U.S. Department of Education
2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name Doral Academy of Technology
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2601 N.W. 112th Avenue
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Doral   State FL   Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 33172-1804

County

Telephone (305) 591-0020   Fax

Web site/URL http://www.doralacademyprep.org   E-mail   ytamargo@dadeschools.net

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

_____Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr. Alberto Carvalho   E-mail acarvalho@dadeschools.net
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Miami-Dade School District   Tel.   (305) 995-1000
I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

_____Date_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Angela 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.

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

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

*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.

Part I – Eligibility Certification

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

1. 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. 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 and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.

3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017 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.

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 2011 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: 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, or 2016.

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 has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

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.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2016-2017) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district   281 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
   (per district designation):   72 Middle/Junior high schools
     79 High schools
     10 K-12 schools

     442 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
   [X] 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, 2016 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	42	22	64
7	30	26	56
8	61	20	81
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	133	68	201

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:

0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
5 % Asian
0 % Black or African American
89 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
6 % White
0 % Two or more races
100 % Total

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

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2015 – 2016 school year: 1%

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	**Answer**
(1) Number of students who transferred *to* the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred *from* the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	2
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	2
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	187
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.011
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
   0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 42 %
   Total number students who qualify: 84

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
   6 Total number of students served

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

0	Autism	0	Orthopedic Impairment
0	Deafness	0	Other Health Impaired
0	Deaf-Blindness	2	Specific Learning Disability
0	Emotional Disturbance	4	Speech or Language Impairment
0	Hearing Impairment	0	Traumatic Brain Injury
0	Mental Retardation	0	Visual Impairment Including Blindness
0	Multiple Disabilities	0	Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

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

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects	15
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a licensed professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1   22:1

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

Required Information	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	96%	96%	96%
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 2016.

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 X

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.

Doral Academy of Technology's mission is to prepare students with the academic skills in any rigorous educational setting while instilling a belief in their own self-efficacy.

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

Doral Academy of Technology (DAT) is located in the heart of city of Doral, Florida, nestled between a residential neighborhood, industrial warehouses, and minutes away from the bustling Doral city area. DAT is a Miami Dade Public Charter School in which students are required to participate in an open lottery process. The application process opens in mid-December and then the school holds a public lottery during the school's February Educational Excellence School Advisory Committee (EESAC) meeting, which is witnessed and certified by a public accountant. Students who are then selected in the lottery are invited to an Academic Orientation with their parents in March and then again for a School Orientation in early August.

PART III – SUMMARY

Doral Academy of Technology (DAT) is comprised of approximately 89.1% Hispanics, 5.5% White, 4.5% Asian, and 0.5% percent Black students. A significant portion of the student population consists of students for whom English is a second language. These students are not considered ELL students. DAT provides students with a rigorous academic education that allows them to seamlessly transition to one of our high school programs. DAT creates a high quality 6th-8th educational learning community where stakeholders are dedicated to promoting an exceptional educational experience with an obligation to ensure that our students engage in a robust learning environment. Students receive hands on real world experiences through various courses and extracurricular activities led by instructors who have had years of professional experiences in their fields of study in Engineering, Sciences, and Mathematics. Doral Academy of Technology opened its doors in 2011. The school has been recognized by the State of Florida as one of the highest performing middle schools in the district and has consistently been rated an "A" by the state of Florida since 2011.

DAT aims to prepare students for high academic performance, stimulate their lifelong love of math and science and create new pathways for them to pursue academic and professional careers in the fields of Math, Science, Engineering and Technology. Students in grades 6th -8th are provided with a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and a rich extra-curricular program of activities. The school model is unique in that it places a premium on preparing students for advanced academic course work as early as sixth grade. Students have the opportunity to enroll in courses at a variety of levels in order to accommodate for their learning needs and educational aspirations. Students can even begin their high school coursework while in middle school and earn up to seven credits towards their high school graduation. In order to further prepare our students for college, our school mandates that all middle school students enroll in a college readiness course that utilizes Naviance, a project based online educational program that assists students in achieving their personal college and career goals.

The strategic approach that DAT uses to foster student academic and social development include opportunities in school clubs, family events, exploration in visual arts, music and theatre performances. Students can participate in clubs such as the National Junior Honor Society and Builders Club. Family events include DAT's annual Family BBQ orientation at the start of the school so that parents and students can meet teachers, administrators and other support faculty. Families can also participate in the school's Pasta Literacy Night and afterschool social gatherings. These events are important and beneficial for the development and relationship between all stakeholders. The annual Urban Art Show and the Multicultural event provide students a mean to exhibit their works in digital art imaging, photography, and visual arts. Both events allow student to experience and growth social and culturally.

DAT has been able to meet and exceed annual goals as determined by the state of Florida in all tested areas in Reading, Writing, Math, Civics, Biology, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. The staff collaborates to review data and determine what teaching strategies and programs will be best to meet the needs of the students, whether it is to remediate or enrich the curriculum. Technology is also integrated effectively into the curriculum. Interactive boards aid teachers in presenting innovative lessons, while computer labs and student tablets are found across subject areas to enrich activities and diversify classroom instruction.

The staff at DAT participates in numerous professional development opportunities to continuously improve instruction and discuss best practices. At professional development sessions, teachers and administrators learn and discuss current educational trends, research, and cross-curricular instruction. If the practice heeds excellent results, it is shared, along with other knowledge and expertise with other schools around the nation, providing suggestions of how to implement the practice and improve upon educational programs and strategies.

Students engage in numerous opportunities to develop and display their talents in either academics or extracurricular activities. Students also participate in activities outside of the school where they can be evaluated and recognized for their diligence. Middle school students in the math academy program have participated in local and state mathematics competitions. Most recently, Doral students defended their 2015

Championship at the Florida Gulf Coast University Math Competition. 35 middle school students from Doral came well prepared, and took the first place trophy once again. DAT's "Girls Who Code" placed in 3rd place overall amongst over 30 different groups at the 2016 Miami Code Fest hosted by Florida International University Schools of Computing and Information Sciences. Students in 7th and 8th grade also participate in a school wide TEDx, an officially licensed and international recognized TEDx Youth event during the school year. At DAT, we believe that activities like these help students achieve a richer educational experience that provides students the opportunity to maximize their potential outside of the school day.

DAT is worthy of being honored as a National Blue Ribbon School because the staff and other stakeholders are dedicated to providing students with a high quality education that will prepare them for college and beyond. At DAT, we strive to provide a strong educational foundation for our students to help them to not only succeed academically, but to realize their dreams as well. Our goal is to allow students to understand and appreciate their learning styles to guide and instruct them how to best accommodate, plan, and monitor their own learning, thus kindling a desire and fostering the ability for lifelong learning.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Doral Academy of Technology (DAT) is a public charter school dedicated to providing its students with a rigorous and diverse academic curriculum enriched by a robust academic program, dedicated to ensuring that all students are ready for the challenges ahead regardless of their socio-economic background. In order to ensure that all students are high school, career, and college ready by the time they are promoted to the ninth grade, DAT has aligned its curriculum to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) and the Florida Standards (FS). DAT curriculum requires students not only to meet the state's graduation requirements, but also to exceed them as well. The mandatory course of study for all middle school students includes three years of core courses, such as, language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social studies.

The English/Language arts (ELA) program includes course offerings in Language Arts 6-8, Honors Language Arts 6-8, Pre-AP Language Arts 6-8, and Gifted Language Arts. These courses provide students with the skills necessary to ensure they understand the importance of being thoughtful, judicious writers who reflectively engage in critical thinking. The foundation of DAT's ELA curriculum is the web-based program - Study Sync. Study Sync offers online access to thousands of classic and contemporary texts, both fiction and non-fiction. At DAT, we know that better readers make better writers, thus close-reading skills are infused into the ELA Curriculum as early as 6th grade. All students in sixth grade are assigned to both a language arts class and a reading class. DAT has incorporated early SAT strategies in all Language Arts classes through the newly instituted Writing and Reading Action Plan (WRAP) in order to expose them to college vocabulary and high level reading and writing strategies at an earlier age.

The math curriculum provides a strong foundation of concepts, techniques, and applications. DAT uses the Carnegie Learning Curriculum for Mathematics grades 6 through 8. The Carnegie Learning Common Core State Standards transition plan for middle school aligns to standards and improves students' foundational skills to prepare them for the advanced study of mathematics. The Carnegie Learning Curriculum also has an adaptive math software program that aligns to each course and provides students with highly individualized and self-paced instruction that meets their individual needs to improve their math skills. DAT offers required courses like Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and various levels of a math research elective course. Students can also participate in a Math Academy program, which engages students by giving them the tools needed to become proficient problem-solvers while instilling self-confidence and developing a deep understanding of core mathematics concepts. Many students in these courses are also involved in the Chi Alpha Mu society.

The science curriculum offers students courses at the advanced and Pre-AP levels, as well as other more demanding courses like Physical Science and Biology. These courses offer students the opportunities to explore new questions using scientific knowledge and critical thinking in their own life decision-making. Students are also given the opportunity to solve real-world problems by engaging in labs and longitudinal research-based projects, gathering and discussing and analyzing data on a daily basis. Labs are conducted two per quarter. DAT allows students to conduct dissections that are related to real life application of research-based practices, focusing on the overall theme of life science. The science curriculum makes real world connections to mathematics, reading and writing. Beginning in 6th grade, students incorporate metric conversions utilizing the scientific method. A cohort of 8th grade students engage in research via participation in an ongoing mice research study in which they shadow high school students, whereby the learn how to conduct and refine the longitude life of mice. Monitoring the effectiveness of student lab reports, which include short and extended responses, is critical, as writing is a school wide goal, reinforcing the science curriculum. For example, journaling during lab activities helps students develop an essential skill in scientific research.

The Social Studies curriculum is aligned with the state standards and extends its students a comprehensive offering of required and elective courses. Required courses include United States History, Civics, World History available in advanced, and Pre-AP as well. Elective courses include Law Studies with Mock Trials and Speech and Debate. At DAT, students engage in real life civic responsibilities while learning about how

the American system of justice works from both a civil and criminal perspective. Middle school students had the opportunity to serve as jurors and critiqued student attorneys for a mock trial. They shadowed high school's students while they prepared for a district Mock Trial Competition. Currently, students will be participating in a local and national Civics competition team. 7th grade students in DAT are enrolled in a Civics course in which there is a state end of course exam in May. The Civics curriculum is designed to help students develop an increased understanding of the foundations of our constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded. Students participate in a Civic Political Fair where they take surveys to determine where their views are related to the political scale. Additionally, this past election season middle school students participated in a mock election where they voted on the Florida ballot.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at DAT are required to follow a STEM enriched program within elective courses. Project Based learning is at the heart of the instructional approach in DAT. Students collaborate on meaningful projects that develop creative and civic engagement in the classroom and local competitions. Students are not just assessed on their understanding of academic content, but also on their ability to successfully apply the content learned when solving authentic problems. Beginning in 6th grade, students are enrolled in Robotics I as their first technology STEM elective. This course introduces students to programming "intelligent" tasks in a specific environment such as designing, building, and testing robots. This course exposes students to understanding of mathematics, mechanics, physics, and the use of algorithms. During their 7th grade year, students have the option to continue with Robotics II or to pursue DAT's Future City I course. Robotics II requires students to engage in different programming platforms such as VEX IQ, Ultrasonic, Touch and Color Sensors, and VEX-IQ like Challenges while the Future City I course introduces students to basic research skills necessary to succeed in the competitive Future City II course offered in 8th grade.

Future City I is a project-based learning course where students learn concepts encompassing engineering, STEM related content, scales and apply math and science concepts to real world issues with criteria and constraints. During their last year in the DAT, 8th grade students can select either Future City II or Introduction to Computer Science. Future City II allows students to continue exploration of engineering and design techniques. The course involves student participation as a team (consisting of three students, a teacher, and a volunteer-engineer mentor) representing the school at the annual South Florida Regional Future City Competition held at the Florida International University School of Engineering Campus in January and present final submission to a panel of judges – engineers from around the Metroplex. Students use SimCity TM software to design a city of the future, which demonstrates aspects related to the maintenance of city infrastructure and population. DAT also offers Introduction to Computer Science for 8th graders. This is a full year course, which offers a wide lens on computer science by covering topics such as programming, physical computing, Java, HTML/CSS, Discrete mathematics, and data. Students are empowered to create authentic artifacts and engage with a focus on creativity, communication, and problem solving.

The physical education curriculum is a .5 credit semester course, intended to provide the students with the opportunity to gain an understanding of and appreciation for physical exercise. Students in the 6th grade are enrolled in a Physical Education course, which is wheeled with another .5 credit semester course titled Video Game Design. Digital fluency in the 21st century extends beyond basic uses of email, word-processing and web surfing and into the realm of designing and coding. Students who participate in the imaginative world of video games develop important critical thinking skills needed for careers in Video Game Design and Computer Science. Students in grades 7th through 8th are mandated to take a .5 credit semester of physical education and a .5 credit semester of a college readiness course.

The foreign language curriculum has proven to be a very successful program at DAT. Meanwhile in middle school, students have the opportunity to take two full years of the same language in order to fulfill the high school graduation requirement. We offer a variety of courses in Spanish, French, and Italian.

Through the schools' articulation, students can choose an array of electives, such as technology, physical education, foreign language, and other areas in science, social studies. DAT also allows our students to

participate in an array of performing arts and fine art elective courses such as Theatre, Dance, Photography, Voice, Instrumental, and Visual Arts. DAT promotes the school's vision by providing students enough opportunities to become lifelong learners.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Doral Academy of Technology (DAT) strives for high academic achievement. Students are enrolled in academic courses as well as a variety of electives courses required for standard middle school graduation while given the opportunities to earn high school credits such as Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, Physical Science, Biology, and the foreign languages of Spanish, French, and Italian.

The integration of the students' chosen electives throughout the curriculum motivates them to excel academically and improve their student performance. High performers can enroll in advanced level courses. Honors courses focus on lectures, discussions, and activities involving a higher order thinking process and challenging tasks. Some students also choose Pre-Advanced Placement where the coursework is noticeably more rigorous and thought provoking.

Beginning in 2016-2017, the Language Arts department instituted a Writing and Reading Action Plan (WRAP), thereby infusing vocabulary, SAT/ACT preparation, close reading, and writing of short and extended responses into the curriculum. This meant not only to address lower level readers and writers, but also to push those with the highest proficiencies even further toward high school- and college-level literacy.

The school offers after school tutoring, as well pullout sessions where student are identified as potentially dropping a level on the state assessments. Students participating in the exceptional student education (ESE) program have documentation that states their IEP goals and accommodations to ensure success and continually challenge the students. The school has an inclusive setting where these students enroll in courses alongside the general student population. Students participating in the gifted and special needs program have formal plans in place to show their goals and/or accommodations needed for support. Some of these students also receive consultative services where a program specialist consults with teachers to ensure that students are excelling in academically challenging courses. Students in the special needs program also take Learning Strategies, where a certified ESE teacher assists them with a variety of educational needs.

Teachers utilize rotations where students participate in whole group instruction followed by a series of three stations: independent activity, cooperative, differentiated learning or peer group work, and small group instruction led by the teacher. Other teachers prefer more traditional methods of instruction that include discussions and open-ended tasks. Technology is another aspect of instruction that is infused into classes through interactive boards, student tablets, and computer applications such as Reading Plus, Carnegie, Edgenuity, Gizmos, and Study Sync.

Worthwhile and challenging lessons provide students a high quality education. Data provided by formal and informal assessments is reviewed and monitored on biweekly basis by a number of stakeholders in the school; professionals analyze school data in their department meetings, Professional Learning Communities, administrative meetings, department chair meetings, and even in EESAC meetings. Students participate in baseline, interims and mid-year assessments in reading, writing, math, civics and science courses. Data chats are conducted with students in each of these courses in order to provide support and strategies on an individual basis. Using the school improvement plan, stakeholders are constantly revisiting strategies and new educational trends that can benefit student performance in reading, mathematics, science, writing, and other state assessed areas. Through the school's leadership team, data is utilized to drive instruction for all tested areas, create pull-out programs that target interventions, and schedule review sessions that are held before and after school and Saturday sessions.

The school has a five-step Data Student Performance Success Wheel that begins with the administrative team, teachers, students, and then stakeholders: (1) The administrative team meets and breaks down the data by subject area; (2) The administrative team meets with each assigned department. Learning gains by each benchmark are analyzed and strategies are put in place to meet the needs of the students, enabling teachers to gauge student performance via individual, classroom, and grade level data by utilizing an in-house data

program; (3) Subject area and grade level data chats are conducted with each individual teacher, which allows them to focus and plan a prescribed intervention strategy for targeted students and class needs; (4) Teachers will gather data and then meet with individual students to conduct data chats as well. The intent is for each student to understand and know their performance on a quarterly basis and view their mastered benchmarks for each interim and mini assessment; (5) finally, school-wide data by subject area is then shared with all stakeholders during the school's EESAC meetings.

The school improvement plan is reviewed during each data presentation in order to understand how each goal area is being met. The school also informs all stakeholders of its academic performance via the school's profile page (found on the school website). Committees of professionals gather once a month to monitor and make recommendations for a Career and College Ready Initiative Plan that promotes middle school students to be "high school and college ready."

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. **School Climate/Culture:**

Doral Academy of Technology (DAT) creates a positive and nurturing culture for all stakeholders: our students are showered with respect, compassion, and knowledge. Thus, students are encouraged by teachers and administrators to pursue their own interests and passions. Students are able to make the connections between the school curriculum and skills needed in the real world. DAT's philosophy is rooted in a core of beliefs and/or values that drive and serve as the impetus for implementation of the vision and mission of the school, encompass high expectations leading to student success as early as sixth grade. Consequently, both students and teachers are held to these expectations, as students do best – intellectually, personally, morally – when they are striving for excellence. Furthermore, autonomy in the teaching and learning process kindles a desire to quest for knowledge. Through accountability and responsibility, learners become engaged and the teacher facilitates the quest for knowledge; both the learner and facilitator are accountable for their actions.

DAT provides students with various ways to participate and feel accepted. A guidance counselor assigned to each grade level serves as an advocate for students. DAT's culture is merely known as the "Doral Way" the guiding of students and staff members towards success academically and socially, and toward a commitment to lifelong learning. The administrative team has an open door policy for all stakeholders so ideas are shared and solutions developed in order to meet the needs of the individual. Through ongoing observations and walkthroughs of classrooms, both students and teachers receive support and reassurance from the administrative team in meeting the school's goal of continued academic success. Teachers are afforded various opportunities to participate in leadership roles, ranging from being department chairs, club sponsors, Literacy Team leaders, and Curriculum Team members to becoming actively involved in developing school wide professional learning communities. In addition, all teachers are guided through the process of ensuring that they become highly qualified teachers during their first two years of teaching via the Mentor Program.

Not only are students provided the opportunity to participate in challenging courses, they are also motivated to join in an abundance of extracurricular activities and local or state competitions. DAT's goal is to provide a highly rigorous curriculum infused with effective, proven teaching strategies, that incorporate the Florida Standards and Next Generation State Standards, while integrating research-based, print/literacy-rich, and technology-infused curriculum initiatives that encourage success for every student.

2. **Engaging Families and Community:**

Doral Academy of Technology (DAT) believes that engaging families and communities contributes to greater academic achievement and improvement of the school. Three core beliefs sustain this model: 1) student achievement increases the more knowledge parents have about their children's school experience; 2) greater involvement of families through non-academic channels contributes to greater academic buy-in; and 3) the more a school invests in a local community, the more resources, support networks, and allies become available to holistically bolster the health and vitality of the school.

Our goal is for parents to be fully aware of the academic happenings in their student's education. Besides communicating to parents and students about standardized testing results and quarterly grades, parents and students also receive weekly updates of announcements and activities.

Furthermore, parents and students have access to a web portal where they can: access home learning, pertinent academic resources, track student achievements, activities, and keep up with student news and any other pertinent school information.

DAT teachers meet with parents and students to answer subject-specific questions and better include parents in understanding what they can do to assist their children academically. DAT works to empower parents and community members to enhance school programs by meeting formally during monthly EESAC

and PTSI meetings, where they translate their feedback into a concrete plan of action for school improvement. Yet, DAT strives to engage the community through non-academic means as well. For example, the school encourages our stakeholders to join our multiple service programs for the local community, such as: food and clothing drives for the needy, social events and support services for the elderly, and walks to raise awareness for those with special needs like autism. Moreover, each year, parents commit to volunteering 30 hours at the school. This encourages parents to be more invested in contributing to the growth of a healthy school community and ultimately increases the likelihood that they will be more involved in their children's educational experience, and their children along with them.

Annually, families are invited to an opening of school orientation BBQ where they have the opportunity to visit teachers and receive information on school clubs and activities for the new school year. Further, families and community members attend school-wide events like the annual Urban Art show featuring projects on visual arts and photography, and various theater productions. Thus, parental involvement is central to the success of school culture at DAT.

3. **Professional Development:**

DAT promotes ongoing professional development. We offer our teachers and staff members a wide variety of professional development opportunities that range from universal strategies for success across all disciplines to course specific instructional practices and skills. First, we assist new educational professionals to become "highly qualified" in their subject areas. With this in mind, we offer a Mentoring Program that provides beginning teachers with support, training, and guidance to ensure their success in teaching. Second, they work to maintain that elite status by attending multiple professional development workshops on a yearly basis, which cover essential topics such as: instructional best practices; data lesson development; current educational trends and assessments; Professional Learning Communities, effective lesson planning, action research and data-driven instruction, cross-curricular literacy enhancements, and covering differentiated techniques.

In addition to ongoing professional development, teachers are instructed and supported as they align their assessments and lessons with the Florida Standards; teachers develop progressive focus calendars that are used to develop more engaging and productive instruction. Consequently, individualized student data is evaluated and strategies are employed that address the needs of our school's ESE and economically disadvantaged students. Through data provided by the administrative walkthroughs and performance data, professional development is provided to all instructional personnel that addresses a variety of teaching strategies and interventions.

Regularly, professionals participate in Miami Dade County's IPEGS evaluation system in which they must develop a yearly Deliberate Practice Growth Target Form (DPGT). The plan assists individuals in aligning their professional growth to the school improvement plan goals in such areas as reading, writing, and math, student performance, individual learning goals, professional development activities, or performance outcomes. At DAT, we believe that it is our duty as teachers and administrators to develop personally and professionally so that students continue to develop a strong foundation upon which they can not only achieve academically but also realize their dreams outside of it.

4. **School Leadership:**

The school leadership at DAT is committed to providing a rigorous educational environment for all students. The Doral leadership philosophy is to educate all students in a manner that provides them the opportunity to be successful in middle school. Thus, each decision that is made at the school keeps in mind that central philosophy. The administrative leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal, and the reading coach. The extended leadership team at the school includes department heads in all of the core academic areas and electives, special programs coordinator, activities director, student services chair and testing chair. The administrative leadership team meets on a weekly basis and the extended team meets bi-monthly. The administrative team uses iPads to conduct walkthroughs in classrooms on a daily basis. The entire leadership team has identified ten behaviors that should be seen in classrooms during observations. These behaviors include: 1) Is the teacher actively engaged with students, 2)Board

configurations are displayed, 3) Evidence of data binder, 4)Teacher utilizes a focus calendar or pacing guide,5) Utilizes data and which ones to drive instruction, 6)Lesson plans are updated, 7) Differentiated Instruction is evident in lesson, 8) Student responses and efforts are recognized and reinforced in lesson, 9) Creates a well-managed and simulating learning environment, 10)Promotes learning by demonstrating accurate content knowledge. A report is generated biweekly and the observations are discussed with the extended team. Based on the results of these surveys, relevant professional development is enacted for the faculty that addresses key observations. Visibility in classrooms is a critical factor for establishing a culture of expectation. In addition, at each leadership meeting alternating departments are required to present relative data such as, baseline, interim testing, assessment results, new initiatives and other academic issues as they arise. The resulting data is used to develop action plans and instructional focus calendars, which are monitored by the leadership team. Based on the consensus of the entire leadership team, purchasing decisions are made on new reading or math programs, textbooks and other instructional materials, and technology. The principal's philosophy is to be inclusive of the content area experts in the decision-making process in order to help make the best decision to promote student learning and engagement. Administration believes in breaking down the barriers or obstacles for teachers so that they can focus on nurturing and educating our students.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Doral Academy of Technology is committed to providing students with the opportunities to participate in higher learning via a challenging curriculum as early as 6th grade. One of the most important guiding principles at DAT is that our school encourages students to challenge themselves in the classroom setting and beyond. DAT encourages middle school students to enroll in at least 7 credit high school courses beginning in middle school. Student's success revolves around the involvement by the counselors, teachers, administrators, and community that instill a sense of purpose and confidence in their learning. Our school's culture is referred to as the "Doral Way." The "Doral Way" is known primarily for allowing students opportunities for success, learning, and leadership. Teaching is meaningful and innovative to produce positive and reflective individuals. The school offers a curriculum that contributes to this vision by providing students with a full range of opportunities in the classroom, as well as through clubs and community service, to learn and develop skills that will empower them to become lifelong learners.

DAT is committed to upholding high expectations for all, to creating safe and caring learning environments, and to maintaining a culture where parents, teachers, students, governing board members, and community stakeholders work as a cohesive team. Reinforcement and reflection methods are implemented by the teachers to assist students in making connections and develop higher order thinking skills by helping them analyze and synthesize data using depth of knowledge. Students create interactive journals in almost every core class of study. Hands on, project based and multi-media instructional delivery is utilized to engage students. Every student's needs are addressed in the classroom. Students with language barriers, struggling, or with special needs are given the opportunity to review and reapply knowledge at their own pace through intervention as needed. DAT does not believe that some students can learn and participate in high-level educational opportunities rather that every students has the right to be challenged.

Much, if not most, of the academic success at DAT is the result of an unstinting open-access policy that is guided by an unswerving belief in equity. Undeniably, our guiding principle is based on the knowledge that students, given the opportunity, will demonstrate a willingness and desire to succeed—it is part and parcel of an inherent drive to achieve. At DAT, a student's academic success stems from the inner psyche and is fostered by teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents who acknowledge and reward their efforts constructively.