

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mrs. Mia Hall

(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 401 East 8th Street

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

City Fort Worth State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 76102-5504

County Tarrant County

Telephone (817) 815-2400 Fax (817) 815-2450

Web site/URL http://ywla.fwisd.org/pages/YWLA E-mail tamara.albury@fwisd.org

Facebook Page

http://www.facebook.com/YoungWomensLeadershipA

Twitter Handle cademy Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

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

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Kent Scribner E-mail kent.scribner@fwisd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Fort Worth Independent School District Tel. (817) 814-2000

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

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr Jacinto Ramos

(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, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 83 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 29 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 18 High schools
 - 16 K-12 schools
- 146 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	95	95
7	0	72	72
8	0	66	66
9	0	38	38
10	0	40	40
11	0	35	35
12 or higher	0	32	32
Total Students	0	378	378

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 30 % Black or African American
 - 58 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 8 % White
 - 2 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 3%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	8
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	313
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.026
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %
10 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Cambodian, Korean, Japanese, Bengali, Burmese, Chamorro, Nepali, Urdu

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 65 %
Total number students who qualify: 235

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
0 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 0 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 0 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers	34
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	0
Paraprofessionals	3
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	6

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 11:1

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

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

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

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

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

Yes No

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

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

To develop the full potential of every girl by providing an environment that encourages critical thinking, inspires self-confidence and nurtures both intellectual and emotional development.

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

Our students are affectionately referred to as GEMS (Girls Excelling in Math and Science) and to become a GEM, students must participate in a rigorous application process that includes a panel interview, handwritten essay and teacher recommendations. Students must also submit supporting documents, to include their most current report card, attendance record and standardized test results from the previous school year if available. Students applications are screened for completion, eligibility and accepted students will be determined by lottery. The YWLA gives preference to economically disadvantaged students and siblings of current students. Students may apply for admission into the YWLA beginning in 5th grade and while the greater majority of our GEMS will enter the Academy in 6th grade and matriculate through graduation, students are accepted through the 9th grade.

PART III – SUMMARY

The Young Women's Leadership Academy (YWLA) opened its doors in August 2010 to 75-sixth and 75-seventh grade students. The YWLA is Fort Worth Independent School District's (FWISD) first single-gender campus and one of seven all-girls public schools in the state of Texas. The YWLA is a private-public partnership between FWISD and the Young Women's Preparatory Network (YWPN). The Academy serves a student population of 380 students and 62% are economically disadvantaged. The majority of our students will be the first in their families to attend college.

The YWLA strives to provide a rigorous academic program that supports our students academically, as well as prepare them physically, socially and emotionally for success in college, career and life. As a part of the YWPN's network of schools, the Academy is committed to three core values: 1) college preparation, 2) leadership development and 3) health and wellness. Our dedicated instructors provide an engaging classroom experience that goes beyond teaching the concepts outlined by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). YWLA classrooms are best described as inclusive of diverse extension activities, learning through exploration and one that promotes critical thinking. These practices challenge our students daily, strengthen their understanding and ultimately yield higher student achievement. Additionally, the YWLA promotes physical wellness and emphasizes the importance a healthy lifestyle by promoting well-balanced nutrition and physical activity daily through our commitment to implement blue zone practices.

The class of 2016 will be YWLA's first graduating class and to date, can boast 100% acceptance into one or more four-year universities and offers of more than \$2 million dollars in merit scholarships. Our 32 graduates will attend prestigious institutions throughout the U.S. and beyond. The YWLA's confidence in the impending success of the class of 2016 is attributed to our beliefs in the deliberate, intentional and robust experiences provided by the Academy. In addition to a rigorous academic curriculum, the YWLA cultivates a college bound culture through annual college visits, strengthens our GEMS' interpersonal skills through collaborative projects and team-building exercises, and assists our GEMS with discovering their strengths and interests through multidisciplinary summer enrichment camps, mentorship and job shadowing opportunities. Upon graduation, GEMS will have visited numerous colleges, engaged in a multitude of STEAM based activities and can feel confident about their career aspirations.

The YWLA operates a traditional A/B Block schedule with four classes daily and eight academic courses each semester. This schedule permits lengthier class periods and allows instructors to teach more intensely and facilitate complex, relevant classroom activities. In addition to daily courses, GEMS attend a 40-minute Advisory period where they receive remediation, participate in college preparation workshops and receive social/emotional support from a nationally recognized non-profit organization for young girls. Advisory classes are homogeneous by grade level and the instructor assigned serves as a liaison between the student, her academic team and family. Advisory instructors provide ongoing support throughout the school year.

As a tenant of leadership, GEMS are encouraged to share their strengths and talents with others. The YWLA stresses the importance of civic responsibility and promotes social awareness through Service Learning and Community Service Projects. Middle school requirements dictate 15 hours and high school requirements demand 25 hours annually. Upon graduation, GEMS will have performed nearly 150 hours of service. Many GEMS will exceed these expectations through participation in YWLA clubs like SASS where GEMS provide peer tutoring and Student Council. The YWLA's StuCo has received both state and national recognition for their commitment to service.

The demands of the YWLA academic program require a genuine commitment from students and parents alike. During student orientation both parents and students are required to sign a commitment agreement. Students pledge to maintain favorable academic standing, attend school regularly and follow the expectations set forth by the YWLA and FWISD. Expectations for parents include attending parent meetings, providing homework help, communicating with instructors and volunteering on the campus. The YWLA values a healthy relationship between home and school and emphasizes the importance of collaboration.

The YWLA strives to build and nurture strong bonds with the community to provide extension opportunities and student enrichment. The YWLA benefits from partnerships with various community businesses and organizations that provide math, science and writing workshops, provide a contemporary social/emotional curriculum, support the Academy through volunteerism and mentorship, and provide STEM based contests and events.

The YWLA is committed to providing a superlative academic experience for all GEMS. “We are extraordinary not because we say it, but because we work hard at it,” an excerpt from our student creed, embodies the spirit of the Academy. The YWLA faculty in collaboration with parents, students and stakeholders work tirelessly to ensure that every GEM is prepared for the challenges and obstacles she will face in pursuit of her dreams. A concerted commitment to high expectations and academic excellence are the driving forces of the YWLA.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

YWLA's English Department focuses on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), as well as College Board standards to serve as the foundation of our instructors' curriculum. The standards set forth are utilized to create vertical alignments across all grade levels to prepare students for the rigor of Advanced Placement and college-level courses. Supplemental applications, like Istation, Vocabulary Workshop and AP Central, are used to enhance student achievement and to ascertain foundational skills. Pre-testing and post-testing are used to scaffold lessons and distinguish tutoring groups to improve reading and writing skills for struggling students. Project-based learning, real world application and our instructors' respect for student voice and choice promotes a love of learning and creates lifelong readers and writers. Instructors work collaboratively to create cross-curricular writing opportunities and encourage the use of resource platforms for students to share their writing through pen pal programs and writing workshops with community organizations. GEMS performing above-grade level and seeking challenges are employed as peer tutors and are enlisted to participate in academic competitions like oral reading, debate and spelling.

YWLA's Math Department strives to horizontally and vertically align classes by using a TEKS-based curriculum highlighting quantitative reasoning and problem solving through real world application. This approach prepares middle grade students to take AP and college-level courses, like AP Calculus, where they will have to conjecture and analyze situations in order to be successful. Students are consistently engaged through the use of manipulatives, cross-curricular projects, cooperative grouping, and technology. Math instructors use Socratic questioning and formative assessments embedded in their lessons to determine where students are struggling with conceptual or computational errors. Students complete error analysis on summative assessments to identify misconceptions, provide an opportunity for clarification and to improve their foundational learning. Students performing above-grade level are utilized as peer tutors and provided opportunities to complete extension projects based on skills currently being taught in the classroom. Advanced students are also encouraged to compete in academic mathematics meets, as well as other STEM-related competitions.

YWLA's Science Department uses TEKS, AP College Board and Next Generation Science Standards to align its 6-12 curriculum for instruction. This ensures that our students are learning in a content-rich environment that promotes critical thinking and cognitive rigor through inquiry. In preparation for AP courses, all GEMS in grades 6-8 take Pre-AP science courses to allow them to accelerate faster than if they were in traditional schools. YWLA instructors use data from various formal/informal formative and summative assessments along with standards based assessments to create individualized plans to ensure each student's success. This culture reveals our students' strengths and weaknesses allowing students who are underperforming to receive tiered instruction. GEMS who exceed expectations participate in peer learning groups during class and complete standards based extension projects. Our AP Environmental Science program has been accepted to participate in a pilot program through AP College Board with that will allow students to complete service learning projects globally. Our students are prepared for college-level science courses and maintain a greater interest in the environment and conservation.

YWLA's Social Studies Department employs the use of the TEKS and emphasizes a chronological approach coupled with thematic thinking skills to promote student achievement. Instructors recognize the importance of teaching themes to promote a global understanding of Social Studies in preparation for AP and college-level courses. Instructors strive to make content relevant and employ the use of various instructional strategies and contemporary technology to accommodate the multiple variances in student learning styles. GEMS are encouraged to experience the past and formalize connections with today's historical events. The analysis of visual and written material is emphasized in preparation for effectively writing the DBQ. Academic interventions such as weekend workshops and advisory push-ins are data driven and specially formulated to eliminate knowledge and skills deficiencies. Study groups and extension activities are designed to aid students not meeting mastery. Projects like research papers, presentations and History Fair are utilized to scaffold learning. Differentiated approaches are developed in response to individual student needs to include the use of video clips, Socratic Seminars and enrichment trips. Peer tutoring and project-based learning are used as platforms to enhance advanced student performance.

All YWLA content areas incorporate college and career readiness standards and support the Academy's college bound mission. YWLA strives to expose, educate and equip every student for success in college, career and life. Students are exposed and educated about college and careers in each grade level through college visits, enrichment programs, presentations, college and career readiness lessons and special programming. Additionally, our students are equipped through project-based learning, hands on activities and both individual and group college readiness workshops. These opportunities, coupled with the accessibility and support of our full-time College Bound Advisor, ensure the success of our GEMS.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

YWLA's Physical Education Program offers extensive health and wellness programming that aligns with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and supports our third core value. All 6th grade students are enrolled in Moving to Wellness, a full-year course encompassing both physical and health and wellness education. All 7th and 8th grade students are enrolled in their choice of PE or Athletics, with a one semester requirement in the course. High School students are enrolled in Athletics, Cheerleading or PE. GEMS attend PE and athletic courses each A- or B-day. Students that enroll in Athletics participate in at least one seasonal sport: Volleyball, Basketball, Track or Cheerleading.

PE courses ensure that students learn the importance of proper warm up, stretching and cool down techniques. Additionally, they learn social skills like team building, sportsmanship, game etiquette and conflict resolution. GEMS are encouraged to participate in physical activity daily to encourage life-long fitness and support their physical, mental and emotional health.

YWLA's Fine Arts Department utilizes curriculum aligned with the TEKS. All middle school students take the arts as an elective course and 90% of high school students take an arts elective which they attend each A- or B-Day. YWLA offers fine arts courses in chronological order and/or ability level for middle school art, Art I-III, AP Studio Art, middle school choir, Choir I-III, Show Choir, middle school band, Band I-III, and middle school orchestra, Orchestra I-III. Fine arts courses develop students' skills and knowledge, teach cultural and historical influences, emphasize creative expression and technique and evaluate through performance or products. Students are taught using Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) and Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB) techniques and strategies. Community involvement and service learning opportunities are aspects of the Fine Arts Department. Partnerships with museums, music halls, and arts festivals allow for a holistic and well-rounded education with the goal of producing working artists and life-long patrons of the arts.

The World Language Department consists of Exploratory Languages, Spanish and Mandarin-Chinese courses and curriculum is based upon the TEKS. All 6th grade students take Exploratory Languages which allows students to learn the basic vocabulary and language patterns of six different languages: Spanish, French, Latin, Italian, German and Mandarin-Chinese. Middle school Spanish students can test into an upper level language course for high school credit. All high school students are required to take three years of language courses to meet the highest graduation standards. Students may choose from Spanish I-III, Mandarin-Chinese I-IV, and AP Spanish Language. Approximately 44% of students that take Spanish III will enroll in AP Spanish Language. All courses are one-year in length and are attended each A- or B-day.

Students enrolled in World Language courses participate in school-wide activities to recognize Hispanic and Chinese heritage and students learn culture through their participation in traditional experiences. Students have visited Peru and can visit China in 2016.

YWLA's Career and Technology (CATE) Department offers two unique career pathways for GEMS: Bio-mechanical Engineering and Digital Media/Animation. Curriculum for these courses are based upon standards set forth through a nationally accredited organization specializing in engineering curricula for middle and high school programming, as well as the TEKS. All middle school students are required to take courses in both programs and then choose a pathway upon entering high school. These courses are attended each A- and B-Day beginning in 6th-12th grade. 22% of all high school students take PLTW, which prepares students to be innovative and productive leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Through an engaging, hands-on engineering based curriculum, PLTW encourages the

development of problem-solving skills, critical thinking and creative and innovative reasoning.

78% of students are enrolled in the Digital Media/Animation program which offers a broad foundation of knowledge and skills to prepare students for high-demand jobs in today's technical fields. Coursework includes enhanced practical experiences in computer-generated art and text, graphic design, graphic production, electronic design and the development of specialized skills in multimedia presentations. Real-world application is essential: Engineering students host engineering workshops at elementary campuses to promote STEM while Digital Media students design marketing materials and commercials for private and campus organizations. Our All in Film Club was recently featured at a film festival.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

While the YWLA spotlights high school graduation, we tell our GEMS that high school graduation is the expectation and college graduation is the goal. In order for 100% of our students to be admitted and successfully complete college, they must be prepared for the rigors of college coursework and possess the commitment and dedication necessary for college life. This preparation begins in our classrooms and all core courses, as well as the majority of elective courses are Pre-AP and Advanced Placement. Students may begin taking Dual Credit courses as early as their Sophomore year.

YWLA instructors utilize a myriad of instructional strategies to ensure that our GEMS are provided an educational experience that provides engaging, rigorous and relevant coursework, learning through investigation, real-world application, as well as collaborative and project based learning. Instructional methods include, but are not limited to the use of Writer's Workshop in English/Language Arts classrooms, the 5E model to guide inquiry in science classrooms, differentiated instruction in mathematics and thematic teaching in social studies. Instructors are encouraged to develop extension and enrichment activities to emphasize concept relevance and strengthen understanding. Students are held accountable for their learning through the use of rubrics for assignments and projects, self and peer analysis and have the liberty to choose the direction of their work. These methods establish expectations and allow students creative freedom in their output. Additionally, they increase student engagement and yield higher student achievement.

All high school GEMS are provided with a laptop through FWISD's one-to-one initiative. Instructors attend professional development workshops to aid their facilitation of technology enriched classrooms. Teachers meet weekly with their departments and grade-level team meetings to discuss scaffolding, cross curricular project ideas, student progress and the development of additional challenges for high-performing students.

At the conclusion of each grading period, students needing additional support are identified and scheduled for academic intervention meetings. The student, her parents/guardians, teachers, and an administrator discuss opportunities for improvement and collaboratively develop SMART goals. Goals can address improved study habits, organization, and additional opportunities for tutorials and remediation. Following the intervention meeting, students are constantly monitored for progress.

At least two years prior to graduation, every high school GEM is matched with a mentor through the YWLA's Mentoring Program. Mentors provide social and emotional support for their mentee, as well as provide exposure to cultural, college and career-based experiences to emphasize real-world connections and support student achievement.

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

Our GEMS participate in an extensive testing calendar that includes state standardized assessments (STAAR/EOC), quarterly district-wide benchmark exams, College Readiness exams (PSAT 8/9, NMSQT PSAT, SAT and ACT), and the Texas Public School entrance exam (TSI). As a result, teachers have the fortune of utilizing a wide spectrum of data to support their instruction and can assess if students are college ready. As a campus, the YWLA has had tremendous success with STAAR and EOC exams based on the Level Two- Satisfactory threshold. Though grateful for this success, our teachers and students stretch themselves to increase performance to the Level Three- Advanced Academic Performance standard.

To do this, our instructors use district benchmark results to identify students that have the potential to reach this marker and offer extended day tutoring sessions. Sessions are scheduled before, during and after school to allow students flexibility to attend. Simultaneously, students that are at risk of not meeting Level Two performance are invited to extended day sessions, as well. Instructors use benchmark data to forecast performance projections for every student. This data is available through online access and instructors can resource individual student scores, class averages and determine which TEKS were mastered and those needing additional attention.

Similar methods are used with our college readiness exam results. The YWLA provides preparation courses for the PSAT, SAT and ACT exams to all sophomores and juniors. Each course is taught by a contracted third party organization during the school day. They administer pretests to students and share this information with our instructors to provide reinforcement in the classroom. This allows our teachers to work with students individually, as well as in homogeneous groups through the facilitation of activities and assignments that will improve achievement.

These support systems would not be successful without the support of our parents. Parents are sent grade reports every three weeks in the form of a progress report or report card. They are also given student reports for the college readiness exams they have taken. In addition we offer Parent University and information nights to aid their understanding of their GEMS scores and provide them resources, online tools and strategies then can utilize at home for skill-building practice with their student.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The climate of the YWLA encourages growth and allows students to thrive in a variety of areas. Walking through our halls, GEMS are inspired to succeed as their eyes focus on the prominent images of successful women that have made significant contributions in the areas of science, civics, math and engineering. These images adorn each floor as a reminder of the possibilities that live within us. Morning announcements publicize the significant contributions of women correlating with calendar events such as Black History Month and Engineering Week.

Instructors provide challenging, engaging lessons that require GEMS to think critically. Collaboration is a common theme and instructors frequently coordinate cross-curricular learning opportunities. The administrative team provides flexible schedules that allow instructors to facilitate intervention, as well as a time for team training. Instructors offer tutoring during their conference period, Advisory and after hours in an effort to support our students' academic growth. Additionally, high school students participate in SASS (Sisters Assisting Sixth-Grade Sisters) to aid our younger GEMS.

Instructors at the YWLA play an integral role in the success of our students. Discussions about student achievement are held during weekly meetings and potential solutions are agreed upon in an effort to further the success of our students. Instructors have control over how the TEKS and curriculum will be designed and delivered in their classrooms. This affords personal ownership to each instructor. As lifelong learners, instructors are encouraged to attend local and national professional conferences by campus leadership.

The counseling staff and leadership team have an open door policy to support the needs of students. The guidance program includes guidance lessons, individual planning and crisis intervention. "INOK" (It's Not Okay) is a comprehensive program that works in collaboration with "United Voices for Change" (UV4C), a student-led initiative, to promote respect and civility throughout the school. INOK covers a variety of topics that affect youth like suicide, bullying, sexting, and dating violence. In support, the "Polish Protégé Program" provides mentors through partnerships with various community organizations.

GEMS of the YWLA develop bonds of sisterhood throughout their academic career. This is fortified through programming that provides emotional support to the student body, sisterhood enhancing lessons, and hosts activities that raise awareness of self-worth. The program coordinator provides daily mentorship for students in need and collaborates with the counselor to ensure that students' social and emotional needs are met.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

The YWLA believes that when a student goes to college, the entire family goes to college. We value parents as an integral factor of student success. Family and community engagement are crucial and parents are invited to be active participants and collaborators on the campus.

Parents are engaged and educated through our Parent University Program. Parent University (PU) is a series of education and engagement sessions hosted by our Counseling and College Advising Team. These one-hour workshops are hosted three to four times per semester to integrate, educate and equip our parents with the information and skills necessary to support their student's success at not only the YWLA, but in college, career and life. Topics include; Saving and Paying for College; College 101; Road to Graduation; Stress Management; Suicide Prevention; State and College Assessments. High school families will work one-on-one with the College Bound Advisor throughout their student's journey to college.

Parents are invited to serve on our Site Based Decision Making Team (SBDM). The SBDM Team is an advisory council that consists of parents, teachers, campus leadership and community members. Membership in the YWLA's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is strongly encouraged and parents may also choose to be active through volunteerism through chaperoning college trips and special events.

Community engagement is also pivotal to the success of the YWLA and we have been very fortunate in our cultivation of partnerships. We are a STEAM campus and partnerships with various defense, energy, technology and transportation companies provide our students with outstanding exposure to careers and professionals. These relationships have afforded our GEMS various job shadowing and hands-on experiences.

The YWLA was recently adopted by the local chapter of an international service organization which provided GEMS the opportunity to participate in a day of community service with their members. Additionally, every 11th grade student was provided a job-shadowing experience in the career field for which they have expressed interest. Other partner organizations have provided the YWLA with volunteers, mentors and unique cultural and civic experiences for our GEMS.

College and university partnerships are also very vital and as a result, GEMS have been afforded the opportunity to participate in engineering camps and leadership trainings. These partnerships have also yielded unique summer enrichment endeavors and college and career exposure for our GEMS.

3. Professional Development:

All YWLA core courses and most high school level elective courses feature Pre-AP or AP designations. Pre-AP and AP instructors of record must be Gifted and Talented (GT) certified. This is attained initially through the completion of thirty GT professional development (PD) hours. GT certifications must be renewed annually through the completion of six additional GT hours. The YWLA's Programs of Choice (POC) Coordinator monitors the local PD database to ensure compliance with state and local requirements and works closely with the district's Advanced, Accelerated and Innovative Learning department, as well as YWLA faculty to research local, state and national PD opportunities. Recommendations for PD are provided to campus administration based upon teaching assignments, instructional and curriculum deficiencies, College Board updates, the TEKS and student performance. PD hours specific to each instructor's course curriculum are required annually and are identified in the YWLA's annual professional development plan.

YWLA participates in various trainings to include College Board Advanced Placement Institutes, National Math & Science Initiative (NMSI), Gifted and Talented Academy, and Core Curriculum State Conferences. Campus curricular departments routinely utilize formal and informal assessments, to include benchmarks, STAAR/EOC and pre- and post-tests to evaluate curriculum, instruction and student performance. Venues like vertical alignment pyramid meetings, district-level department, and grade-level team meetings allow for curriculum and instructional alignment planning, as well as the exchange of innovative instructional strategies and resources. Additionally, YWLA instructors participate in extensive networks that include education professionals from College Board, local universities, district and YWPN network schools. Through these networks, YWLA educators are introduced to modern researched-based instructional techniques, resources to supplement and scaffold curriculum and teaching best practices.

Campus specific trainings to support the YWLA's college bound initiative include Texas State Initiative (TSI) for College Entrance, College Board PSAT/SAT preparation, and Advanced Placement DBQ training. PD opportunities like cross-curricular writing, vertical and horizontal alignment, data-driven instructional strategies, and differentiated instruction provide YWLA instructors with the skills necessary to improve student achievement across all curricular areas. Compliance training includes Emergency First Aid, Stryker Evacuation Chair, Blood-borne Pathogens, Bullying Prevention, Child Abuse Reporting and Technology Acceptable Use.

Faculty members to include administration are required to attend PD annually. Student achievement is paramount at the YWLA and the knowledge and skills gained from participation in professional growth opportunities ensure that every academic team member is prepared to facilitate instruction, be instructional leaders and serve as a resource to our GEMS.

4. School Leadership:

The overarching philosophy of the YWLA is that the academic achievement and emotional well-being of every GEM is paramount. All decisions, to include partnership development, budget, curriculum and student activities are made deliberately with the best interest of all students in mind. YWLA administration embraces distributive leadership and works collaboratively with faculty, students and stakeholders for the benefit of our GEMS and the Academy. This is modeled by the principal in her efforts to establish committees, initiation of community relationships and her empowerment of student organizations.

Instructors participate on at least one committee per year. This includes, but is not limited to the Social, STEAM, College and Career Readiness and Technology Committees. These committees develop enrichment opportunities and social endeavors for our GEMS. A member of the YWLA Leadership Team (Principal, Dean of Students, Dean of Instruction, Counselor, College Bound Advisor and Programs of Choice Coordinator) are each assigned to a committee as a liaison. It takes a village to meet the goals outlined in the YWLA's mission and effective collaboration curtails frustration and burnout.

In addition to committee service, instructors are assigned to both a grade level and content team. The master schedule was developed with this in mind and allows for content departments to meet each A-day and grade-level teams to meet each B-day. This promotes ongoing collaboration between colleagues to provide interventions and academic initiatives with the YWLA's mission and philosophy in mind. Teachers can also serve on the YWLA Think Tank, a group of YWLA Faculty members that review the curriculum, student handbook, daily schedule, and past/future initiatives in an effort to make proposals for the upcoming school year. The Think Tank initiates changes through suggestions, surveys and brainstorming sessions with students and colleagues alike.

The Principal meets with Junior and Senior Class Officers and student council monthly to stay abreast of current student concerns. Topics can include the formation of academic/social organizations, Service Learning and Community Service Projects, student expectations, fundraising and socials. Students are frequently called to upon to assist with school-wide endeavors like student orientation, recruitment and open house as a way to expose systems and enhance leadership capacity.

The YWLA's success can be attributed to the commitment of our students, staff, stakeholders and administration to work collaboratively towards excellence. Mutual respect and consideration serve as the conduit between stakeholders. We hold one another accountable and always keep our mission, philosophy and students at the forefront.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The single most effective tool that attributes to the YWLA's academic success is our daily schedule. Our traditional A/B block allows teachers to plan elaborate and engaging lessons. It allows students to accelerate the accrual of graduation credit, their participation in dual credit courses and it provides for a daily advisory period. Each of these elements is mutually beneficial to all YWLA stakeholders.

Longer classes allow instructors to not only introduce concepts, but they can allot time for individual practice and employ formal/informal formative assessments. The YWLA experience embraces project based learning and learning through experimentation or exploration. Longer class periods give instructors the flexibility to design and facilitate these types of activities without the constraints of time. Additionally, longer class periods also mean longer planning/team periods which provide a daily opportunity for instructors and stakeholders to collaborate on special projects, initiatives and interventions. This collaboration promotes writing across the curriculum and inspires real-world application since teachers can effectively plan joint endeavors to benefit their teaching and their students' learning.

A daily Advisory period creates a built-in opportunity to feature speakers, college presentations, student body collaborations and endeavors, as well as an opportunity to take advantage of instructor tutoring and or provide peer tutoring to their sisters. Advisory also allows students to conduct polls, communicate with their peers or receive social/emotional support from the guidance counselor or program coordinator. This is also a convenient time to incorporate PSAT/SAT/ACT and writing workshops to promote student achievement. Often these types of instructional enhancements and resources are provided before or after school and therefore not available to all students. The Advisory period allows instructors, administrators and key personnel to utilize the time strategically for the greater good of our GEMS and the Academy.

Lastly, the traditional block allows students to earn up to eight credits annually during the traditional school day. This allows middle school students to access courses for high school credit sooner and high school students ultimately gain greater access to AP Courses and can participate in Dual Credit at the neighboring community college. Parents are pleased because this allows their GEMS to receive college credit at the expense of the district and will reduce college expenses in the future. Students are pleased because higher level courses yield higher weighted GPAs as compared to their counterparts. This factor makes them even more competitive when pursuing entrance into college and improves their chances of receiving merit scholarships.