

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):
- 30 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 31 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 31 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 92 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	76	92	168
K	71	50	121
1	68	53	121
2	62	58	120
3	54	63	117
4	71	61	132
5	60	66	126
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	462	443	905

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1 % Asian
 - 1 % Black or African American
 - 96 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 2 % 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: 4%

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	13
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	32
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	858
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 45 %
407 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 90 %
Total number students who qualify: 817

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
25 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>4</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>1</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>2</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>11</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>3</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: 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	6
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	26
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	3
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	17
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 29:1

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%	97%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

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

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

Yes No

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

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

Rewriting the story of underprivileged communities by creating a positive learning environment that equips students with the academic, social, and leadership skills that are required to succeed in college and the global society.

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

IDEA Public Schools holds a random lottery to ensure equal access for all applicants. IDEA’s Lottery is held in late January and families are notified of the outcome via email and phone. Families may apply to multiple IDEA schools, and rank campuses by preference. To apply, the child must be at least four years of age (for Pre-K lottery) or five years of age (for kindergarten lottery) on or before September 1st.

To be included in the Lottery, applications must be submitted online, by phone, or at a campus prior to the Lottery date. After the Lottery, IDEA will continue to enroll students on an ongoing basis, as seats are available. If accepted, students must accept their offer online and attend registration events to officially enroll at IDEA. If students are not granted a seat, they will be placed on a wait list for the remainder of the school year in which they are seeking enrollment.

IDEA Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability, and is open to all interested students and families.

PART III – SUMMARY

IDEA Academy Mission (IA Mission) is a pre-Kindergarten to 5th Grade, Title I elementary school serving 905 students located in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. IA Mission is located in the small, primarily Hispanic, low-income community of Mission, Texas, situated about three miles from the United States-Mexico border. More than 95% of students are Mexican-American or Mexican Nationals and 100% are eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program.

IA Mission was founded in 2008 on the belief that, when the adults in the system get it right, each and every child, regardless of circumstance, should receive a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college and citizenship. To that end, IA Mission campus leaders hold each of its 55+ staff members accountable to meeting ambitious goals that drive student learning outcomes and boost academic achievement. With a relentless focus on college, the carefully curated elementary program moves students from teacher-led instruction to a student-driven program while enhancing the individualization of instruction with technology-assisted learning, character education, and extra- and co-curricular activities. The ultimate goal is to design and implement a model that gets students on-grade level in order to lead them to college preparedness.

At IA Mission, there is a “No Excuses” motto for all--beginning with the adults. All staff members are expected to be at school by 7:15 AM—with the drive to execute on a thought-out daily plan, a joyful attitude, and a laser-like focus on student mastery. To this end, 100% of teachers, co-teachers, and administrators convene to discuss student mastery every day. On a daily basis, staff are expected to show student work that represents the most common misconceptions or errors identified in the student learning. Using this evidencedbased approach, teachers reflect on any actions that may have contributed to those challenges, and a develop a re-teach plan to correct the errors--for the next day. At this daily meeting, other staff members, often teachers, offer suggestions to their colleagues. This structure is one of the most effective accountability and support structures at IA Mission. This system ensures each student is accounted for daily and that administrators, teachers, and colleagues are made aware of the staff and students who may need additional support to meet their ambitious goals.

To begin the day, it is a school-wide expectation that homework and planners are checked by teachers, while students eat breakfast and continue with silent sustained reading while listening to classical music after breakfast. By 7:45 AM, students and teachers transition to Morning Meeting where teachers ground each student in the plan for the day ahead, as well as, check-in with each student on a social and emotional level. During Morning Meeting, students share a positive or negative situation they are experiencing and the emotions they are feeling. At IA Mission, students are taught, especially the youngest ones, to use words, such as: anxious, irritated, depressed, drained, elated, hopeful, fulfilled, and mellow. The teacher and students are to listen and respond empathetically in order to help with different strategies to stay (or shift) from that mood. A significant number of IA Mission students have challenging home-life circumstances and often experience situations that would otherwise cause them to be distracted throughout the day. The Morning Meeting structure provides a daily opportunity for students to share their feelings within a safe environment while also learning various coping mechanisms. As a result of this focus on social-emotional intelligence, IA Mission students have improved their ability to express themselves more freely, openly, and honestly. As a school community, IA Mission has seen a decrease in student aggression and can largely attribute that to the focus on social-emotional competencies built in students through, in part, the Morning Meeting routine.

In order to recognize IA Mission students’ accomplishments and create a culture of joy and celebration, each week, students are a part of a school-wide assembly where character skills are taught, words of affirmation are practiced, and student accomplishments, such as: top readers, top mathematicians, significant progress on assessments, and students of the week--are celebrated. Every homeroom selects one student of the week for outstanding character and/or academics, and teachers write an individualized paragraph that outlines why that student was selected. This writing is published every week for parents. Parents often share how proud they are of their children and how the teachers’ words are so meaningful.

IA Mission is incredibly proud of the progress that has been made campus wide over the last few years. However, it is important to note that the more recent successes are not representative of the school's results five years ago. As a result of poor performance on the state assessments, IA Mission was awarded a School Improvement Grant under the Texas Title I Priority Schools program. Through the infusion of this funding and support from the Texas Education Agency, IA Mission underwent an incredible transformation including improving internal structures, some of which will be described throughout this application, that have allowed to the school to experience significant academic increases.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

IA Mission aligns its curriculum to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). For reading, in the lower grades, instructional staff spend a significant amount of time teaching students to read through direct instruction activities that include building phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, sounding out of words, word recognition, vocabulary, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. IA Mission consistently ensures the integration of all literacy components, and uses a comprehensive, TEKS-aligned balanced literacy approach that involves the integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking with increasing complexity every day. For example, staff use one before, one during, and one after reading and writing strategy with each text. To facilitate speaking and listening, teachers use accountable talk consistently. This involves: speaking in complete sentences and using academic language, justifying answers with textual evidence, connecting to others' comments; and listening to and tracking the speaker. This approach was chosen because it best prepares students for success in college and citizenship.

Although a significant number of students begin the school speaking little to no English and are generally labeled as “English Language Learners” or “Special Education,” the engagement strategies described above have increased the achievement levels of students, including those who speak English as their second language. ELL students acquire language through a program that focuses on academic vocabulary in isolation, in both English and Spanish. Next, key phrases are prioritized; the final stage includes conversational language. Staff members utilize many visuals to expedite ELL student learning.

IA Mission's math program is also aligned to the TEKS. In the upper grades, we use locally created curriculum and Eureka Math because of the manner in which it builds from concrete to abstract understanding. The primary focus in the lower grades has been on direct instruction math builders and helping students understand number patterns, utilize mixed operations, and explain math properties. The mathematical focus in the upper grades involves building skills coupled with developing students' conceptual understanding. The structure of the math classes involves students reviewing foundational content and completing tasks. The goal is to have students solve tasks using two or three methods and order them by sophistication level. This process concludes with a generalized mathematical understanding and discussion. Each class ends the day with an exit ticket, containing between one and three questions, to check for student mastery. Teachers analyze the results of the exit tickets to determine whether any additional re-teach strategies should be incorporated into the next days' plan.

The science content is aligned to the TEKS standards in grades pre-K to 5 and there is a strong focus on properties of matter; force, motion, and energy; Earth's changes; ecosystems; and life cycles. The curriculum approach was selected because of the manner in which it builds content through group collaboration and exploration and hands-on labs. Each year, students visit IDEA Public Schools' Camp Rio to engage in a high-quality outdoor educational experience that enhances classroom learning. Students spend the day outside exploring the world around them. Specifically, they learn to identify plants and animals, acquire skills in various outdoor team-building activities, while developing a respect for the environment, nature, and wildlife.

For Social Studies (SS) and civic learning, IA Mission embeds SS TEKS with texts and activities into the Reading curriculum. The SS approach was selected because of the manner in which it embeds texts with historical significance and focuses on geographical, political, religious, cultural, and economic characteristics. At IA Mission, students are presented with various activities or opportunities that center around local, national, and international events. For example, students have read about the history of Pakistan and gender inequality around the world through the novel, *I Am Malala*. A few recent activities include learning about hunger and homelessness through active participation in a holiday food drive, and helping with disaster relief for hurricane victims. Students learn about civic engagement by volunteering their time at nursing homes and on one of IDEA's farms harvesting fresh vegetables and produce. Students learn about citizenry by participating in the student-led Phoenix Patrol comprised of a group of students across grade levels responsible for monitoring restrooms, uniforms, and general student safety.

IA Mission began offering half-day pre-K to our community in August 2016. The focus of the academic program is on language acquisition, literacy skills (e.g., text features and blending/segmenting), and mathematical development (e.g., counting, comparing, positions, and patterns). Additionally, social development is an integral component of the pre-K program. IA Mission has built in structures to help students develop self-control, empathy, and independence. Daily, students practice expressing emotions using words. To help with socialization process, pre-K students are involved in school-wide assemblies and parades. The first pre-K cohort entered in the 2017-2018 school year. In the nationally normed Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment, the cohort's oral reading fluency levels are at an unprecedented high and over 90% of students are leaving kindergarten reading at grade level. These results apply to all students, including those who speak a language that is different from English.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

IA Mission complements the students' academic and social experience with physical education (PE), the arts, technology, and structured library systems. Significant emphasis is placed on TEKS-aligned physical education standards. PE, health, and nutrition play a more prominent part of the school culture in order to help students combat the statistics of living in one of the most obese counties in the US. All students in grades kindergarten to 5th have structured 30-minute recess daily with moderate physical activity. Additionally, first to fifth grade have PE between 180 to 270 minutes per week. The PE curriculum includes: healthy eating, exercise, and injury prevention.

Students spend at least 50% of PE participating in moderate to vigorous physical activity, and are evaluated twice a year using the Fitness Gram (FG) to assess performance in the Healthy Fitness Zone. Students wear wrist-only heart rate monitors, allowing coaches to track and measure results instantaneously. The goal is to have students reach 140 beats per minutes (BPM) during PE. The school will likely end the school year with the best data yet. In 2015-2016, IA Mission had 37.5% of students passing the FG; in 2016-2017, it increased to 73.4%; this year, the school is projected to hit 80%. Across the school district, approximately 47% of children are overweight. However, at IA Mission, 23.6% of students are overweight and the school is working to decrease that.

Students are able to participate and compete with other schools across the district in different after-school sports. The most popular include: soccer, basketball, tee-ball, and flag football. Additionally, IA Mission exposes students to robust after school programming including, cheerleading, dance, tumbling, art, and mandala coloring. Clubs are open to all students.

For cheerleading, students attend a local gym to learn cheer, dance, and tumbling. They also attend leadership classes and participate in community service. Cheerleaders show support for their classmates at school-wide events, and compete at the local and national level. Historically, they have earned 1st or 2nd place in their division.

In addition to sports, nutrition education that encourages maintenance of healthy eating has also been a key focus. To model this, the School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Care, and Summer Feeding Program exceed USDA national standards and offer a variety of fresh foods and vegetables, and to ensure snacks make a positive contribution to the children's diet and health, IA Mission emphasizes serving fresh fruits and vegetables as the primary snack and water as the primary beverage.

TEKS-aligned art is integrated into classes. Specifically, all students utilize the elements of art—including the usage of a variety of lines, shapes, colors, textures, and forms. It is common to see students brainstorming ideas and internalizing concepts through drawings and pictures.

Personalized, cutting edge technology and TEKS-aligned technology application standards ensure all students perform at or above grade. All classrooms are equipped with two computers and smart boards in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classrooms. Students practice skills and research information. The smart boards have allowed teachers to be more efficient and effective with in-class instruction. Teachers receive instantaneous feedback on student responses and can act quickly, as a result.

Additionally, first to fifth grade students attend classes in the computer labs for a total of 180 to 270 minutes per week. The students work on programs that focus on critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Students use virtual environments to solve problems and explore issues. During class, students are taught to perform basic software application functions, and use various search strategies.

The library media program provides a balanced, carefully selected, and systematically organized collection of print resources that are sufficient to meet students' needs in all subject areas and that are continuously monitored for currency and relevancy. IA Mission participates in local, state, and national reading initiatives that encourage learners to read for understanding and enjoyment. For example, during breakfast, at home, and after independent work completion, students read. Many scholars read while they wait to transition classes. Over 30% of students consistently read over one million words each year.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

The instructional approaches and built-in structures used to measure the school's effectiveness have been incredibly instrumental in helping close performance gaps. Before the start of each school year, the team uses a variety of assessment data to analyze each student's academic results. In the lower grades, we review norm-referenced test results to assess early reading skills, and learn what students already know and what they are ready to learn next. For those students who are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) is utilized to check progress needed in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. End-of-year mastery results and locally created assessment data also help us identify the students who will need additional urgent intervention at the start of the school year, and who would benefit from strategic grouping.

IA Mission has an achievement gap between the test results of all students and special education students. Therefore, the criteria described above is used to determine and identify these students and additional students who will participate in campus-wide intervention, Critical Student Intervention (CSI). As a result, IA Mission has a scheduled intervention time that allows for campus interventionists to provide specific targeted lessons for small group instruction. These lessons are designed to target the needs of each individual student while also challenging them to achieve ambitious goals. Teachers provide lessons that include a myriad of instructional strategies to ensure they scaffold the learning and bridge the gaps. Teachers use hands-on activities, manipulatives, games, role plays, interactive literary discussions, chants, anchor charts, and ongoing discussions so that students make connections to real world experiences.

For the upper grades, the school also utilizes similar assessments and, additionally, review the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) results from the previous year to understand the grade level performance and assessment standards that need attention. That said, the staff know that assessment data, while very telling and helpful, only provide part of the student's story. For this reason, each teacher is asked to provide information about each child, beyond test scores, in understanding each child's situation. Information on the home life, content of parent communication throughout the year, any discipline infractions, and the character report card of each child are included at the closeout of each school year. This information is used to provide context for each child, not to label or lower the expectations for any student, and to assess the kinds of additional support each child will need to achieve at his/her highest potential the following school year.

At the lower grades, students are grouped at the start of the year based on reading results. Teachers have been able to expedite learning when all students are struggling with similar objectives. That said, the groupings are incredibly flexible and many are changed on a weekly basis to reflect data for the week. Many students, especially those who are accelerating at a faster pace, "jump" lessons to respond to data for the week. The school has students who are in 1st grade, but are being taught 2nd grade objectives, and, conversely, students in 1st grade who are focusing on kindergarten objectives, for example. This allows for students with similar levels to work together and challenge one another during literary discussions and projects. The flexibility and ongoing process of regrouping students as they reach their goals is one way to ensure that each and every student develops to their fullest potential and that they have mastered specific skills. By third grade, students are mostly heterogeneously grouped. There is one accelerated group in

grades 3rd-5th that encompasses many enrichment activities. That said, teachers aggressively monitor student work daily. When students are struggling, teachers are quick to do a re-teach via a huddle to prevent gaps from developing the next day. Students who are performing above grade level engage in meaningful, enriching, and differentiated work.

Repetition is a key strategy that has worked for decoding, math facts, and has created the platform for students to move on to more complicated tasks, once easier skills are internalized. Since elementary skills are foundational to future learning, students in grades Pre-K to 2 are homogenously grouped and mastery in every skill is ensured, before moving on. At the same time, students in all grades read authentic texts and are taught to establish a purpose for reading, ask questions, monitor and adjust comprehension, make inferences, summarize information, and make connections.

IA Mission uses math technology to harness the power of technology to individualize TEKS-aligned math instruction. In addition to the math class, the math technology programs continuously adapt to the user based on his or her responses. The main purpose in implementing this program is to allow students to review foundational math concepts, re-learn and practice current ones, and preview future concepts. In order to evaluate and diagnose the student academic needs multiple forms of assessments are used at IDEA Mission. Bi-weekly assessments are administered district-wide in the areas of reading, math, writing and science. Moreover, interim assessments (benchmarks) are conducted three times during the year to prepare the students for more rigorous testing and to identify the level of support that individual students require.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

IA Mission begins each week with a school-wide assembly filled with music, singing, recognitions, and repeated positive affirmations. The top readers and mathematicians, students celebrating birthdays, and students who show growth on assessments are featured.

Every Friday, IA Mission has a school-wide parade where students of the week and the “Royal Readers” are featured; the entire school shows pride by cheering on participants. For those students who are meeting reading goals, monthly incentives include a field trip to the local book store where students select a book of their choice. For many of the students, visiting a book store is a first-time experience so it is that much more meaningful.

IA Mission motivates students by setting up structures that allow them to be purposeful about tracking their own goals. Students have individualized trackers that are filled after assessments. As a result, students know where they stand and articulate the score they are aiming for to “meet” or “exceed” their own growth. This internal drive to do better each time has been powerful in helping shape the student motivation culture.

Additionally, in the lower grades, there is a student and teacher game that is played in all classrooms daily and is followed by a quick non-monetary reward that students receive if they “beat” the teacher. Students earn points for helping out their peers, effort, participation, providing correct answers, and engaging in outside-of-the-box thinking.

IA Mission discusses empathy and trains around that throughout the year. This helps with students’ social and emotional growth. When students fall short of expectations, staff deliver consequences that are logical to the consequence and not punitive. Students also have a daily meeting where they express their emotions and teachers are trained to show empathy on whatever emotions students are discussing. As a result, students’ empathy and habits for discussion have improved in all classrooms and over 90% of families consistently re-enroll at IA Mission from year to year.

At IA Mission, teachers are shown they are valued in numerous ways. For example, weekly individualized professional development, via check-ins, with each teacher to discuss observations and data are priority. Leaders pour in preparation time and do pre-work so they are maximizing time spent with the teacher. These check-ins are tailored to each teacher.

Two-way feedback, as well as school town halls, are the norm, and encourage teachers to ask questions, and propose changes. Each week, the school has “shout outs” in the staff newsletter that are specific and describe how the teacher exemplifies the core values. Monthly socials outside of school are fun and highly attended. These structures have allowed the school to maintain a staff retention rate of 85% or higher.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

IA Mission values parents by providing them with the resources and knowledge to maximize their child’s success and utilizing parent input to shape initiatives at the school. First, each parent is provided training on how to check their child’s grades, in real-time, daily, and provides a work cellular phone to each teacher and administrator so that parents may call after school hours. The access of teachers and grades has helped improve student success and parent satisfaction.

Students have a planner that is to be signed by parents daily. In the planner, students write homework and teachers and parents exchange notes. Teachers know the importance of parent engagement, so they follow up if a parent signature is missing. Parents receive a newsletter in English and Spanish. The weekly newsletter includes upcoming events, students of the week (and the accompanying blurb for each student), and tips on how to help their children. Some of these include: suggestions on how to organize their binder, study tips, and tips for practice the character attribute.

At IA Mission, there are many meetings with parents throughout the year in addition to surveys to assess parent satisfaction with regards to their child's education. Parents are invited to participate in interviews and share input on school initiatives. IA Mission disaggregates the data and adjusts, based on the feedback.

Progress reports for each student are sent out every six weeks. This is three weeks prior to the official 9-week Report Card and allows families to adjust course, ask questions, and ensure students finish off the quarter strong. At the official report card evening, parents are invited to conference with teachers. To increase attendance, the school provides a dinner to all families whose child had perfect attendance for the quarter and/or earned Honor Roll grades. This joyful occasion encourages cross-communication.

IA Mission knows that student grades should reflect student proficiency in each content area and should not be skewed by behavior and/or character. For this reason, the school provides a character report card for all parents that highlights teacher assessments on character attributes including: grit, composure, zest, gratitude, optimism, curiosity, and responsibility.

It is important that the school is building strong citizens and regularly invite community members and organizations to meet with students and lead clubs throughout the school year. Community members are involved with: tumbling and engineering clubs, and provide school leaders with academic consulting.

IA Mission has had the honor of hosting and touring politicians who represent the school area in the Rio Grande Valley. Annually, the school sends out the Texas Education Agency school report card to the community. The report card indicates IA Mission's areas of strength and challenging areas in norm referenced tests, accountability ratings, enrollment, attendance, and financial information.

3. Professional Development:

At IA Mission, the professional development (PD) is aligned to the school's most important needs. The framework is tied to low-performing TEKS, and each PD session includes ample time for staff to practice a target skill and receive feedback. The school follows the teach, model, practice, apply approach. The effectiveness of each PD session is assessed during follow-up observations, and the expectation is that 90% - 100% of staff are implementing the target skill at the expected level of proficiency within 1-2 weeks after the session.

PD around the lesson planning process to ensure all TEKS are mastered has been a highly structured priority. The district provides bi-weekly PD for teachers on TEKS-based instruction to help with preparedness for lesson delivery. Additionally, teachers are trained to monitor student learning throughout the lesson by reviewing every student's answers to the checkpoint questions and comparing them to the exemplar. This process has improved student mastery and overall school effectiveness. It also has helped in minimizing the gap of all students and subgroup

Daily, each teacher presents the outcomes, causes, and next steps for the day's data. Various teachers help by providing feedback on ways the material could be taught differently. Teachers take the feedback and plan how the next day's lesson should be modified based on ideas shared during daily exit ticket meetings.

District-wide, teachers meet with content and grade level teachers. There is extensive analysis and discussion on most commonly missed TEKS and shared next steps are developed. This professional development allows staff to more deeply understand school versus organization-wide challenges so that all can problem solve effectively.

Similar to teachers, all administrators have intense development throughout the year. For example, during weekly classroom rounds, classrooms are observed together and norming on the most pressing issue and aligned next steps are debated. Also, if a teacher made noticeable improvement on the administrator's action step, it will easily be observed the following week. Administrators are also observed often while conducting observation and/or data conversations with teachers. Similarly, administrators are provided with

one bite-sized action step to become more effective.

Administrators also have “Coaching Academies” where extensive training on the most critical TEKS and/or school leadership levers are developed. The training and practice center around coaching teachers to mastery. Administrators are asked to prepare for a live simulation of these conversations with teachers and are rated on their effectiveness. This laser-like focus on teacher and leader development has had a noticeable impact on student achievement. As a result, administrators are able to coach their portfolio of teachers on a differentiated and individualized level. As a result of the focus on coaching, teachers are more satisfied with their roles and the staff retention has been above 85% for the last couple of years.

4. School Leadership:

The leadership team is made up of three assistant principals of instruction (API’s), one assistant principal of operations (APO), one counselor, and a principal. Additionally, principals who have received solid results and are considered good candidates to provide mentorship to an aspiring principal, also mentor a principal-in-residence (PIR) for approximately 1-2 years.

The principal drives the vision of the school, and is an instructional and culture leader. She ensures all instructional and student/staff culture processes are executed so that students are thriving. The principal coaches and manages all administrators. Similarly, API’s focus on instruction, student culture, and discipline for assigned grade levels. The principal ensures API’s are focused on student achievement. The APO is in charge of all operation-related departments, including the following offices: nurse, facilities, transportation, child nutrition, receptionist, and student information systems. This model allows the principal and API’s to focus more of their time on non-operational priorities. The school counselor leads social-emotional initiatives, special programs, and testing.

There are numerous built-in systems to ensure leaders are focused on student development throughout the day. Daily, all leaders participate in an early morning ten-minute standing huddle where each team member shares their daily priorities. Weekly, leaders are a part of the tactical, a meeting that focuses on short term issues that can be solved in a few minutes. Additionally, all participants share their top priorities for the coming week and success will be measured. Every week, the principal holds weekly check-ins and regular-in-the-field coaching to help leaders build one another’s capacity to reach their goals.

Instructional rounds are another crucial lever for developing the instructional expertise of leaders on campus. The coaching during rounds focuses on skill development of other leaders, and the norming provides the lead team with a shared language and a shared understanding of what strong instruction should look like. Finally, leaders are able to identify and monitor school-wide trends and improvements, through a normed observation data collection and analysis process. Monthly strategy meetings are used to focus on one to two strategic issues and to push the team significantly closer to reaching campus goals.

Grade-team leaders (teacher leaders for each grade level) are another important leadership component. There are weekly grade-level meetings to discuss grade-level data, priorities, upcoming events, affirmations, and concerns. Grade-team leaders are charged with ensuring impeccable student culture and to own their grade team’s results. All of these structures are critical in ensuring the campus meets its goals and that all staff members understand rational and are invested in the direction of the school.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

While there have been significant processes that have helped expedite student results, student work analysis meetings (SWAM) have had the most significant impact on student achievement and both teacher and leader development. This process has been highly impactful because it has required teachers and leaders to analyze the most critical errors in student work across all subject areas and create a plan to correct them. As a result of this process, there are significant increases in end-of-day exit tickets and classes demonstrate significant increases in exit ticket data from the first teach to the reteach.

In order for the SWAM meeting to be effective, both the teacher and administrator must be well-prepared; specifically, the leader must prepare to lead each meeting with a clear focus for analysis. This means, the leader has identified the highest leverage focus (question, rubric strand) for analysis based on analyzing the standard, scripting or reviewing an exemplar, and reviewing student work.

Next, the leader facilitates participants to see a conceptual gap. During this part of the process, the leader prompts participants to define what student would have to know or be able to do to show mastery of the standard in precise and specific ways. This unpacking is referenced throughout the conversation.

Then, the leaders lead participants through unpacking the student exemplar by helping them isolate the specific key skills/characteristics the ideal answer should include to show understanding of the standard so that all are clear on the standard of expectation. The leader asks probing questions of the student work samples that allow participants to see conceptual and procedural gaps, modeling analysis when necessary to illuminate the gaps.

The leader prompts the teacher to name the student error and conceptual misunderstanding before planning the re-teach. The leader works directly with participants on revising the upcoming lesson plan, and leads the teacher to select a re-teach structure and practice the reteach lesson. The teacher then practices the re-teach by leveraging existing resources.

Teachers not only leave the meeting with a vetted reteach lesson that is highly likely to close the target gap in student learning, but also gain critical content expertise that comes only by doing the work of unpacking standards and curriculum and grappling with the different ways to teach content-specific knowledge and skills. IA Mission obsesses over this most important kind of data—student work—and analyzes it with teachers often because it is clear that every child must produce high quality written work in every content to become truly college-ready.