technological and social curriculum that will prepare them for their future endeavors outside the educational environment. The content mastery and resource department is equipped with strategies and hands-on activities in order to meet the variety of learning skills. Visual and auditory strategies are utilized in order to meet the needs of diverse learners. Through Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD), HGA holds an open line of interpersonal communication with parents, so awareness of any scholar's needs or changes in situations are readily notified and kept up to date on the current situation.

The Special Education Department has continuous collaboration with the general education instructors that are able to fill in any gaps that are needed in making sure the scholars are successful. The scholars are guided through one-to-one or small group instruction depending on their learning needs. The school is

equipped with therapists to provide other necessary needs such as speech, occupational therapy, dyslexia, and auditory services. The school also provides access to a school counselor and an academic advisor who are readily available to assist the scholar at any point during the school day.

HGA furthermore provides accommodations for scholars who are on a 504 plan. With support from the instructors and parents, the school strives to provide an open, safe, and communicative environment for everyone who is a part of the HGA team. HGA strives to promote growth, engage the learners, and encourage high order thinking skills. The main goal for all scholars is to be successful in their own unique way and guide them through a path of becoming life-long learners.

### **3d. English Language Learners:**

HGA has a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL), so strong emphasis is placed in this area. Teachers utilize unique and high-order thinking strategies to accommodate the assorted language of origin of the scholars.

Scholars are exposed to a dual language, English and Spanish instructional environment when they first enroll in the school in Pre-K until their exit at the end of first grade. ELL scholars are serviced primarily through the general education classroom environments, where they are exposed to native English speakers in the form of their peers. This allows the ELL scholars to be exposed to educational as well as casual forms of English communication to better understand pronunciation and delivery of conversational words. In addition, a rigorous curriculum is administered throughout the systematic learning environment to prepare the scholars for the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). Instructors discern outcomes through the scholar's daily routines and communication amongst other scholars during group assignments. With the monitoring and tracking of strong instructional support, the scholars' performance levels and understanding of the English language has advanced throughout their educational core curriculum. In addition to utilizing social interactions with others, technology is also implemented in the classroom to allow scholars to use their newfound strategies and understanding to research and further advance their understanding of the material presented.

The well-structured technique is organized and allows teachers to follow a systematic form of instructional schedule. Prior to the conceptual introduction of the academic vocabulary, a hook is implemented to get all of the scholars engaged, communicative, and prepared for the lesson. Emphasizing key vocabulary is one of HGA's non-negotiables and teachers consistently reference their vocabulary word walls. Direct instruction follows and permits the scholars the opportunity to ask questions. Individualized learning provides the scholars the chance to use their learned tactics when solving the educational problems.

### **3e. Other populations, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

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

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

At HGA, promoting scholar engagement is an important component in fostering scholars' learning. Engagement is the foundation of HGA's teaching framework, Essential Elements of Instruction, which is designed to achieve scholars' academic success. Using this framework, scholars engage in making connections using the I Do, We Do, You Do, strategy. Through these connections, scholars develop a profounder understanding and engage with their own learning. Using the TEKS Tracker, scholars are able to track their own progress and measure where they are in the process of achievement. Those who meet their academic goal each week receive incentives used to motivate scholars to increase their work effort and overall school performance.

The After School Program provides additional engagement and expands skills to support scholars' learning through the regular school day. This program is extended to all scholars and grade levels. During this time, social growth is promoted through activities that promote cooperation and teamwork that require collaboration. Scholars may work together in small groups, creating meaningful ways to work with scholars of like interests. Additionally, scholars may utilize electronic devices to access educational learning apps designed to tailor learning experiences and improve student engagement with something enjoyable.

In addition to weekly incentives, scholars who embody HGA's core values are recognized monthly as classroom "Scholar of the Month." Through recognizing achievements of scholars, HGA teachers foster a growth mindset by praising scholars' effort rather than their innate abilities. This allows scholars to develop a sense of resilience and willingness to learn. HGA thrives on promoting emotional growth by supporting teachers in creating a supportive and safe learning environment. Each month, scholars meet with the school counselor to discuss mental health and healthy coping skills that support scholars with developing positive emotional habits.

HGA provides a positive environment for all scholars aimed at promoting college readiness. Upon entering each classroom, each grade level's expected college graduation year is displayed for scholars to see daily along with college banners posted throughout each hallway. This introduces scholars to the idea of college and its importance in the future. HGA provides scholars with resources that can help them prepare for college, such as readiness books and information about college programs. Career days at HGA promote college and career readiness by highlighting a diverse range of career paths. Invited guests speak to scholars about their career experiences and how college prepared them for their career.

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

The school prides itself in the families and community it serves and strives to always maintain full communication and provide transparency. This allows the families to trust the school when choosing HGA for their child's educational needs. The office maintains a judge free open-door policy where scholars, parents, and visitors can visit with administration without the hassles. HGA highly encourages parent participation, as the school understands that a successful, strong, and healthy mindset starts with a conjoined partnership between scholar, parent, staff, and administration. HGA engages parents, scholars, and community to recognize, and understand the mission statement by creating a continuous partnership with the local community college to provide scholars the opportunity to participate in a dual credit program. The counseling department hosts monthly parent information meetings to help provide support in many topics scholars are currently struggling in or discussing several useful topics and strategies to help those with coping mechanisms, but not limited to providing useful and obtaining mental health resources for those scholars or families in direct crisis. HGA offers a variety of school events, such as an open house held after regular business hours to accommodate working parents, provide flexible communication options, phone calls, text messaging, video conferencing, and in person conferences. Collaboration with the local blood banks hosts quarterly successful blood drives. HGA offers yearly hearing and vision screenings with partnerships through non profit organizations that provide free hearing evaluations, immunizations, and vision screening with free eyewear if needed. The school has an outstanding relationship with all branches

of the US Armed Forces. Recruiters visit the campus weekly to provide alternative campus support when needed and provide armed forces memorabilia while providing Intel education on the military and all it has to offer the scholars and community.

There is a positive school culture through having mandatory home visits at the beginning of each school year to allow a more tailored open dialogue for teachers of record, parents, and scholars. During home-visits, the time is well invested, as the school believes it is important to visit families served in the comfort of their home to better understand the families' expectations for teachers, privately discuss any challenges, disabilities, academic gaps, school expectations, and work habits. HGA has a rigorous learning process, and the goal is to provide a top tier quality education, while not only teaching, but also modeling good character traits.

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

Oftentimes the culture of a workplace is measured by responses obtained from the staff members. Depending on the employees' current circumstances, viewpoints may consist of expressing praises of feeling extremely satisfied or too overly stressful. At HGA, maintaining a positive staff morale has a variety of sub-titles. The entire culture of the campus is not in the palm of one single individual; instead, it is a multitude of staff members connected for the same goal. The impact starting from the principal encouraging staff members to accept opportunities to excel in areas beyond the classroom and the entire district working together are two factors that contribute to the culture of the campus.

In order to maintain connection with staff, administrators complete various duties. Often perceived as coaches, mentors, advisors, or motivators, administrators build supportive communities that increase teacher self-efficacy. They are seen developing and highlighting talents by encouraging staff to pursue roles that are often challenging. This allows each staff member to evaluate himself or herself and ultimately seek additional opportunities available within the district. In addition, administrators have the ability to build communities within their individual campus. Beginning at the start of each academic school year, strategically designed training sessions are aligned to meet the needs of teachers and staff. The conferences are normally held on campus, and session topics are delivered by administrators and designated staff members. These sessions are vital for a successful kick off to an upcoming new school year. The overall impact and effectiveness of the training are evaluated during classroom observations and daily walk-throughs conducted during the entire school year.

For the duration of the academic year, teachers are encouraged to seek training from outside agencies and training sites. HGA emphasizes the importance of teachers obtaining pedagogy in areas that enhance the delivery of instruction, aligned with the TEKS, content base, and support scholars' engagement. Upon completion, the staff returns to the campus and shares their newly obtained information with remaining teachers. By doing so, the entire campus benefits from the information. Moreover, through weekly collaboration meetings, teachers and administrators remain aligned to the school and district's academic goals. Teachers are encouraged to share their challenges and successes that occurred during the prior week. Inspired to use their voice, teachers and staff address concerns and as a department, along with their grade level team, solutions are developed and designed for implementation once returning to classrooms.

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

The superintendent, compliance officer, principal, and assistant principal meet monthly to cooperatively work together to promote scholar achievement through effective policies, programs, resources, and budgets. It is critically important to monitor deadlines, timelines, and compliance requirements. The school leaders communicate the school's mission, core values, and character traits to parents and the community. HGA has a proactive approach. The stakeholders, such as the parents, scholars, community members, and local businesses are engaged in mission-minded conversations when developing the campus improvement plan each year.

HGA's superintendent, principal, and assistant principal give all teachers professional, one on one coaching that increases their effectiveness as an instructor. The school's leaders must show proficiency in the six steps

of the observation and feedback protocol and intervene in the classroom to model and teach in real time when needed. The teachers with the greatest needs are observed every week and maintain an observation tracker consistently during the year. The observation tracker is to document observation and walkthroughs, and to include on spot coaching as the principal and assistant principal model for teachers. The recommendations in the observation trackers are actionable, measurable, and the right levels for driving scholar achievement. All leaders engage teachers in mission-minded conversations to connect the feedback to HGA's mission and college and career readiness. HGA has a twenty-nine-category evaluation rubric. The principal and assistant principal differentiate professional development based on teachers' needs that include airtight activities, individual reflection, sharing, applying, and then a follow up. The campus' needs are also identified to provide appropriate professional development to grow and develop the campus.

The school's leaders understand and model the significance of frequency distribution, SAT format, relevance, and college and career readiness. They also model common misconceptions and errors that scholars make during any type of independent practice, how to capture these misconceptions, and what steps to take to provide quality feedback to any teacher needing support. Through the TEKS tracker, reading running records, and other data capturing tools, the leaders can effectively and efficiently lead data analysis meetings with teachers. Components in these meetings must include surface analysis, deep analysis, and action plans that target scholars who did not meet proficiency.

The principals motivate scholars, staff, and families to achieve the school's mission and models professionalism, collaboration, and continuous learning. Both the principals and superintendent are highly visible throughout the hallways. HGA is one team and one mission.

## **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

The teachers and staff at HGA are committed to excellence in education. In understanding that HGA services a diverse population, specific actions are taken to address the diverse needs of scholars, families, and staff. Home visits are conducted for each scholar by the homeroom teacher prior to the first day of school. These visits allow the teacher the opportunity to build a positive rapport and share expectations with the scholar and parents. During this time, teachers and parents can discuss the scholar's individual strengths and weaknesses, as well as their social and economic needs.

HGA has established vital components needed to support cultural awareness, equity, innovation, and respect in the classrooms and school. Cultural awareness is evident when the faculty and staff express interest in the heritage and ethnic backgrounds of scholars. Diversity of language is celebrated, and scholars are given instructional materials in their native language. HGA's skilled professionals promote positivity both inside and outside the classroom. Through positive framing, teachers can educate, discipline, and motivate scholars in a safe and constructive way, while still maintaining high expectations for academic performance.

The teachers at HGA give tirelessly of their time, money, and resources to better serve and support their scholars. Support is provided with the purchasing of school supplies, school uniforms, and the provision of daily dinner meals. Bilingual instruction is provided for scholars in grades Pre-K3 through first grade. Additional teaching support is provided every Monday – Thursday during the After School Program in an effort to close learning gaps. Friday afternoon and Saturday morning tutorials are also provided.

Teachers receive professional development training aligned to their individual subject areas as well as ongoing instructional support from school leaders. Co-teachers are often hired to work alongside a master teacher for one full school year to gain knowledge and skills needed to be an effective teacher. The next school year, the co-teacher is given their own classroom. This practice has proven to be beneficial in retention of newly hired teachers.

Parent sessions are provided monthly by HGA's school counselor covering a plethora of topics. Citizenship and English as a Second Language classes are also provided to parents.

The school's dedication to providing and maintaining a positive learning environment has been evident in

the yearly success experienced by both scholars who have been enrolled since Pre-K3 and those who transferred to HGA from other charter, private, or public schools.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE**

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Houston Gateway Academy's roadmap to success includes providing high quality and effective lesson plans for all teachers in grades Pre-K through eighth grade. The academic achievements each year has given indication that this roadmap to success works.

The campus leaders monitor the implementation of the lesson plans with fidelity, provide feedback and ongoing support on instructional strategies, ensure teachers are providing high quality instruction, review the weekly assessment data to help drive instruction to exceed academic standards, and promote campus and individual professional growth.

The lesson plans are designed to be the blueprint for rigor with well-structured guidelines and lessons that indicates the correct content and defines Essential Elements of Instruction for each component of the lesson cycle. Its well-mastered outline is the most instrumental tool in HGA's success. Providing teachers with lesson plans has proven to improve teachers' organizational skills, save time, enhance consistency, support collaboration, and ensure scholars' success.

The highly effective plans were developed by teachers with proven track records of success and encompassed with instructional resources and assessments aligned to the rigor of STAAR and SAT. HGA's framework for teachers' implementation is the Essential Elements of Instruction. The Essential Elements of Instruction includes the planning phase, assessment, exit ticket, hook, conceptual introduction, direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and concludes with weekly assessments. It is imperative that each element is implemented effectively. The planning phase states clear and specific learning objectives aligned with state standards. The hook quickly captures the interest of scholars, and its purpose is to spark their curiosity with the use of visuals, artifacts, enthusiasm, and personal connections. The conceptual introduction includes academic vocabulary, think alouds, the purpose, activation of prior knowledge, and making connections to self, text, and world. The direct instruction component is when teachers model with excellence, and front load misconceptions. During this time, teachers shine by modeling and using think alouds. Next is the guided practice, which allows teachers to engage scholars, check for understanding, gather data, incorporate evidence-based questions, make adjustments via questioning and observation, and provide strategic sampling. Afterwards, scholars are released to work independently. As the teacher monitors with a purpose, data is captured to guide small group sessions with scholars who failed to master the lesson during direct instruction. The final component is the assessment. The assessments are aligned to STAAR rigor using open-ended questions, real life application questions, and SAT connection.