

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):
- 4 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 4 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	20	18	38
1	26	16	42
2	25	13	38
3	14	21	35
4	15	20	35
5	8	13	21
6	9	8	17
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	117	109	226

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 0 % Asian
 - 87 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 4 % White
 - 3 % 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: 10%

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	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	16
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	168
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %
11 Total number ELL

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

Amharic, Igbo, Polish, Spanish, Taal, Turkish, and Yoruba

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 53 %
Total number students who qualify: 120

8. Students receiving special education services: 6 %
13 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>2</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>1</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: 7
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	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	12
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	2
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 18:1

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	96%	97%	98%	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 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.

Arrow Academy, a school of choice, exists for students to excel academically, socially, and to become motivated members of our community.

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

Arrow Liberation Academy is a public Open-Enrollment Charter School that offers school choice to families that reside within the geographic boundaries outlined in the charter.

The open enrollment period begins on February 1st of each year and all students within the geographic boundaries are eligible to apply. The open enrollment period ends on March 31st. If there are more applications than available openings at any grade level as of midnight on March 31st, a lottery is conducted the first week in April. From the lottery process, students are accepted from the applications received during the open enrollment period. During the lottery, the applications are drawn at random with priority given to siblings of current students and students of staff. All remaining applications are placed on a waiting list in the order in which applications were received. When an opening is available, the first application on the list is invited to enroll. Any applications received after March 31st, are accepted as long as there are openings in the requested grade level. If there are no openings, the student is placed on the wait list in the order that the application was received.

PART III – SUMMARY

Arrow Liberation Academy (ALA) opened its doors 7 years ago with the hope of transforming public education for families pursuing school choice beyond their neighborhood zoned school. ALA was intentional in building a small learning community of approximately 150 students with an 18:1 student teacher ratio serving Kindergarten through 5th grade in its inaugural year. ALA has over 60% of students that qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Located in the Houston suburb of Meadow Place, Texas, ALA has grown to include 6th grade and currently serves approximately 230 predominately African-American students from Fort Bend County, Stafford, Alief, and Houston. These communities reflect some of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the Houston area. Accordingly, eight languages are represented at ALA, whose growing ESL student population offers a new opportunity to the school.

ALA partners with the Sugar Grove Church of Christ to provide wraparound services including Boys Scouts, preschool, and a food bank to ALA families. This partnership affords ALA classroom space, wireless connectivity, a gymnasium, an enclosed playground area, soccer fields and outdoor basketball and sand volleyball courts.

The morning routines are intentional processes that ALA utilizes to build meaningful relationships and to motivate ALA Scholars to achieve academic success. This starts first thing in the morning as scholars shout the ALA mantra, “You know we are readers, we are scholars, and we are going to college!” as they gather in the gym for the Morning Engagement Pep Rally. Morning Engagement ensures every scholar’s day begins in a positive, motivating manner with brain gym, student-created educational chants, and dancing. It reinforces the ALA culture with character education to help scholars develop strong character traits; with celebrations of students’ accomplishments, and with building teamwork to strengthen the community of learners.

As the scholars transition from the gym, they are greeted at the doors of their classrooms with a handshake from their teachers. The instructional day kicks-off with scholars having the opportunity to share with their peers and their teacher “good things” —something positive in their lives. The teachers affirm the scholars who share while their fellow scholars celebrate the “good things” with them.

ALA engages parents with shared responsibilities for academic achievement through many home-school connection endeavors. ALA annual traditions for parents and students include: Family, Math, Science, and Literacy Night, Spooky Spaghetti dinner, and Students’ Showcase days where students display their authentic work for their parents. Traditions also include the Thanksgiving Luncheon; the Fall Festival; and monthly parent meetings that combine with student performances; real-world financial literacy activities, including setting a budget and entrepreneurship; Real Men Read; and a winter program that highlights students’ creativity through acting, singing, dancing, constructing stage props, designing costumes, and learning make-up artistry. Throughout the year, ALA scholars have several opportunities to discover their culture and explore how those beyond their neighborhoods live globally through the Houston Ballet program, the Water Wise program, community outreach through the Fall Food Can Drive and the Super Bowl Cereal Drive, and annual programs such as Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and The Living Museum.

ALA is known for its academic success on the state’s accountability, meeting standards in Student Achievement, Student Progress, Closing Performance Gaps and Post-Secondary Readiness with distinction designations in Reading/ELA, Post-Secondary Readiness, and Top 25% Closing Performance Gaps. Some key strategies that have proven to help meet the needs of all ALA Scholars are the blended learning environment; which includes web-based, customizable station rotation and flex models; data-driven small group instruction, authentic student work, whole group instruction and supplemental resources for additional practice. Another effective strategy is ALA’s use of individualized learning profiles for teachers and students to better understand each one’s preferences for schema and learning. Flexible learning groups allow ALA teachers to best differentiate instruction and learning strategies according to ALA Scholars’ individual needs. It is a fluid process centered on pace and path of each student’s achievement. ALA’s foundation is built on self-managing and relational building processes that help to develop ALA Scholars socially and

emotionally. Finally, ALA supports scholars' physical well-being with daily recess and a physical education program that emphasizes nutrition and daily exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

ALA teachers access an online curriculum portal with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards for alignment, pacing, assessments creator tools, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) analysis for grades 3-6, College and Career Readiness standards, and the English Language Proficiency standards (ELPS). These tools provide an interactive platform for developing effective TEKS-based lesson plans and assessments. The Instructional Focus document (IFD) helps ALA teachers anticipate students' misconceptions, and plan scaffolding activities and questions to help ALA Scholars master the TEKS objectives.

Math instruction at ALA is TEKS-centered and utilizes the guided-math framework embedded in the blended learning model. The guided-math approach allows ALA teachers to support each scholar's development of mathematical proficiency at increasing levels of difficulty through flexible grouping. All grade levels use the station rotation model to ensure students' success. Math lessons involve interactive notebooks with constructed response questions and notes; skill and drill rotations that allow scholars to practice concepts from the previous week; a game or manipulative activity that provides hands-on learning and reinforce the particular TEKS-based skills being taught; data driven small group instruction based on curriculum-aligned assessments and MAP scores; and digitally adaptive lessons with customized learning paths that guide scholars through a complete lesson cycle. The math rotations are anchored with peer-to-peer math conversations, centered on essential questions posed by teachers for further investigation. Teachers also systematically build relevancy through math-related songs, storytelling, books, and multimedia content.

ALA's English language arts and reading instruction is comprised of the balanced literacy framework of growing from the foundational TEKS emphasizing "learning to read" to the complex TEKS focused on "reading to learn". This approach allows ALA Scholars to strengthen their reading and writing abilities. The desired outcome for every ALA Scholar is to master effective communication. ALA teachers engage scholars with mini-lessons that highlight the TEKS objectives, read aloud, and shared reading with the use of books projected on white boards. The station rotation model in the blended learning environment is implemented to ensure that students reach their end-of-the-year reading goals. Teachers focus on data driven, differentiated guided reading groups to address reading gaps and to accelerate scholars' literacy skills. Each scholar is assigned digitally adaptive lessons with customized learning paths to reinforce the mini-lesson of the day. Additionally, independent reading in the classroom is accomplished with scholars' access to a digital leveled reading library that encompasses multiple genres based on reading records data. There is also writing-to-literacy connection that is an integral part of the balanced literacy framework that helps ALA Scholars become published authors. The implementation of these learning modalities allows ALA Scholars in all grades to become proficient in oral expression and comprehension, genres, authentic reading, author's purpose, reflective writing, composition, inquiry and research. These skills are reflected within the seven strands of reading outlined in the TEKS. Student growth is monitored and measured by teachers through informal teacher observations, weekly tests, quizzes, and formal district benchmark assessments.

Science at ALA is student-centered, cooperative learning opportunities to foster exploration and hands-on learning via investigations and labs. The science curriculum utilizes TEKS standards to ensure scholars have the skills and knowledge they need to be critical thinkers using scientific processes. The science TEKS and technology are integrated for a blended STEM learning environment that includes science kits, videos, simulated labs, and an online platform with differentiated lessons and e-books covering the physical, earth and life sciences. ALA teachers utilize the Engage, Explore, Explain, Evaluate, Extend (5E) model to help ALA Scholars to reason, solve problems, construct their own knowledge and communicate effectively in science. A variety of hands-on experiences including interactive notebooks, classroom investigations, science fair competitions, and cross-curricula connections of reading, writing, and math are supplemented with a science classroom library to engage ALA Scholars in learning real-world application of each lesson.

ALA uses a supplemental online social studies curriculum aligned to the TEKS. This curriculum allows

ALA teachers a simplified approach to effectively integrate social studies with language arts daily. The curriculum provides media, research resources, map studies, content vocabulary, print visuals, and weekly print materials to engage ALA Scholars to become responsible, problem-solving citizens. The curriculum focuses on foundational themes of community and its constituents, to the specificity of Texas history; United States history; and global and cultural studies. ALA utilizes the home-school connection to give families the opportunity to participate in their children's learning through projects, researching historical figures, and oral story telling of historical events. Finally, real-world learning occurs through mock elections, student written letters to elected officials, and cultural performances.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Fine Arts at ALA enrich the lives of students through daily, 45-minute classes that include music, visual arts, dance and theatre. This program allows all ALA Scholars to utilize their talents in singing, dancing, acting, painting, drawing, and other forms of artistic expression. These disciplines are taught using TEKS objectives as the foundation and are enhanced through cross-curricula integration. Students are challenged to develop critical thinking, leadership, and problem-solving skills as they connect their learning across disciplines. Units are developed thematically to reinforce vital character education traits and meet the cultural and social needs of ALA Scholars.

While essential skills such as music notation, art elements and principles, and foundations of theatre and dance are explicitly taught by teachers, students create content, and apply and evaluate their learning objectives through leadership roles. Fifth-6th grade ALA Scholars serve as set designers, stage managers, assistant directors and choreographers for ALA's four annual school-wide stage productions, and thematic art exhibitions. These productions involve every scholar in the school, and engage the community and ALA families.

ALA Scholars are actively engaged in daily, 45-minute P.E. classes that integrate the TEKS with nutrition, health and wellness. Healthy eating and physical activity habits are taught using animated characters from a supplemental resource to actively engage all grade levels for a healthier lifestyle. P.E. classes start with warm-up activities to increase heart rate and breathing rates. ALA Scholars follow with activities aimed to improve gross motor skills, balance, flexibility, and muscular strength during moderate to vigorous physical movement as they learn games, rhythmical patterns, exercises, and other aerobic and anaerobic activities. To further develop ALA Scholars' manipulative skills, the P.E. teacher utilizes stations for explicit practice in movement sequence, body control, and hand-eye coordination. Cross-curricula activities are embedded in P.E. with chants about math facts and reading to supplement scholars' learning. Scholars are allowed to develop their physical skills in a nonjudgmental environment that supports effort, practice and attention to wanting to improve.

To support ALA Scholars socially and emotionally, the P.E. program includes weekly classes that focus on controlled movement and breathing techniques that allow scholars the time to decompress and expel negativity from their mind, body, and soul. This system of exercises has been a source of awareness of physical strength, flexibility, posture, and enhanced mental awareness for ALA Scholars.

ALA families have opportunities to join their scholars during P.E. classes for Moving with Moms and Fitness for Fathers to learn more about nutrition and physical fitness. The culminating P.E. activity to implement the TEKS in a meaningful way and to help ALA families make a home-to-school connection is the Family in Training (F.I.T.) night. Parents and scholars come to school in workout clothes to participate in an aerobics class, obstacle courses, centers with exercises, and a station with healthy smoothies' demonstrations and recipes for the family to take home.

ALA Spanish instruction emerges in 6th grade with daily 30-minute lessons utilizing a digital curriculum. Teachers supplement this with lessons incorporating vocabulary, commands, commonly used words, and beginner conversations. Students delve into diverse cultures of the Spanish-speaking world while simultaneously reflecting on their own culture. ALA introduces spoken word, dance, food, and song while following the TEKS based curriculum.

Technology applications are a critical component of developing ALA Scholars for digital citizenship. The 1:1 technology ratio allows ALA Scholars and teachers respectively, to experience the TEKS across 6 strands of learning that are tailored to meet the diverse needs and strengths of scholars across all grade levels. ALA reflects a comprehensive 21st century learning environment that strengthens the daily instruction for ALA Scholars. ALA's blended learning environment is supported with wireless connectivity throughout the school, web-based platforms for adaptive learning and hardware including document cameras, projectors, and interactive whiteboards. ALA Scholars in the primary grades are taught how to login using a picture-based ID and password. Through embedded lessons, these scholars quickly learn how to use a touchpad on their tablets to point and click on their customized learning paths and access teacher assigned folders. Third -6th grade scholars are encouraged to correspond with teachers, respond to feedback and self-evaluate through the educational software, creating an interactive, digital classroom. The dashboards on the web-based platforms provide an ongoing stream of data for teachers to use to guide classroom instruction. A personalized learning path is created for each scholar, allowing them to work independently while providing critical time for teachers to provide data-driven, small group instruction.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Effective teaching and learning at ALA are based on three essential questions: What is it we expect our scholars to learn? How will we know when they have learned it? How will we respond when they do not? These questions guide ALA teachers to examine their instructional methods, interventions and assessments continuously to identify and implement on-time adjustments to meet the needs of ALA Scholars. Teachers incorporate intervention and enrichment time for ALA Scholars through flexible grouping accomplished through the master schedule. ALA takes a unique approach of embedding the Response to Intervention (RtI) model and enrichment in the classroom to meet the diverse needs of ALA Scholars. ALA teachers include visual representation to support ALA Scholars' efforts in the classroom with the use of anchor charts, thinking maps, graphic organizers, and exemplars. These align with Tier I instructional methods such as direct teaching, peer to peer conversations, think aloud, skill drills with supplemental materials, read aloud and shared reading.

During Tier I, ALA Scholars engage in authentic tasks with differentiated leveled lessons, scaffolding learning and questions gradient along Bloom's Taxonomy to assess scholars' understanding and appropriately challenge them as they learn. ALA teachers reteach as necessary, and have a reteach plan prepared and ready to implement timely.

During Tier 2, ALA teachers ensure that achievement gaps are addressed in small group instruction with approximately 4 to 5 scholars utilizing guided math, guided reading, or targeted tutoring. These interventions are for students who need additional teacher time. Likewise, scholars who are ready for enrichment are accelerated on a customized learning path to include above-grade level instruction utilizing technological resources. Furthermore, ALA Scholars' grade-level needs are met and reinforced through a customized learning path that includes current TEKS-based objectives.

Approximately 50% of ALA Scholars are engaged in a Tier I or Tier 2 level of instruction or interventions to help close learning gaps. There are approximately 10% of ALA Scholars who needs are best met at the Tier 3 level of intervention. These scholars are grouped with 1 to 2 scholars with similar learning gaps to receive intensive instruction from trained interventionists utilizing pull-out or push-in models. The Intervention Team (IT), educational diagnostician, general education and special education teachers, and parents are included during the Tier 3 intervention phase to ensure the scholar's academic success.

ALA utilizes a diagnostic approach to monitoring and targeting the instructional needs of ALA Scholars with timely data-driven instruction. Data include universal screeners for kindergartners; measures of current academic levels in reading, language arts, math, and science; ongoing diagnostic reading records; district assessments; and state assessments. The data team creates data walls and binders for teachers' use as they deliver on-time, data-driven instruction. In 3rd through 6th grade, teachers meet with ALA Scholars to determine their quarterly goals for growth and learning. ALA teachers meet frequently by grade level teams with the school leader, content-based Professional Learning Communities (PLC) with the instructional coach, and at team meetings to ensure timely and effective interventions are selected, implemented, and

monitored to improve student achievement for all ALA Scholars. ALA teachers review assessment data for the core content areas to determine scholars' instructional level and to measure academic growth three times per school year. Attendance data, school climate and culture data; and parent involvement data are also part of the data review. Data analysis focuses on teaching and learning outcomes, and identifying additional needed leadership support. ALA teachers further analyze the data to determine appropriate instructional strategies, to specify or modify groupings and identify indicators of growth. This process allows ALA teachers to develop Specific, Timely, Appropriate, Reasonable, and Measureable (SMART) goals to monitor their instruction and help ALA Scholars grow academically and close existing achievement gaps.

To close the achievement gap of African Americans and economically disadvantage students, ALA utilizes flexible grouping so that teachers start instruction where a student is in the learning process and accelerates the learning to grade level with small group instruction, tutors, and strong pedagogy. o further support these scholars' learning, visual representation is a part of most lessons and technology-based customized learning folders benefit ALA Scholars as they grow in their academic skills. ALA teachers understand that planning is critical to closing the achievement gap. Therefore, ALA teachers utilize a scaffolding lesson plan that includes a three-part activity section to build on scholars' depth of knowledge; as well as, using student profiles to support learning preferences of these ALA Scholars.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The A-L-A Radio station for morning announcements, “good things” (positive news students share in the classroom), educational chants (e.g., “PERSEVERE on 1: 3,2,1 P-E-R-S-E-V-E-R-E I won’t give up, I won’t give in, success is my destiny!”), and the Morning Engagement Pep Rally all serve to establish an ALA culture of motivation and engagement. This engagement extends to the morning routines including ALA teachers shaking their scholars’ hands at the door as they enter the classroom, “when I clap, we all clap” to affirm fellow scholars, and a class greeter to welcome guests.

ALA communicates and maintains clear expectations for all scholars through the Social Contract, an agreement of behavior developed in collaboration between each ALA class and its teacher. The teacher poses prescriptive questions to ALA Scholars, and as they respond, a scribe writes down their responses, which become the Social Contract that everyone in the class agrees to and signs. The contract is then posted prominently in the classroom. Throughout the day, teachers assign scholars to be raters to provide feedback to the class on how well they are doing in following the Social Contract and what they can do better to get a higher rating.

The Social Contract is not limited to the classroom; the school leader works collaboratively with all stakeholders to create a contract to hold one another accountable for personal behavior to further establish the culture of the school. To support ALA Scholars’ academic, social and emotional development, a Green Party is hosted every 9 weeks for all of the ALA Scholars who demonstrated self-managing behaviors. Those who are “Caught Doing the Right Thing” or “Caught Being Kind” receive prizes. As such, every ALA Scholar has an opportunity to be recognized and celebrated.

ALA teachers and leaders endeavor to ensure an enjoyable place to work. Teachers are motivated by a small learning environment that focuses on student growth and academic achievement. They are rewarded with a performance pay structure that is not restricted to number of years teaching; instead, it rewards effective implementation of ALA processes. Teachers are recognized by their colleagues and leadership with ALA’s tradition of affirmations. Each staff member has an opportunity to create, write, and design affirmations of appreciation, admiration, and thoughtful deeds she or he has observed about someone else. Teachers can then stop by the Affirmation Shop and pick up their “kudos” that are in personalized monogram bags. As a result, a strong synergy of family and unity is developed through heart-felt expressions. Finally, a team plan events throughout the year for teachers to celebrate achievements, birthdays, and eureka moments about teaching and learning.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

ALA’s engagement with families begins with ensuring ALA scholars receive free uniform shirts and school supplies to ease the burden of starting the school year. This support continues throughout the year to support the emotional and social development of ALA Scholars and their parents.

Additionally, new families to ALA are invited to School Showcase events to meet teachers and school leadership teams and to learn about the “Arrow Way.” At these events, ALA School Ambassadors meet new scholars and begin to develop friendships. New scholars also have an opportunity to engage in one-to-one technology literacy activities to build excitement and anticipation for learning at ALA. ALA Parents have an opportunity to build networks through participation in the Eagles’ Nest Where Scholars Land Advisory committee, which offers opportunities for volunteering in the school, parent trainings, and classroom support.

ALA families stay connected with learning in the classroom through Peak of the Week newsletters from classroom teachers, monthly Eagle Nest News from the school leader and newsletters from ancillary teachers. Additionally, teachers use online communication tools to send messages and alerts regarding class assignments, ancillary news, and school-wide updates. ALA’s website is another tool that help families

stay connected to school events, activities, and learning at ALA.

All parents have access to the online parent portal where they can monitor their scholars' progress 24/7. Teachers send home progress reports for all ALA Scholars, and parents receive a customized report card that indicates the scholar's current reading level compared to the expected reading level; and inform a scholar's parent(s) if the scholar is performing on, below, or above grade level achievement for each 9-week report. Parents receive the customized report card in the mail to ensure timely notification about their scholar's performance in school. Parents are also provided a comprehensive student profile report three times a year detailing their scholar's academic growth. Finally, ALA has implemented regular parent conferences throughout the school year as part of an ongoing method of communication with families. These conferences allow parents to review data, learn more about the scholar's strengths and areas of needed improvement. Parents and teachers collaborate, provide input, and develop a learning plan for the scholar's success in school.

Approximately 85% of families attend parent engagement events at ALA, including Meet the Teacher Night, Family Thanksgiving Feast, Hispanic Heritage Celebration, Family Math, Science and Literacy Night, Winter Production, Black History Production, End of the Year Award Ceremony, Family Fitness Night, Moving with Moms, Fitness with Fathers, and ALA Fun Day. Furthermore, ALA's teachers, staff, and school leaders have been trained and are keenly aware of the skills needed to sustain relationships with students and their families.

One of ALA's most vital partnerships is with the Sugar Grove Church of Christ. Through it, ALA families have access to wraparound services such as Boys Scouts, a food pantry and a preschool. Additionally, this partnership affords ALA a state-of-art educational facility, including 400-seat auditorium. Throughout the school year, Liberation hosts several events that are supported by community businesses and restaurants, including Home2 Suites by Hilton, Chick-Fil-A, Pyburn's Food Market, Raizes Mexican Kitchen, Gringo's and Brewingz Grill. As part of its Fine Arts program, ALA Scholars have participated in coaching and enrichment from professional artists with The Houston Ballet and Kozmik Oasis Recording Studios partnerships. ALA is committed to transparency in school performance by posting data, school report card, and federal reports on the school's website. ALA utilizes direct mail marketing and media campaigns to surrounding communities to share initiatives and data trends about the school.

3. Professional Development:

Teachers at Liberation Academy engage in a connected professional instructional system differentiated to address each teacher's growth and development needs, and help close the achievement gaps for identified ALA Scholars. This professional instructional system includes embedded instructional coaching for teachers with just in-time feedback; structured release days for team data analysis to refine teaching practices; and TEKS aligned curricula development. Teachers have the opportunity to observe instructional coaches model best practices and observe lessons being taught in their classrooms to their scholars. This approach allows for building instructional capacity that includes instructional strategies and program expectations in literacy, math; science and technology.

Regular structured early release days afford ALA teachers time to collaborate and review data to impact teaching and learning for all ALA Scholars. As teachers review each scholar's learning continuum profile, they consider the gifted and talented, dyslexia, 504, special education, ESL, and RtI population to make informed decisions on supports, accommodations, and modifications needed to ensure the success of their scholars. Lastly, ALA's instructional system includes training on technological resources, supplemental materials, customized preference profiles for teachers, relational building processes and TEKS-aligned curricula for data-driven decision making to ensure teacher growth and development.

Rather than the "one-size-fits-all", "sit and get" professional development approach, teachers are offered a range of options that help impact staff capacity, student achievement and school improvement. These include webinars that focusing on technology instruction across disciplines, online classes, consultant interactive presentations, internal trainings led by team leaders, instructional coaches, and the school leader. These courses focus on lesson planning, small group instruction and deconstructing the TEKS to better

understand expected student outcomes.

ALA also offers bi-weekly PLC's or meetings that provide time for ALA teachers to reflect on current teaching practices and discuss ways to provide better instruction to ALA Scholars. PLCs include in-depth analysis of assessments, student assignments, and report card grades to ensure that ALA is reporting to parents and ALA Scholars grades that are accurate and reflective of grade level expectations.

To further support growth in teaching and learning, ALA teachers meet with the school leader for one-to-one development to view videos of distinguished teachers in the field, debriefing of current observations, and review of next step implementation in the classroom. These sessions are further supported with instructional coach modeling for teachers as needed and team teaching to refine practices as ALA continues to build instructional capacity.

As a result of ALA's professional instructional system, there are 100% highly qualified and certified teachers and over 50% of teachers have obtained two areas of certification since the school's inaugural year. Additionally, the administrator and instructional coach have obtained train-the-trainer certifications to ensure full implementation of instructional programs and use of resources with fidelity in ALA's classrooms.

4. School Leadership:

ALA has had the same school leader and a core teaching staff since its inception over 7 years ago. The Leadership team includes a school leader, instructional coach, data team, coordinator for special populations, and lead teachers. The goal of ALA team members is to provide excellent customer service to ALA families. ALA is a school choice for parents, and it is the privilege of ALA school leaders and team members to serve the needs of ALA Scholars and their families. Together, ALA leadership, team members and scholars strive to meet high expectations for academics, personal behavior, and relationships. As a result, the school leadership and team members cultivate feedback and a growth mindset to prepare ALA Scholars to reach their full potential for future success in college and careers.

The ALA school leadership team philosophy is rooted in the Engage, eXplore, Communicate, Empower, Launch (EXCEL) model. Each day the leadership team engages stakeholders with greetings, dialogue, and questions as this team builds trust and develops relationships. These relational bridges allow the leadership team to ask for stakeholders' helping hands in teaching, learning, volunteering, and partnering with the school. The school leader and instructional coach explore and determine the immediate needs of the campus with morning walks, utilizing a blueprint with daily review of goals and checkpoints with ALA team members and scholars. This process also includes open ended questions to get feedback from team members to address the needs of the campus in a timely manner.

The data team and the coordinator for special populations is led by the instructional coach as they work to design PLC's for data-digs, common assessments, RtI processes, effective accommodations and modifications in the classroom, as well as, vertical alignment of curriculum. This team assist teachers in identifying and addressing achievement gaps, student academic growth patterns, and next step action plans for ALA Scholars' success in the classroom.

The school leader maintains an open-door policy that allows ALA teachers and scholars to communicate daily in a non-threatening environment, as well as a means for the school leader to be responsive to stakeholders' concerns and questions. The school leader values communication with parents; therefore, a block of time is reserved for parents to meet with the school leader as desired. This model allows for transparency and immediate improvement.

The school leadership team empowers ALA team members to make informed decisions appropriate for their level of responsibility that are impactful on student learning and school culture. As the school leader delegates, the school leadership team trusts the ALA team members to execute tasks and verify that tasks have been done with excellence. As the school leader empowers the school leadership and ALA team members, the development of skills and productivity increase, and high performing teams are established.

To maintain momentum for high expectations, the school leader reads and responds to relevant research in the educational field and shares these insights as a strategy to launch school leadership and ALA team members for future success.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Walk into any ALA classroom and blended learning is evident and it is attributed to the underlying academic growth and achievement gains for ALA Scholars. ALA utilizes two distinct models of blended learning: the station rotation model and the flex model.

All grade levels adhere to the station rotation model in math and reading. Scholars rotate to a variety of classroom modalities including web-based learning platforms. ALA Scholars are engaged in digitally adaptive lessons with customized learning paths that guide scholars through a complete lesson cycle on TEKS aligned objectives. During the reading block, ALA Scholars are engaged in digital books that include text-to-speech accommodation to support struggling readers during the independent reading rotation. ALA Scholars' learning is monitored through online comprehension quizzes and online quizzes from the customized learning path. Other rotation stations include lessons that encompass interactive notebooks with constructed response questions and notes; skill and drill that allow scholars to practice concepts from the previous week utilizing supplemental resources; and authentic work providing hands-on learning and reinforcing the TEKS-based skills being taught. ALA Scholars also rotate to small group instruction. These rotation stations are complimented with peer-to-peer academic conversations, essential questions, and direct whole group instruction.

All grade levels adhere to the flex model in science and social studies. Instruction is facilitated by the teacher and supplemented with web-based lessons. ALA Scholars progress through a customized, fluid schedule among learning modalities. The teacher utilizes a flexible and adaptive approach for activities such as small group instruction, cooperative learning projects, and scaled-down grouping for targeted tutoring. The flex model allows the ALA teachers to use the data dashboard to offer on-time interventions to scholars needing extra help; as well as offer enrichment to high-achieving scholars. Through the flex model, ALA is able to push-in intervention or pull-out for more specialized tutoring to meet the diverse needs of ALA Scholars.

Path, pace, and personnel are key elements of the blended learning environment that has been successful in shared academic success for ALA Scholars and teachers. Learning is no longer restricted by any one teacher's pedagogy. ALA Scholars are afforded interactive, adaptive technology instruction that is customized to best meet the scholars' needs. Secondly, learning is no longer restricted to the pace of the teacher or to the pace of an entire classroom. Lastly, learning is no longer compromised due to teachers' absences. The ALA blended learning environment allows for sustainable instruction and maximize bell-to-bell instruction that can be monitored through the data dashboard. As a result, scholars are not limited to completing busy work with a substitute teacher in the absence of the classroom teacher.