

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Cathy Van Ness

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

Official School Name Austin Middle School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1514 Avenue N 1/2

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

City Galveston State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77550-8135

County Texas

Telephone (409) 761-3500 Fax _____

Web site/URL https://www.gisd.org/Domain/203 E-mail cathyvanness@gisd.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Dr. Kelli Moulton E-mail kellimoulton@gisd.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Galveston Independent School District Tel. (409) 766-5100

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 Dr. Matthew Hay
(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 (per district designation):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 5 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 2 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

13 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, 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	53	76	129
6	71	72	143
7	58	76	134
8	74	57	131
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	256	281	537

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 9 % Asian
 - 8 % Black or African American
 - 42 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 39 % 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 2015 – 2016 school year: 7%

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, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	20
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2015 until the end of the 2015-2016 school year	16
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	36
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2015	515
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.070
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
20 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Korean

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 49 %
Total number students who qualify: 262

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
37 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.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>10</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>11</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>24</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>6</u> Mental Retardation | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>3</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 9
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	35
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.	9
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

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 15:1
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	96%	96%	97%	97%	97%
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 X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2011

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

The mission of Austin Middle School is to prepare students for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math career pathways and promote character, leadership, and civic responsibility.

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

Upon application, students are ranked using a rubric which allocates points for core subject averages, state and nationally-normed test results, attendance and discipline. Students with the highest scores in the application pool are selected to fill spaces attend Austin Middle School.

PART III – SUMMARY

Austin Middle School (AMS), located on Galveston Island, Texas, was constructed in 1939. After 69 years as a traditional middle school, Austin Middle School shifted its focus to a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) magnet program for 5th – 8th grade students in 2008 as a result of community input and guidance. The STEM theme was chosen because of our geographical location on the coast, local industries, and institutions such as a major teaching hospital, environmental agencies, the shipping and fishing industries, U. S. Corps of Engineers, and a university with a focus on maritime studies.

AMS reflects a diverse student population of approximately 42% Hispanic, 8% African American, 39% White, and 9% Asian, 2% Two or More Races, and 49 % Economically Disadvantaged student. Of the 540 students, approximately 25% of the students are identified as gifted and talented. Additionally, 5% of the students are English Language Learners, and another 5% of the students receive special education services in a self-contained setting. Diversity of AMS students is celebrated and provides a richness to the overall climate and culture. Academic learning is supported by an inclusive and respectful environment. This mindset is communicated to and by students through No Place for Hate designation activities. Students and staff participate in events that honor diversity and acceptance of others such as Mix-It-Up Lunch, Morning Welcomes, and the Peace Rally.

Teachers and staff focus on strategies that challenge students to innovate and invent ideas which model real world learning and work environments by participating in field experiences in the community and attending presentations at hospitals and labs. The staff incorporates collaborative group work on projects to prepare our students with skills and strategies necessary to pursue future coursework in the STEM field. Student learning experiences are enhanced by participating in robotics, web design, video technology, graphic design, engineering and the fine arts. Upon entering high school, our students have been given the opportunity to earn up to seven high school credits.

We encourage students and faculty to always give their best effort as individuals and as team members. Our students and campus have been recognized for exhibiting award-winning attitudes and behaviors. Significant recognitions include robotics competition winners, essay contest winners, art contest winners, and state recognition for distinguished performance on state assessments for the past eight years.

Our staff includes a broad range of highly motivated professionals with a commitment to learning and to serving as role models for our students. This year AMS is piloting a school-wide enrichment model that engages all students in activities to enhance the existing curriculum. Our school-wide enrichment model provides rigorous learning experiences and high standards for all students through developing talents and providing a broad range of advanced-level enrichment experiences for students. For each school-wide enrichment model unit, the grade level team works collaboratively with the advance academics specialist to expand the required curriculum into high quality/high interest instructional plans. Students research topics of study using a variety of protocols to access information. Using the research information, students create quality work in alignment to the Texas State Plan for Education of Gifted/Talent Students. Students present projects to their peers and community members.

Austin Middle School believes that a strong Parent-Teacher-Community partnership is crucial to the success of our students. Parents are encouraged to spend a minimum of ten hours a school year volunteering at school events in order to become involved in their child's educational experience and academic success. The administration, faculty, and Parent Teacher Organization work together closely to provide opportunities for parental involvement and students. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and provide input in order to provide support for academic achievement of our students. Our faculty encourages activities which include community partnerships, such as working with local environmental community organizations, social service organizations, and local universities.

Receiving the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program Award in 2011, catapulted Austin Middle School's status as a top tier school and redefined educational success for the district. Strong schools mean strong communities. The support for our campus through increased community partnerships have made a

tremendous impact. Strong partnerships have allowed us to expand the educational experiences for our students in addition to fostering a sense of community. The campus has been supported with financial donations as well as volunteers desiring to share their areas of expertise with our students. Students have collaborated and participated in programs with individuals from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the city's banking and financial sector, local universities and colleges, the fine arts community, and state level government officials. Recognition for high performance motivates students and staff to continue the trajectory of excellence. Student mobility rates are low and faculty positions are sought after by committed educators. Teachers and students want to be at the campus and proudly wear the AMS badge of honor.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The core curriculum is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and STEM curriculum. This interdisciplinary approach integrates science, technology, engineering and math into the core curriculum giving students an opportunity to participate in real world learning experiences.

Using the English Language Arts (ELA) TEKS as a foundation for literacy, the curriculum provides a study of various forms of literature using the Balanced Literacy framework and the Readers/Writers Workshop approach to promote autonomy and to meet the needs of individual students. Using the gradual release of instruction model, students are explicitly taught literacy skills during mini lessons using modeling and “think-alouds”. Students practice and apply literacy skills in classroom activities such as Literacy Circles, group projects, classroom discussions, and in written responses. Using literary selections from multiple sources, students connect knowledge across the curriculum to build an understanding of cultural diversities and the complexities of our world. Through analysis and synthesis, students develop problem solving skills, fostering a life-long love of reading and writing. Students create various forms of narrative writing, expository writing, persuasive writing, and analytical writing. Every six weeks, we celebrate our love of literature and reading with our school-wide Game On Read activity.

The math TEKS require students to demonstrate their understanding of math concepts in multiple contexts with an emphasis on math processes. In order to provide a deep understanding of math concepts, math instruction begins at the conceptual level and builds to the abstract and is applied to everyday life situations. The math department integrates hands-on activities, cooperative learning, and technology infused lessons to prepare our students for a rigorous high school curriculum. Students practice math concepts and processes using web-based math games and a TEKS aligned math program to build procedural fluency, automaticity with math facts, and problem-solving skills. Math courses in grades 5 through 8 are taught at an advanced level with the opportunity for students to take Algebra I during their eighth grade year for high school credit. The science program is designed to develop scientific literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The goal of science education is to stimulate student curiosity about their immediate surroundings and our universe. The curriculum is TEKS driven using researched-based resources and instructional strategies. Science concepts are taught through scientific investigations with an emphasis on science process standards using cooperative learning and hands-on experiences. Students apply their understanding of science content through models, projects, presentations, and class discussions.

Social studies teachers use the social studies TEKS and big idea Essential Questions to guide the study the history of the United States from the exploration period through the 21st century. The social studies standards also require students to problem solve and use critical thinking skills to construct and understand their knowledge of history, geography, economics, government, citizenship, culture, science and technology. Social studies content is taught and applied using role-play, graphic note-taking, group work, and web-based program using interactive whiteboards.

Included in the AMS mission statement is the promise to immerse students in a community of learners which promotes character and a sense of civic and global responsibility and to prepare students to assume leadership positions in an increasingly scientific and technology-based society. Strategies used to support this goal include integrating opportunities for civic learning into units of study, creating stand-alone lessons, organizing student groups such as Student Council, National Junior Honor Society, No Place for Hate Coalition, and other student groups. In addition, it is an expectation that all students at AMS participate in community service either as an individual or as a part of a group. Providing opportunities for students to participate in the democratic process and apply their decisions to make a difference in the community in which they live is a motivating factor for students. Instructional strategies that increase content knowledge, higher order thinking, social/emotional skills, and knowledge of college preparation are embedded in our core curriculum. Incorporating college and career readiness into the core curriculum provides an avenue for preparing our students for the future. In core courses, students have the opportunity to experience real world project-based lessons. For example, students work with a local community organization that provides field

experiences in the wetlands and other ecosystems in our community. Students are required to work collaboratively to solve problems and find solutions to real life situations in our community.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The art curriculum, based on the TEKS, consists of four levels of art instruction correlating with years of previous student experience: Beginning, Art I, Art II, and Pre-Advanced Placement Art. Core subjects are interwoven seamlessly into daily work and cross-curricular projects. Visual arts courses are open to all students grades five through eight with an opportunity for high school credit. Each course focuses on fundamentals including the elements of art while exploring various media and techniques.

Music at Austin Middle School involves both voice and wind instruments. These Fine Arts electives are open to all students from grades five through eight and free of an auditioned entry. Choir students attend classes every other day throughout the year. Band students attend classes daily throughout the year. Instruction, heavily integrated with technology, includes teacher modeling, music theory culminating with practical application, performance, and composition. While technique is our primary focus, students also learn to read and perform music in accordance with the TEKS. Proficiency of these skills provides an easy transition into high school band and choir classes.

Theatre at Austin Middle School is open to all students. Using the theatre TEKS as a guideline, the students integrate theatre, art & design, writing, social studies and science through daily warm-ups, games, activities and specialized units of study arranged to support concepts currently being learned in core classes. Student leadership also is integral to the theater program. All aspects of performances are student-led. Student participation in theater is not limited to performance on the stage. Student interests and individual strengths are valued by assigning students to back stage roles such as managers, lights, sound, and props.

The physical education TEKS include movement, physical activity, health, and social development. Students are encouraged to set individual goals for improving their physical fitness and health. During each class period, time is provided for participation in strength building activities for upper body strength, abdominal strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance in order to reach their goals. Team and lifetime recreational sports are utilized to teach and practice physical fitness standards. Students in fifth through eighth grade participate in physical education every other day throughout the school year.

Spanish instruction based on the TEKS is offered to fifth through eighth grade students as an elective class every other day throughout the year, culminating in high school credit during the eighth grade year. The Spanish language program focuses both on language construction and cultural aspects of the novice speaker and the native language learner. The Spanish language is acquired by incorporating communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and showing. A web-based computer program is utilized to provide practice and enhance retention of the language.

The debate class is a popular course of study only available to eighth grade students upon application. This class meets every other day throughout the school year. Although students do not receive high school credit, the curriculum was developed with the high school debate TEKS as the foundation. Through this course, students use argumentation and debate to address current events and /or topics in core curriculum. In preparation for debates, students research topics and work with partners to build a case to defend their position. A debate tournament is held twice a year in front of an audience of peers.

All sixth through eighth grade students participate in a year-round engineering elective course which supports the STEM theme and provides a pathway for career exploration. The curriculum is based upon standards set by nationally accredited organization. This program promotes problem solving, critical and creative thinking, collaboration and communication. For example, students use the design process to build and programs models of traffic lights and robotic arms.

The technology TEKS emphasize creativity and innovation; communication and collaboration; research and information fluency; critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making; digital citizenship; and technology operations and concepts. Fifth grade students are enrolled in robotics and in a technology

application course that provides a foundation for their success in future STEM electives and core curriculum. Robotics is also offered as an elective to students in sixth through eighth grade. Students with a passion for robotics participate in robotics competitions. In addition, the technology courses offered to sixth through eighth grade students lead to high school credit in digital graphics, computer science, and video-technology. In these courses, instructional foundation skills are explicitly taught, modeled, and then applied to real world projects such as creating applications, art work, and video presentations.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

As a district, middle teachers and administrators have determined the Galveston Independent School District Secondary Literacy Framework which includes seven strategies to drive instructional practices in all courses. The common instructional framework includes goal setting, collaborative group work, questioning to learn, writing to learn, talking to learn, literacy groups, and scaffolding. Multiple protocols within each of the strategies are used to solidify learning. For example, journal writing, exit tickets, written self-assessments, and note-taking are Writing to Learn protocols used to develop ideas, to increase fluency, and as a formative assessment. Graphic organizers, sentence stems, cue card, and anchor charts are Scaffolding protocols used as temporary supports to assist students in making connections and accomplishing tasks.

Student academic performance is frequently monitored by teachers and administrators. Student classroom performance is evaluated every three weeks. Students are formally assessed with benchmarks in major core subjects at the end of the fourth six-weeks and curriculum based assessments (CBAs) are administered every six weeks. Students take the state assessments and our Limited English Proficient students are given the language proficiency exam to monitor their progress in mastering the English language. Eighth grade students are given the PSAT 8/9 exam in order to monitor college readiness, and the technology proficiency assessment to track their ability to use technology effectively. All students are assessed three times a year (beginning, middle, end) using a universal screener to monitor their progress in math and reading. All of this data is used to track each individual student's progress. In addition to formal test data, teachers use formative assessments of classroom instruction to assist in determining student needs.

Computer software is used to disaggregate this data in order to provide immediate and accurate feedback to teachers and administrators regarding student performance. This data is used to monitor individual students as well as sub-populations to ensure that all student groups are receiving a fair and equitable education. Sub-populations that shows scores with ten percentage points or more below the all students group are addressed by determining which individual students within the sub-population need assistance. During department meetings each six weeks and weekly grade level meetings, teachers use current assessment data to identify these specific students who are struggling academically and discuss ways to help individual students improve their academic performance. Students who need extra assistance are grouped to receive individualized instruction on the specific TEKS or objectives in which they have demonstrated a need for improvement. Teachers also use this information to determine which research based academic materials will be used to provide extra instruction as well as differentiated instruction in the classroom to improve student performance. If a student's performance does not improve then the student is referred to the Response to Intervention team where a formal intervention plan is devised to help the student improve academically.

Student success is closely monitored, and the intervention plan is tweaked as needed to ensure student success. Parental involvement is key to student success; therefore, parents are included in the decision making process regarding their child's academic development.

In order to provide additional instructional time for students during the school day, an Academic Prep class is scheduled for every student. At this time, students to receive this specific instruction based on their individual needs. Students may receive small group instruction to improve learning in core subject areas a few days a week and spend the rest of the time exploring interests through project based learning. Grouping for additional assistance during Academic Prep is flexible. As students acquire needed academic skills, they are assigned to spend more time on individual projects during Academic Prep class. Students who have mastered the core curriculum are provided the opportunity to explore challenging topics during this time.

The goal of this course is to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to fill the instructional gaps, attend to their social/emotional needs, and provide enriching experiences above and beyond the core curriculum. Academic Prep allows all students to receive extra academic support according to their academic needs whether it is providing struggling students the opportunity to receive extra academic support or providing other students the opportunity to explore ideas of personal interest through project based learning.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

From its inception, AMS was created to be an innovative and game changing educational experience for students on Galveston Island so naturally the culture would need to address academic, social, and emotional growth.

Academic growth is supported by setting high standards, understanding the needs of diverse learners, and creating an environment where students from all academic backgrounds can be successful. All students are enrolled in advanced courses, and it is an expectation that all students maintain at least an 80 average in all classes. Students dropping below this standard are provided additional support before or after school and during teacher conference periods.

Social growth is prioritized as highly as academic growth. Students begin each day with messages that emphasize the importance of connection, teamwork, and collaboration. Although the individualization of students is important, students are also taught to value the group as a whole. The development of a social contract outlining what is expected of an AMS student in the classroom is important in assisting students in obtaining the “soft skills” that are necessary for personal, social, academic, and professional success. Students have opportunities to work together in academic subjects, sporting events, fine arts programs, and school and community sponsored clubs and activities. The belief is that the skills and insight that the students gain at school should be used to positively impact the community and beyond.

Students move from preadolescence stage to adolescence stage during the middle school years so it is imperative that emotional growth is considered in understanding and setting goals and expectations for our students. The school counselor and faculty are cognizant that as students mature and develop, they will need the freedom to explore who they are and to express emotions in a healthy and productive way. Supports for emotional growth include individual counseling, conflict resolution sessions, lessons on current topics that concern middle school students such as bullying, sexting, and how to get help in difficult situations.

Teachers are given a great degree of autonomy to create exciting and innovative lessons. They are regarded as respected educators and encouraged to think outside of the box to create lessons. The creativity of teachers is essential to the success of the campus. Feedback from teachers is also highly valued and considered in campus planning. AMS supports the needs and development of teachers by encouraging teachers to continuously gain additional knowledge and skills. Teachers are given professional days for planning, lesson development and professional learning every grading period.

AMS believes that addressing the learning needs of students and teachers provides a positive environment for the academic, social and emotional growth which in turn creates synergy for the campus as a whole.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

AMS engages parents, families, and community members in a variety of ways and understands the importance of parental engagement. Upon enrollment on our campus, parents are encouraged to participate in their child’s education in the form of volunteerism and in support of our policies and procedures. We respect the individual talents and skills that our parents and community have to offer. Parents and community members can often be found sharing their expertise by assisting the band director in rehearsals, judging science fairs, guest speaking in classrooms, and coordinating communication avenues. As a celebration of their engagement, we recognize parents every six weeks at our Breakfast of Champions ceremony. Parents are awarded publicly for their commitment in supporting their child and Austin Middle School.

AMS believes that informed parents are better able to support and make decisions about their child’s education. Parents are invited to participate in book studies with teachers and students via our digital

library and online learning management systems. Topics for studies have included teenage brain development, historical novels based on local history, and defining success for students. These studies encourage collaboration and regular communication and promote the idea of constant evaluation of the use of resources available to the campus.

The campus has an ongoing relationship with a local environmental educational group. The goal of the partnership is for students to participate in artistic ecologically-based field experiences that allow students to experience the Galveston ecosystem first hand while creating water color pieces of art inspired by the natural beauty of the island. Another community based organization focuses on connecting youth to the marine environment and maritime industries providing tours of the bay and the harbor aboard their technologically advanced floating classroom. Coupled with these excursions, students receive land based instruction which includes a tour of their Platinum Award Winning green construction campus. A local university encourages student interaction with the community and research faculty in many ways, but specifically through the SCI Café series in which cutting edge research is discussed in layman's terms and social/community impact is addressed. This partnership has allowed AMS to also hold their own Teen SCI Café in conjunction with this program that features topics more targeted to the teenage population. Specialized grants through the university have also provided scientific equipment for the classrooms. Relationships with families and the community have afforded our students opportunities to learn beyond the four walls of the classroom and explore possible career opportunities.

3. Professional Development:

AMS uses multiple measures to determine professional learning. Staff/student input, the mission of the school, individual teacher needs, TEKS and student performance data assist in determining professional learning for staff members in order to meet the needs of our students. After analyzing data from multiple sources, professional learning activities based on best practices are chosen either for or by our staff. Primary consideration on the content of the professional learning includes academic achievement of our students, the magnet focus and specific needs of our students.

The formats and sources of professional learning varies. Teachers, the principal and other campus support staff participate in book studies, classroom observations, campus and district professional learning communities (PLCs), regional face to face professional development sessions, online courses, and in leading professional learning sessions.

Multiple measures are used to determine the effectiveness of professional development. Teacher feedback, parent feedback, and student success based on report card grades/test scores, student behavior, and student engagement are used to determine effectiveness. Observation data collected by administrators and teachers is also analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the application of professional learning. Professional learning is not viewed as a one dimensional event.

Professional learning includes the expectation of teachers making instructional changes that benefit the students. The principal is also held to the same expectation of making changes in campus practices so that teachers and students benefit. For example, after middle school PLCs, teachers conference with the principal about the instruction that will take place in the classroom. The principal observes instruction in the classroom and provides feedback.

As a campus with one teacher per grade level per subject, providing content specific professional learning communities has been difficult. In order to overcome this obstacle, the principal has collaborated with principals from other middle schools in the district to provide release time one day per six weeks for district-wide professional learning communities that focus on instructional planning. During the instructional planning, teachers use data from past student performance of the TEKS to determine an area of emphasis for their learning. As a result of the district-wide professional learning communities, a change in teacher practice in the classroom has led to improved student achievement. In addition, teachers have reported a positive feeling of collegial support. Structuring opportunities for staff to share ideas and plan for instruction supports the sustainability of knowledge and skills learned from professional development.

4. School Leadership:

The Campus Support Team consists of the principal, assistant principal, the counselor, the curriculum facilitator, the librarian, the social worker, the head custodian, the behavior support liaison, and truancy officer. The members of this team are purposefully included in decision-making in order to promote clear communication and coordination of activities that support a student's education. The role of the principal is to follow the model of the servant leader, to impart vision, and to provide opportunities for others to lead as well. Each week, the principal leads the Campus Support Team to address student and staff needs. The adoption of this practice allows the team to structure an academic environment focused on student and staff growth.

The principal and other members of the team work closely together and share the philosophy of "servant leadership". The team approaches each day secure in our belief that the leadership team is ultimately here to serve the needs of students and staff. Each member of the team is responsible for providing avenues for all stakeholders to share input for decision-making and providing opportunities for each staff member to serve as leaders on committees, on grade level and department teams, and as student group sponsors. Through service to the students and staff, relationships are honored, and others are empowered to lead.

Not only does the team look to the staff to participate in leadership opportunities, we encourage our students to serve as leaders through group/club membership in the school and in the community. We look to our students to provide feedback from the students' point of view about the daily operations of our campus. Because our leadership philosophy is developed around the concept of service, the information gathered from our students is used to assess the various policies and programs that directly impact our students. An additional benefit to listening to student voice is that we are able to model servant leadership by showing students that their beliefs and concerns can positively influence the school environment for all students.

Parents are also viewed as participants in our school leadership framework. A strong parent teacher organization and booster clubs are utilized to assist in the two-way communication systems. Each year a parent volunteers to serve as a grade level coordinator. The grade level coordinator is in charge of disseminating information to other parents via email or social media. During monthly parent teacher organization meetings, the grade level coordinator shares the quality of the communication to parents and reports concerns. This input is used to make decisions for making improvements. AMS believes that this input is vital to student achievement.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

One of the primary goals of Austin Middle School is to improve student achievement – academically/socially/emotionally. One academic practice that has positively affected every student is classroom observations and feedback. The focus is to view teacher observations and planning meetings as an opportunity to collaborate and improve instruction for all students. Teachers are given the opportunity to learn and plan with other teachers across the district in the same grade level and subject matter. This embedded professional development allows teacher to share ideas and collaborate thus improving the instruction for all students. In order to assess the implementation of the instructional plan, teachers are also encouraged to observe each other and provide peer feedback.

Another layer added to the learning is conferencing with the administrators. After planning sessions, teachers bring artifacts to share their unit plan for the upcoming six weeks of instruction. We discuss the big idea of learning for that time period and how to make it relevant for their students. Ideas are shared regarding the student thinking to be evoked and the best practices to achieve student learning. How will we present this information to students in multiple ways to stimulate thinking and aspire success? How will we keep students engaged? Teachers also bring their student data from unit test, CBAs, universal screeners, and classroom grades. This information is dissected and explored to ensure that each student is receiving the academic support that they need. Adjustments are made and academic success is reviewed every three weeks. Ideas are shared and strategies are given to help teachers improve instruction.

The administrators meet frequently with all teachers to explore and discuss all aspects of teaching and learning. Classrooms observations occur frequently and are viewed as a way to provide feedback on teaching practices and classroom management techniques. The administrators aspire to create an environment of trust and sharing of ideas. Teachers must feel valued as they are an integral part to the success of our campus. The goal is to achieve a continuous cycle of improvement where all parties are sharing and learning from this experience. This creates and maintains a positive school climate which will positively impact student learning and achievement. AMS is a community of learners that support each other in the process of achieving and maintaining high expectations for students.