

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name East Early College High School
 (As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 220 North Milby Street
 (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

<u>Houston</u> City	<u>TX</u> State	<u>77003-2708</u> Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)
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County Harris County

Telephone (713) 847-4809
 Web site/URL

Fax

S <http://www.houstonisd.org/EastECH>

E-mail ssquare@houstonisd.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. Grenita Lathan E-mail
 (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) HISDSuperintendent@HoustonISD.org

District Name Houston ISD Tel. (713) 556-6000

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. Rhonda Skillern-Jones
 (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 2018 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 2012 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: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
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 (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 188 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 41 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 50 High schools
 - 5 K-12 schools
- 284 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
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 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	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	56	64	120
10	67	68	135
11	55	65	120
12 or higher	36	69	105
Total Students	214	266	480

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 3 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 94 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 1 % 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 2016 – 2017 school year: <01%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

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

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	4
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	4
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	485
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	<.01
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	<01

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
8 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):
English, Farsi (Persian), Ibo/Igbo, Spanish, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 88 %
Total number students who qualify: 420

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.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>0</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
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 including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	17
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	0

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 28:1

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

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	99%	99%

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 2017.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	104
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	94%
Enrolled in a community college	2%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	4%

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. 2012

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

Prepare underrepresented populations for a successful college experience through increasing rigor, developing supportive relationships, and showing the relevance of knowledge to real life experiences. We strive to graduate all incoming freshmen in four years with not only the advanced high school diploma but also with up to 60 hours of college credit.

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

Houston Independent School District manages all magnet applications. The district offers a range of thematic educational choices for grades K-12. Each program's enriched curriculum centers on a specialized theme that meets students' diverse needs and magnet programs seek to draw a diverse student body from throughout the city. Students are selected for this program based on the district magnet program guidelines and matrix score and are then placed into the selection lottery where an accepted list and wait lists are created. An application takes about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All lottery sessions are held at Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center by the Office of School Choice. Lottery results are not final until approved by the Office of School Choice. East ECHS accepts between 120-130 freshmen each year.

PART III – SUMMARY

East Early College High School is situated in one of the oldest neighborhoods in the Houston area, the East End. This neighborhood was among the first founded and settled in the city of Houston, and has been the home of several immigrant groups in succession. Currently, the East End is populated by mostly Hispanic residents and is undergoing some revitalization and gentrification. Most students who choose East ECHS come from the immediate area and are typically the first generation in their family to earn a college degree, or even a high school diploma. Many families struggle financially resulting in several students securing employment to help their parents provide for their families.

East ECHS opened in August of 2006 on the campus of Houston Community College-Southeast, in four classrooms on the third floor of the Angela Morales Building. The new campus, named Leonel Castillo, was built in 2009-2010 a few miles closer to downtown Houston. A year later, Houston Community College's new building, named Felix Fraga, was also complete. Although the school has been in existence for a little over ten years, notable traditions have been established, making it a top choice for students. Notable traditions include summer bridge camp for incoming freshmen, a rose ceremony for graduating seniors, and senior summit to showcase service learning projects.

Most students who attend East ECHS come from families with limited English skills and limited knowledge of the American education system. Although some students may speak English fluently, they do not speak it with a rich vocabulary that is gained through hearing English spoken at home and throughout their community. Many students have parents who know and understand the value of obtaining a college degree, but do not have the knowhow or experience to navigate the process. Also, they do not have the funds to spend on expensive test preparation programs that many more affluent families are able to invest in.

East Early College High School is dedicated to preparing all students for a successful college experience by graduating all incoming freshmen in four years, with not only the advanced high school diploma, but also with up to 60 hours of college. The school's purpose is to follow the early college philosophy of rigor, relevance, and relationships. East ECHS teachers focus on teaching the whole child, ensuring social and emotional needs of students are met. East ECHS's small school size allows for smaller class sizes, attention to social and emotional needs, and attention to academic needs, which translate to more direct learning for students. Students are offered many extracurricular activities such as debate, Robotics-STEM, Student Council, National Honor Society, sports, and Literacy Magazine. College field trips serve as an essential experience for students to explore college life outside of the community college. Dedicated teachers and staff work to provide students with the necessary supplies, clothing, and nutrition needed to maximize the learning process. Key to the school's success is the determination to provide students with the same opportunities provided by more affluent schools, and by larger more comprehensive high schools. College is often a dream for many students as they struggle to find balance between school and supporting their families or caring for younger siblings.

Students at East ECHS are fully integrated into the college community at the Felix Fraga campus. They are encouraged and invited to attend activities on campus and they are eligible for admission into honor societies and organizations. These immersions and interactions help support the 92-100% associate degree completion rate which is the highest in the district, and one of the highest in the country among Early Colleges. Each year, students are asked to serve at least 25 hours of community service. This culminates in a senior project that involves a mentor from an organization and providing a minimum of 25 hours of service while also providing a donation. Students also reflect on their project and what they learn from working with their mentor and with the organization. Through these service-learning projects, students become aware of community resources for their families, and as a result their families become more engaged with the community. Furthermore, students who require additional encouragement to ensure successful completion of college degree are provided structured interventions for one year after graduating from East ECHS to fulfill the school's mission.

East Early College High School is a previous recipient of the National Blue Ribbon Award. This recognition instilled a greater sense of pride in students, faculty, and community. The recognition from this prestigious

award served to support the revitalization of the East End neighborhood. Graduating seniors are required to submit community service projects, which directly contribute to revitalizing the area. The community impact from the senior projects, coupled with the publicity from being a previous National Blue Ribbon award recipient, have made the neighborhood more desirable. Additionally, recognition from this award has been leveraged to increase student access to scholarships and to top-tier institutions. School based programs and mentors offer students support with identifying institutions that offer the least financial burden and the most support.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

As part of Houston ISD, teachers in East ECHS follow district-approved guides to ensure the lessons are in alignment with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). As an Early College, tremendous effort is exerted to address the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) to ensure students are ready for their college courses. To facilitate the alignment, cores subjects have pacing guides, and scope and sequence documents. In addition, East ECHS uses “master courses” available in the district online Learning Management System (LMS), with activities, resources, and videos. Said master courses are likewise aligned to the subject TEKS, allowing teachers to differentiate lessons accordingly and provide students with supplementary access to the core curriculum.

Some of the most important skills to needed to succeed as a long-term learner are critical thinking, reading and writing. East ECHS’s English Language Arts (ELA) department provides students with multiple opportunities to improve those skills. ELA teachers promote reading of a variety of texts selected to address each individual student’s Lexile level, and cooperate with other learning areas to offer texts related to all disciplines. For example, English II students are expected to read one non-fiction science book per semester accompanied by an essay. The ELA teachers also differentiate content with multiple activities where students express themselves in other ways than a written assignment, such as presentations, videos, and posters, using in-depth data collected from the District Level Assessments (DLAs), Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exam, and formative assessments. The goal is for data to drive instructional decisions. Struggling students are identified early in the school year though diagnostic tests, and are provided extra tutorials after school and Saturdays. They also take reinforcement classes, and participate in online activities to cover gaps in their learning and increase their reading and writing skills for the collegiate level.

East ECHS’s curriculum emphasizes the STEM disciplines. Therefore, mathematics is extremely important. Math curriculum addresses the TEKS by connecting mathematics to the real world with connections to other areas of knowledge. Also, students are provided with state of the art resources and hands-on activities to access, practice, and ultimately learn the content. Teachers in the math department use online tools not only to enrich the content, but also to close knowledge gaps in the foundation skills identified from diagnostic tests, and provide interventions to address misconceptions detected in the formative assessments. As in ELA classes, students requiring extra assistance are also identified early in the school year, and provided with extra support with tutorials, double-block classes, and online reinforcement activities. The school also connects the learning of math with other activities in the science and engineering classes. Math learning is also reinforced in the after-school STEM club, were students are engaged in robotics, engineering, and science competitions. Here, they apply their math skills to real life situations.

Social Studies courses promote higher level skills and critical thinking while addressing the TEKS. Each year, students compete in History Bowl, a collaborative event that engages students to think critically while competing against other Early Colleges in the district. Social studies teachers work collaboratively to ensure students seamlessly transition from ninth grade to senior year. Government and economic systems are taught with an emphasis on the American systems and how they compare to the world. Time is also spent on civic responsibility; the importance of engaging the government through the simple act of voting. In addition to mastering the course content, students also learn perseverance in struggling with tough standards, to never be satisfied with the minimum, to find their best learning style, and to understand that most of their limitations are self-imposed.

The Science department uses a hands-on, inquiry based approach to enhance the learning of the TEKS and develop the CCRS skills essential to succeed in college. The lessons follow the 5-E cycle, where students have multiple opportunities to discover and apply the content. Biology students are expected to connect their academic learning and the TEKS to real life situations, and generate presentations where they apply what they learned. Chemistry students have a performance part in their tests where they must follow the scientific method to design a lab experiment, collect and analyze data from the lab, and write conclusions. Physics students are engaged in labs and learning stations that connect the topics to real life events, as well as use

state-of-the-art computer lab equipment to measure and analyze data, which relates to the math skills acquired in the math subjects. Environmental classes go to field trips outdoors to collect samples and analyze different ecosystems.

East ECHS teachers are tasked with supporting students with the acquisition of the skills that will allow them to succeed in college (as reflected in the alignment of the curriculum with Texas CRS), as well as providing students with real college classes during their four years in the school. The school, in coordination with higher education institutions in Houston and beyond, provide dual credit classes in all content areas that students can take towards their associate's degree. Students who compete in different clubs and organizations, such as Debate or Robotics, are expected to apply learning to real word situations.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to core content areas, students at East ECHS are required to earn credits in physical education, fine arts, foreign language, health, and other electives. Students can deepen their knowledge in other curriculum areas by engaging in school sponsored clubs and organizations.

All students take advantage of the courses offered at Houston Community College (HCC) in order to fulfill the fine arts state graduation requirement. These classes include music, art, and drama. All fine arts classes are aligned to the TEKS and empower students to explore realities, relationships, and ideas. This is done through active learning, critical thinking, and innovative problem solving. The fine arts on the campus consists of Dance, Choir, Piano, and AP Music Theory. Beginning classes in each provide fundamentals of the subjects and develops performance skills. Dance and Choir are two of the most popular classes. All students participate in one or more of these classes each year. Approximately 25% of the students choose to continue beyond the state requirement. They are open to all grade levels.

Physical education (PE) and health education courses consist of Coed PE and Dual Credit Health. Each student participates in PE and Health to fulfill the state graduation requirements. Both of these courses are fully aligned to the state standards (TEKS). PE provides the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to a physically-active lifestyle. PE classes consist of cardio, sports, and weight lifting. In health classes, students develop skills that will make them health-literate adults while gaining a deeper understanding of the knowledge and behaviors they use to safeguard their health. About 25% of our students continue to participate in PE beyond the graduation requirement, especially athletes who participate in team sports.

Languages Other Than English courses are provided by HCC. For instance, students are able to take Spanish I, II, and III in dual credit classes. In addition, fluent and native speakers are encouraged to take the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam provided each year to freshmen and sophomore students. This test, if passed with a three or higher, allows students to receive college credit for Spanish I and II which allows them to also fulfill the high school graduation requirement of two years of the same language other than English or go on to take more advanced language courses through the dual credit program at HCC. Each Spanish course is aligned to the state standards (TEKS). Through language courses, students gain an understanding of two basic aspects of human existence: the nature of communication and the complexity of culture. In addition, students become aware of multiple perspectives and means of expression, which lead to an appreciation for differences and diversity. These courses are open to all students.

Technology courses consist of Business Information Management (BIM) and dual credit POFI 1301 which is offered through HCC. The CTE classes are aligned to the state standards (TEKS). BIM instruction provides content aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills for students to further their education and succeed in current or emerging professions. Through these classes, students are encouraged to participate in extended learning experiences such as career and technical student organizations and other leadership or extracurricular organizations. These classes provide students the opportunity to work with Microsoft Word and Excel and receive industry certifications in both. They also work on office documents and processes that make them more marketable in their careers. Students who are interested in pursuing additional certifications are provided opportunities to do so. Teachers encourage students to pursue more college classes such as drafting and accounting at the college level to further their

understanding and career goals. All students are offered the opportunity and encouraged to take a technology class. Approximately 20% of our students take one or more of the classes offered.

Other elective credits can be earned by taking additional courses for endorsement graduation requirements, but should be concentrated in one area to satisfy those required by the state of Texas. For instance, students who are interested in pursuing a degree in the arts, take additional courses in the arts to satisfy elective graduation requirements. These courses include Art Appreciation and Music Appreciation. Students interested in STEM degrees or career fields can take additional math, science, or engineering courses to acquire STEM endorsement. Many students also take additional course in behavioral sciences and social studies to help fulfill endorsements.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Even though East ECHS is an early college high school, not all students arrive ready for the demands placed upon them in an environment of intensive, rigorous learning, or with mastery of the prerequisite standards. The goals set for students are high. For these reasons, a wide variety of instructional strategies are used to insure students' academic success now and into the future. East ECHS prepares students for graduation from high school, entrance into college, and beyond.

With the support of HISD, East ECHS makes use of a wide variety of technology in meeting the needs and demands of students in a 21st century world. All students are provided with a laptop computer, loaded with a variety of productivity and educative software to insure their familiarity and comfort with this important tool, regardless of their economic status. This important leveling of the proverbial playing field provides students of all backgrounds and experiences the opportunity to grow beyond what they themselves may have dreamed is possible. Most of the students are Title 1 eligible and might not have the opportunity to work with advanced technology and software if not provided. Without this service, many of them would be ill prepared for the future. Additionally, many of the supports used to reinforce, differentiate, and review instruction are provided via software on student laptops

As a data-driven school, we modify our instruction according to the students' needs. For math and English, a universal screener tool is utilized, the Beginning of the Year Assessment, early in the semester to identify students with gaps in their skills. Then, students are divided into tiers, create different interventions, and their progress is tracked with online tools, common assessments, and adaptive learning tools. In other areas, common assessments are employed to generate reports on the TEKS to assist teachers with differentiation of instruction with activities that will address those said skills.

However, East ECHS does not depend solely upon technology for student introduction to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, but rather the interaction created within the give and take of explicit and direct instruction. All teachers and professors utilize some form of this within their instruction. Most often this will take the form of "I do, we do, you do," in which the teacher introduces a concept or idea, gives an example or demonstration, then works individually or in groups to practice the concept or idea. Finally, students demonstrate understanding by using the idea or concept on their own or in a small group. In science and math classes, this problem-based learning, usually in small groups, is a significant part of the curriculum.

To meet the challenges encountered by East ECHS with the differences in preparedness of students, faculty and staff are committed to expanding the methods and efforts put into maintaining high standards and goals. For this reason, most of the teachers, even in non-core subjects, offer tutorial opportunities to students before school, after school, and on Saturdays. Tutorials are not limited to students who are struggling academically. Students who are performing above grade level also receive additional supports to complete tasks that require higher-level thinking skills. Students are presented with options to choose from more difficult texts, opportunities to integrate technology into presentations, and project based learning opportunities.

As noted earlier, East ECHS has a peer to peer tutoring/mentoring program in which older students work with younger students to insure academic success. Additionally, our faculty and administrators work with

students upon request irrespective of assignment. This flexibility on the part of East ECHS team maximizes benefits to students whose schedules may not fit the tutorials times available with their teacher of record.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

East ECHS motivates and values its faculty throughout the school year. The Sunshine Committee, or social committee, recognizes all teacher's birthdays with cards through email to everyone on campus. This includes celebrations for important life events, such as wedding and baby showers. Teacher Appreciation Week is a time to celebrate teachers with gifts and special recognition for their commitment to our school and students. Special bowling nights are set up by the principal to thank the faculty as well as a great camaraderie between teachers. Monthly meetings and open-door policy with our administration has made communications a vital part of our teachers feel productive and valued.

To ensure incoming student success, particularly for ninth grade scholars, students participate in a week-long bridge camp at East ECHS. Throughout the week topics are introduced to both parents and students, including mini lessons on academic success, social awareness, community involvement, and college readiness. The bridge camp not only prepares students for the level of rigor associated with college-level readiness but also provides multiple opportunities for the students to socialize via team building activities and restorative circles with the National Honors Society and Student Council. As students participate in the camp, the parents of incoming students also attend informational sessions on volunteerism in which they are encouraged to sign up to volunteer at upcoming events such as the Field Day, Literacy Day, Open Mic Night, Noche de Ciencias (Science Night), Homecoming Dance, and the Spring and Fall Festival.

Grade level orientations are held to inform parents and students on the campus standards, expectations, and outcomes. Each of the grade level orientations discuss various topics that are aligned and based on the grade level needs. The meeting provides parents an opportunity to interact with the grade level dean, faculty, and staff as well as gather information that ensures the students' success at East ECHS. During orientation the parents are advised on how to navigate the campus website for current events. Similarly, parents are encouraged to connect and follow East ECHS on various social media platforms. As the year progresses, the grade level dean meets regularly with parents, students, and teachers of the students who face particular challenges. The parent conferences include dialogue about the academic standing, behavior, attendance matters, and student strengths.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Parent, student, and community involvement begins months prior to the student enrolling into East Early College High School. Prior to acceptance, parents and students of all incoming eight graders have an opportunity to tour the campus during school hours. The magnet coordinator encourages East ECHS student ambassadors to conduct the tours and provide student perspective to all attendees. The campus tours allow students and parents to observe instruction, interact with current students, observe transitions, and meet with faculty and staff.

The role that parents play on campus stems from building strong rapport and relationships with the families from the beginning of the school year. Leaders maintain the lines of communication in the spirit of transparency. Data as it relates to school's performance and accountability is shared on school's website. Members of the school's Site-Based Decision-Making Committee meet throughout year to discuss areas of need. Additionally, each year parents and community members are provided opportunities to provide input to the school's published School Improvement Plan. The campus social media platforms are updated constantly. Moreover, when messages are communicated via phone, they are transmitted in both Spanish and English. The Parent Teacher Organization meets monthly. In addition, East ECHS host "Coffee with the Principal" and "Tea with the Team," to address parent concerns as well as inform parents on campus happenings. To accommodate working parents, leaders strategically conduct scheduled parent meetings twice a day; morning and afternoon. Special guests from HCC are invited to attend meetings to discuss university requirements, networking, and scholarship opportunities. Parents remain informed of students' academic standing through communications from teachers, grade level chairperson, and access to the online gradebook for each teacher.

The commitment to community service is evident as the students at East ECHS often exceed the 25-hour volunteer requirement set by the grade level deans. At East ECHS, the development of student's community advocacy is equally as important as academic success. The students conduct various community services on and off campus. For example, the Humane Society encourages the students to maintain the integrity of the community by keeping it free of trash. Students, parents, and community members gather, and in unity walk the community picking up debris. Graduating seniors, develop, plan, and implement a senior project. The purpose of the senior project is to encourage students to seek solutions to an observed dilemma in the community. The students make connections with various entities, such as local food banks, senior citizen centers, community gardening centers, churches, thrift stores, and government agencies. It is through the projects and volunteers that the community gets involved and becomes invested in the success of students. These connections have established several long-standing partnerships with the school.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development for faculty and staff is focused on student achievement and offered on three levels: school-wide, grade or department level, and individual teacher. Providing teachers and administrators with three levels of professional development maximizes impact to student achievement by allowing for implementation of school-wide initiatives while meeting the needs of individual teachers. Good instruction is contingent on high-quality faculty and administrative professional development.

As an early college high school, the primary focus is preparing students to successfully take dual credit, AP classes, and courses at the community college. In addition to high achieving students, East ECHS has students who struggle or are not quite prepared for the level of rigor and work needed and thus attention is required to specialize instruction that scaffolds content to ensure all students learn the content quickly, keeping them on track for their associate's degree. These challenges require the staff to be up to date on current teaching methods, upper level content, and, best practices for bridging student gaps. Since the primary focus is college readiness, all teachers train in National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI), for either AP or Pre-AP teachers and Rice University Advanced Placement Institute College Board trainings throughout the year and in the summer. These are week long training opportunities further strengthen the teacher's ability to reach their students with relevant content necessary for an early college high school. Each summer, ECHS teachers are asked to participate and present at the Middle College National Consortium (NMC).

Department or grade-level professional development is determined in collaboration with the dean and department. Grade level teams meet once each week to review assessment data across content areas, identify students who require intervention, develop intervention plans, and to plan upcoming lessons. Project-based learning in lower grade levels fosters opportunities for students to make connections among content areas while applying learnings in core content areas to real life examples. Additional professional development is identified at the individual teacher level to address different variations of experience, required subject matter knowledge, and teacher preferences.

Teachers are exposed to numerous instructional technology tools and encouraged to select at least three for professional development. At least one instructional technology tool must be one that is being implemented by the teacher for the first time to expand the teacher's instructional toolkit. To strengthen their instructional technology toolkit, teachers are encouraged to take advantage of the principal, deans, or campus instructional technologist to develop skills.

4. School Leadership:

The administrative team consists of a principal and two deans. The philosophy of East Early College's leadership team is to provide a small, personalized learning community that prepares first generation, college bound students for global success through a challenging, rigorous program of study focused on academic rigor, based on relevance to the students' world, and delivered in a safe climate of mutual trust and respect. The leadership team looks to expand opportunities and to remove barriers for all students with

a focus on student achievement and to ensure that all students graduate with an associate's degree in Arts or Sciences. Teachers and students are empowered to engage in opportunities to serve in leadership capacities and engage in opportunities to self-advocate.

Throughout the school year, the administration, in collaboration with teacher leaders, develop lessons for advocacy that encourage the growth and development of students on many levels including academic, personal, social, emotional, and creative. One of the first lessons is the development of a mission statement and yearly goals. The students work together to craft a mission statement in their own words that is then posted within the classroom for the remainder of the year. This process of personalization of something so fundamental in guiding decisions throughout the year develops a deep sense of student ownership. Additionally, when redirection is required, the administrators refer to individual goals set by students.

Communication among stakeholders is key via school website, social media accounts, and meetings. Furthermore, the administrative team attends events to show support for sports, performances, competitions, and other events that involve students. Students and teachers are recognized for their efforts. The principal is intentional about seeking input from students, parents, and teachers. The principal and deans are engaged with students when they are not in class. Students and teachers complete surveys throughout school year to provide the administrative team with information before decisions are made. Teachers are provided many opportunities to join leadership teams. Staff meetings are hosted by teachers in their classroom, facilitating team-building and collaboration for staff.

The Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) of East ECHS is comprised of elected and designated adults who develop school improvement guidelines with the input of others. The committee consists of the principal, dean, teachers, paraprofessional staff, parents, business partners, and community members and is chaired by the principal. Teachers are elected to a two-year term of service. The main goal of the SDMC is to work together on the School Improvement Plan, which is revised yearly based on campus and student instructional needs.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Addressing the emotional and social needs of East ECHS students is a key component of the success of the school. Through numerous activities and interpersonal relationships, the faculty, support staff, administration, and students themselves strive to maintain a safe, healthy, and nurturing atmosphere that encourages student growth and development. The students are empowered to organize school-wide events, clubs, and organizations that support all aspects of their well-being. Through the desire of the students and the support of the staff, many of these activities and organizations form current events and events planned and sustained throughout the future, thus providing an ongoing legacy of support for each new group of students entering the school.

The addition of special set aside days such as Fall Festival Day, Literacy Day, Field Day, and Mental Health Day provide opportunities throughout the year for the students and staff to bond and reinforce those personal relationships that are the backbone of the school's success. Every semester, students self-select clubs or organizations they wish to participate in during time within the school day. Whether it is Latin dance, needlecraft, cooking, exploration of the world of anime, robotics, gaming, fitness, debate, Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA), or participation with Literary Magazine, a very popular group on the campus, students are encouraged to interact with other students and staff to expand upon the narrow focus of academics and more fully develop as well-rounded members of a larger community. Students often expand these experiences into after school clubs by partnering with a willing staff sponsor.

Additionally, older students mentor younger students through an organization known as Falcon Ambassadors. Older students who are academically and institutionally successful, post their profiles and younger students can choose a mentor with which they wish to work. This peer to peer tutoring and mentorship has shown to be academically successful for both the mentors and mentees. Finally, as an early college high school with a strong focus on advanced academics, students are supported by advisors and with programs designed to assist them with seeking advanced degrees from top universities. This includes preparing them for the process of applying to college and the interview process. Knowledge of the academic requirements and financial supports increase the possibility of college entrance and completion.