



## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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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

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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):
- 23 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 8 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 5 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 36 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
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0
<b>2</b>	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	0	0	0
<b>4</b>	0	0	0
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	42	64	106
<b>10</b>	29	62	91
<b>11</b>	29	47	76
<b>12 or higher</b>	34	41	75
<b>Total Students</b>	134	214	348

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 0 % Black or African American
  - 100 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 0 % 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: 5%

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.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	4
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	18
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	354
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.05
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %  
50 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: 99 %  
Total number students who qualify: 346

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %  
7 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>1</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>1</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	16
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
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.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	99%	100%	100%	100%	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.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	77
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	47%
Enrolled in a community college	12%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	18%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	22%

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.

Jimmy Carter Early College High School is committed to cultivating and shaping the 21st century leaders of tomorrow through a rigorous yet supportive academic and behavior program to become college ready, career ready, and life ready. Jimmy Carter Early College High School motivates life-long learners to build a legacy of excellence for the student, the family, and the community.

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

Jimmy Carter Early College High School (JCECHS) serves students from low-income families, students from disadvantaged groups, first generation college goers, students who may have not received the academic preparation necessary to meet credit college entrance standards, students who are English Learners, students whose family obligations keep them at home, and students for whom the cost of college is prohibitive. During the Spring Semester recruitment at the middle schools begins. Presentations to the grade 8 students are done to showcase what JCECHS has to offer. Counselors distribute and collect applications to verify the demographic information through PEIMS data. Once the verification is done, the applications are submitted to central office. Once central office has applications a performance-blind, open-access lottery system is performed to select incoming grade 9 students.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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La Joya Independent School District (LJISD) consists of more than 226 square miles in western Hidalgo County in South Texas. Boundaries extend south from the United States-Mexican border, formed by the Rio Grande River, north to McCook in Texas. A large number of attending Hispanic students (99.7%) represent the surrounding demographics. Jimmy Carter Early College High School, a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredited high school, enhanced by a vibrant and familial culture, nevertheless faces socio-economic and second language acquisition challenges.

LJISD established in 2010-2011 the College Transition Academy based on the Early College High School model. The College Transition Academy welcomed a freshman cohort and was designated “Exemplary” by the Texas Education Agency. These students, and every subsequent cohort, were predominantly socio-economically disadvantaged, at-risk, first-generation college students. Through a rigorous application and partnership with South Texas College (STC), the College Transition Academy was renamed Jimmy Carter Early College High School (JCECHS), the district’s flagship early college. Today, the campus offers non-traditional students an opportunity to concurrently receive an associate’s and high school degree. In 2014, a major milestone was achieved when eighty-four students graduated, seventy-five with associate degrees.

Key academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural strategies empower JCECHS to achieve academic success, evident in state exam results. The academic day begins with an intervention period where students receive tutoring, utilize a self-selected reading program, explore college and career choices, or further character development. JCECHS practices horizontal and vertical teaming, focusing on student achievement, cross-curricular assignments, and student conduct. Teachers adhere to course syllabi, expect consistent attendance, model academic planners and vocabulary, and implement the Common Instructional Framework.

The counselor follows a district schedule focusing on traits such as kindness, integrity, and citizenship, corroborated by intervention period teachers who implement a campus-adopted program on respect. Yearly, the district highlights an anti-bullying, suicide prevention month when students, teachers, parents, and staff organize a district march and rally. Teachers and students wear themed articles of clothing throughout the month to publicize awareness in a fun and unique manner. In addition, JCECHS teachers and staff emphasize self and stress management for students. Teachers practice flexibility and sensitivity regarding assignments during vertical and horizontal teaming.

Students are encouraged to participate in intramural sports such as basketball, soccer, and volleyball. Friendly competition is fostered between neighboring early colleges, and students compete in intramural sports at STC. During lunch, students play in the soccer field and basketball courts, walk in the pleasant grassy areas or, on tables shaded under a patio, share a meal. Drug awareness is promoted during Red Ribbon Week, when every day, an activity highlights the benefits of a drug-free lifestyle.

Opportunities to socialize in a productive and constructive manner abound. Classes hold elections, and everyone participates in the campaigns. National Honor Society (NHS) provides students opportunities to cultivate friendships through community service. Mu Alpha Theta, a math honor society, joins students interested in math, community service, and academic conferences. Future Business Leaders of America recently advanced to national competition. The Summer Bridge Program leads prospective freshmen through team building activities, and Orientation Week acclimates them to early college environment and requirements. Students anticipate and enjoy after-school holiday dances. Camaraderie is evident in the library where students study together, the student union where students socialize or practice University Interscholastic League (UIL), or outside where students enjoy sports and board games.

Cultural sensitivity and awareness is fostered through various activities and courses. Spanish Advanced Placement and Dual Credit explore Spanish art and culture. 10th grade English delves into world literature, and Art Appreciation (a college course) examines and exhibits art across cultures. 10th grade World History creates projects that explore cultures and in Speech, students research and present a culture. JCECHS celebrates and highlights days such as September 16th (Mexican Independence Day), Martin Luther King

Day, and Cinco de Mayo.

JCECHS's students benefit from a unique schedule. Comprised of only 348 students, the entire student body enjoys lunch simultaneously. Therefore, friendships form across grade levels, and club meetings are conveniently held during lunch. Path to College Success (1st Period) allows flexibility when addressing students' academic needs. Library resources and technology labs remain available daily. Students who remain after school for extracurricular activities, tutoring, or lab use are provided transportation every Wednesday. South Texas College Jag Express transports students to the McAllen campus (fifteen miles away) to attend courses on-site, and a number of students arrange early schedules to manage part-time employment.

Through focus on academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural student needs, JCECHS creates a welcoming and productive collegiate environment where students experience academic success.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

Every JCECHS teacher follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum standards for public schools set by the state of Texas. Teachers also incorporate Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement curriculum, and customize materials and resources. Tutoring, enrichment, and differentiation are ongoing. Technology, real-world applications, research, study skills and testing strategies are incorporated in all courses. The Common Instructional Framework is a major strategy that facilitates and reinforces curriculum, and vertical alignment is continual. End-of-Course results, a state mandated exam required for high school graduation, and associate degrees are possible because every teacher recognizes academic skills required for student success at the next grade level. Students must also pass the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exam to enroll in college courses. South Texas College (STC) courses require fulfillment of core objectives.

English Department courses follow TEKS and a district curriculum guide that incorporates college skills. Underclassmen develop understanding of writer's craft, critical reading, academic vocabulary, research skills and preparation for the End-of-Course and TSI Exams. Upper division courses challenge students through Advanced Placement curriculum and STC English department core objectives. College texts, an excellent STC online library, media, essays, and PSAT, ACT/SAT curriculum are used. Our campus wisely invested in an extensive library of challenging, high-interest, nonfiction and fiction, contemporary and classic texts for every grade level. All resources and methodologies support the English Department's goal to produce critical thinkers and readers, capable writers, and media-literate students.

Mathematics teachers adhere to state-mandated curriculum (TEKS), and prepare students for EOC, TSI, and upper division dual enrollment courses. The department benefits from a true student cohort model that builds solid academic relationships through cooperative assignments and peer-tutoring. Algebra and Geometry focus on real-world applications through conceptual, analytic and reading skills. Critical thinking is practiced through projects that implement technology. TSI tutoring ensures students enroll in college math courses. Algebra II and College Algebra (11) focus on abstract, number sense skills and PSAT and ACT/SAT curriculum. Pre-Calculus and Calculus I and II (12) prepare students to earn math-related degrees. Math teachers advocate financial literacy, mathematical confidence, and college preparedness.

The science department offers four courses: Biology I, Chemistry, Physics, and College Biology all focused on applying the scientific method using process skills. Students in grade nine are prepared for EOC and TSI; grade 11 prepares for PSAT and ACT/SAT. Biology I (9) focuses on field experiments, laboratory methods, and problem solving. The department focuses on implementing academic vocabulary in lab reports, classroom talk, exams and research. Teachers use focus questions to prompt academic discussions and collaborative laboratory exploration. Chemistry (10) analyzes the composition, properties, and states of matter. Chemistry and Physics teachers plan with grade level math teachers to reinforce required math skills. In the Physics (11) course, students make observation and analyze data to define the laws of nature. Biology II (12) offered as a college course, focuses on the natural world, lab experiments and safety, research and research writing skills, and bioethics. Each grade level emphasizes lab safety, math skills, and scientific reasoning. The department fosters a research and exploration mindset, critical thinking and understanding the complexity of contemporary science issues.

Social Studies teachers jointly approach the curriculum as a combination of TEKS and Pre-AP standards which maintain student sustained growth in historical skills. Pre-AP World Geography (9) makes meaningful connections to create foundations for future study, using current events to build understanding of world cultures. Pre-AP World History (10) develops strong writing and oral skills through analysis of primary and secondary documents, and creates real world connections through an implementation of analog and multimedia technology. U.S. History (11) students earn college credit through dual enrollment courses, and prepare for End-Of-Course Exam. A small number of students do not qualify for college courses; nevertheless, they receive tutoring for the End-of-Course Exam by a grade level history teacher. Seniors are encouraged to take college U.S. and Texas Government while completing the required Economics and

Personal Financial Literacy.

### College and Career Readiness

Jimmy Carter Early High School is established as an early college campus where students simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to 60 college credit hours. This model encourages and promotes college readiness by building high academic rigor required for post secondary courses, yet maintaining the support and structure integral to a standard high school model. Students are gradually transitioned to a full college schedule by their senior year, upon which they have developed many skills critical to college success.

## **2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The fine arts program follows the national visual arts standards, which provide quality art education. Students enrolled in Art I classes for one-year work in different studios to learn the stages of creating art. This course connects experiences and interests as students create, present, respond, and attach personal meaning to external context. Reading, writing, cooperative, and individual learning are vital to reinforcing creative and critical thinking.

In addition to Art I classes, JCECHS offers the Art Appreciation dual credit one semester class to fulfill the required high school fine arts credit. It is a general introduction designed to create an appreciation of the visual arts through purpose, process, and meaning, strengthening communication skills. Students critically interpret and evaluate works within formal, cultural, and historical contexts while exploring connections to experiences and develops cultural awareness through visual literacy and project based learning.

The State of Texas requires one full year of Physical Education (PE), and Physical Education students participate in recreational activities regardless of performance level, ensuring optimal participation. Health Curriculum is a one-semester course based on three resources aligned to TEKS which include the 6 Components of Health, Lifetime Health, Making a Difference, and Parenting and Paternity Awareness (P.A.P.A.). Students must also complete a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training course before graduation.

Spanish I and Spanish II, offered year-long (9-12), adhere to the TEKS. Students study Spanish and Latin-American culture, geography, history and literature, with connections to World History and World Geography, combined with practice in formal Spanish. Pre-AP Language and Culture (10-11) studies Hispanic world issues and cultural background for Advanced Placement exam preparation. JCECHS's Spanish AP scores surpassed state and national averages for the previous three years. Spanish 2313 and Spanish 2315 are dual credit courses. Through Spanish-speaking culture and media, native proficiencies in formal written discourse, public speaking, and oral reading, are enhanced. Students create original works in a variety of media, publish, compete in poetry contests, and participate in, and evaluate cultural events.

JCECHS offers Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses including Arts, Audio/Video, Technology and Communications, Business Management and Administration, and Education and Training. Students satisfy state requirements and gain useful skills for a challenging job market, practice 21st-century skills, and transfer classroom experience into real-world practices.

Students are required to take one-half credit in Professional Communications, available for dual credit with South Texas College (STC) where students are introduced to essential human communication and theories. Students apply everyday communication principles to professional endeavors and demonstrate how to establish relationships and implement small group communication skills.

Journalism I is offered at all grade levels. Through production of a school newspaper, interviewing and news gathering techniques are learned, and the importance of media literacy and reporting ethics are stressed.

Business Information Management I (BIM I), is mandatory for grade 9 students and may be combined with the Business Management and Administration Cluster by enrolling in Business Information Management II (BIM II). Both programs are available for Advanced Technical Credit (ATC) through partner institution,

STC. BIM courses incorporate College and Career Readiness by using resources like Myregionone.org to complete an interest inventory survey and create portfolios of certificates and community service hours.

The Education and Training Cluster includes Information Technology, Computer Programming and Advanced Computer Programming, available as dual enrollment. Students may enroll in six hours of dual credit and graduate with a Substitute Teacher and Teacher's Aide certificate. Students may earn industry certifications for Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) in Word, Word Expert, Excel, Excel Expert, and PowerPoint. Students at JCECHS, so far, have earned 147 industry certifications.

Students who take two or more CTE classes for three credits or more with at least two courses ATC with 80 or higher as a final grade or a combination, can earn a graduation distinction as a Rio Grande Valley Linking Economic and Academic Development (RGV-LEAD) scholar. JCECHS graduated 91% of students with this distinction in 2017, and in 2016, 89% earned the same recognition.

### **3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:**

Teachers implement instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the needs for all students at JCECHS. Teachers follow the components of the lesson cycle: planning, focus, initial teach, guided/independent practice, elaboration and closure. When planning, teachers examine data, materials, and take into account students' prerequisite skills. Lessons are designed to communicate value and importance to real life, and make a connection to prior experiences. Teachers are especially conscious of student experiences, as a number have experienced significant challenges. However, we view these experiences as powerful background knowledge that will inform their academic growth.

Initial teach requires delivery of an initially engaging lesson, so the requirements of the standards versus the students' comprehension levels are taken into account. At this point, it is important to examine the most efficient grouping, scaffolding, and questioning techniques. We explore the preliminary concepts of the lesson through learner choices and novel methods of delivery.

Students may practice concepts in a guided or independent fashion. Rubrics, clear product standards, higher-order thinking skills and appropriate materials are important aspects of this stage in instruction. To challenge more advanced students, independent projects are assigned. Finally, students confirm gained knowledge. Teachers use formative assessments throughout the learning process, and certify mastery through summative assessments.

JCECHS applies interventions from a variety of sources in a consistent manner. Since JCECHS is a small campus, individualized intervention is a powerful influence on student success. Teachers tutor before, during and after school, and students tutor in peer and group sessions. Teachers re-test, and guide students through websites that provide enrichment. Counselors, administration, and parents are important sources of support to improve student achievement. Grade-level teams meet regularly to adopt effective plans of action concerning students in need of interventions.

Students at grades 9 and 10 enroll in two one-hour ELA classes. Based on the performance of the students at 9 and 10, schedules are adjusted for the following year with regards to whether they will enroll in college courses, and the number of college courses. It is important to analyze performance data at grade 10 especially, as the following year they are eligible to enroll in English, Math and History.

Students requiring additional support due to second language acquisition, are instructed using Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies, and all teachers receive training to address the needs of English Learners.

For Response to Intervention (RtI), 504, and special education students, teachers implement modifications and differentiation, including extra time, scaffolding, tutoring, peer modeling and study groups. Special education students receive in-class individual support in core areas, but are helped with inclusion through Alternative Teaching, Team Teaching, and One Teaching and One Assisting. These strategies ensure students follow Individual Education Plan (IEP) and modifications. Tiered support is provided to students.

Content, TSI and EOC tutoring is held after school and during Path to College Success period. If a student does not meet TSI standards, tutoring is provided before, after school, and during the Path to College Success period. Before retesting, based on the diagnostic report, students receive at least five hours of tutoring. As a basis for preparation for the ACT, teachers also use information from the PSAT exam. The PSAT diagnostic report sends student feedback on exam results to target interventions.

If students require credit recovery, JCECHS offers an online program.

At JCECHS, formative and summative assessments are used to effectively certify mastery of state standards. To deliver effective instruction, formative assessments are ongoing throughout the lesson cycle. Discussion, question and answers, oral and written quizzes, and a large variety of activities allow teachers to check for understanding during the lesson. LJISD trained all campus teachers in the classroom use of research-based formative and summative assessments.

Summative assessments align to state standards. JCECHS administers six weeks exams and benchmark exams to conduct data disaggregation during Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) sessions. During PLCs teachers create targeted plans of instruction, address individual students' areas of need, decide grouping patterns, and appropriate instructional timelines. A data base system, Data Management and Assessment System (DMAC), generates data reports of local and state exams. DMAC allows teachers and administrators access to students' academic history and information on special populations. Curriculum is then tailored to students' individual needs.

## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

JCECHS's environment is designed and managed to ensure academic, emotional and social support. Students utilize current technology since STC updated computer and science labs on campus. On the second floor, STC created comfortable study areas for college students. Students appreciate opportunities and resources provided through JCECHS and South Texas College.

JCECHS teachers believe they share responsibility for the academic experience of all students, evident in peer and student interaction. Students rely on all teachers for projects or materials. Campus policy allows students access to any room at any time (if convenient) to complete assignments, and teachers cooperate to shift students and materials as necessary. Space and resources are used in a flexible, tailored and productive manner. Our small campus creates an academically accessible and supportive atmosphere which motivates students to succeed through various approaches. Our school counselor regularly meets with all students to ensure they earn the necessary credits for high school and college graduation. Students' academic progress is communicated to parents and students through regular progress reports, and the school provides students incentives for attendance and academic achievement. Accessible and routine tutoring is available for all students. Our librarian promotes reading extensively through a campus book club and incentives for top readers.

The library is extremely inviting and frequently updated to ensure access to books and technology. A sponsor of the Library Reading Club, the librarian nurtures a lifelong love of reading through engaging, relatable literature. The club discusses book choices, recommendations, community service hours and fund-raising. In addition, the librarian works with STC to service all STC and JCECHS students.

Students engage in organizations, activities, and community service. Food, toy, and blood drives maintain a high level of student engagement. Students raise funds for the Leukemia and Lymphoma society. Seniors, in particular, donate hundreds of hours to community service. Students are encouraged to experience extracurricular activities to develop their talents, interests and leadership skills. Administration works with the district's comprehensive high schools to allow participation in athletics and fine arts. Students also participate in technical and career organizations: Technical Education Student Organizations (CTSO), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), Carter Association of Future Educators (CAFE), and Red Gold Student Publications.

Teachers sponsor organizations such as Student Council, NHS, FBLA, SHPE, Mu Alpha Theta, Yearbook, CAFE, and Anime Club. The faculty represents diversity in background and education: military veterans, international instructors, business, law, art, engineering, counseling, and technology. This tapestry creates the perfect incubator for faculty to conduct thoughtful pedagogic dialogue. Administration hosts holiday luncheons for teachers, and faculty celebrate personal and professional milestones.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

JCECHS engages families and community through staff outreach. The school social worker and parent volunteers meet monthly to discuss approaches to contemporary student issues. The social worker coordinates meetings between campus parents and the larger district parent volunteer committee. The district reading coordinator holds monthly meetings for our campus Parent Reading Club to discuss socially relevant books. The National Honor Society holds a ceremony so parents can witness induction of new members and understand the organization's philosophy. NHS sponsors a spring beach cleanup and a twice-yearly blood drive, and every Thanksgiving collects canned goods donated to the local food bank. In a school wide response to Hurricane Harvey, NHS collected a room full of school supplies.

At the annual Fall and Spring Festivals, the Parent Volunteer Committee organizes with students and teachers to raise funds for campus needs. Teachers work closely with parents to create a fun, safe event gathering families of students and staff. Financial Aid Night disseminates important information and

applications to parents of senior students. Parents are also invited to attend Financial Aid night at South Texas College. On Curriculum Night, our campus informs parents regarding syllabi and school policies, and parents are welcomed to voice concerns and suggestions. On Parents' Night held in fall and spring, parents meet their child's teachers, and monitor progress and report cards. Before the beginning of each school year, parents register students, meet staff, and receive a campus orientation. During the year, state and local universities and armed forces visit and present college and career advice.

Media is also extensively used to communicate with families and community. Our campus website, organized and inviting, features scholarships, campus activities, important forms, and links to academic websites. It also provides a link to Skyward, a district program parents use to monitor grades, schedules and attendance. To service our bilingual community, the website provides a section on college information in Spanish. Teachers also used educational applications to connect with parents and students reminding them of assignments, deadlines and activities. Our campus participates in a yearly "Why La Joya?" event where potential 9th grade parents and students receive information on the distinctive benefits of attending JCECHS.

Through various mediums, JCECHS communicates a solid commitment to parent and community engagement and a mutually beneficial partnership with all campus stakeholders.

### **3. Professional Development:**

At La Joya ISD, professional development opportunities positively impact the capacity of staff and administrators by enabling them to continually improve skills and adjust professional practices based on an interactive process of self-reflection and adjustment. The Curriculum and Instruction Department provides training in alignment to the District Needs Assessment, and trains staff throughout the year. In compliance with state and federal requirements, teachers are offered the opportunity to attend trainings in Bilingual Education, Special Education, Gifted and Talented Education, Best Practices, Assessment, Content and Curriculum, and Positive Behavior Intervention Systems. These professional development opportunities are offered monthly, with needed updates and scheduling which specifically ensures teachers maximize instructional time with students.

Specific to JCECHS, STC provides support to Dual Enrollment faculty through specialized professional development opportunities both online and on-site. The Dual Enrollment Learning and Teaching Academy Online training (DELTA) provides participants with support and guidance as well as information on STC expectations, resources, policies, procedures, and creation of a college environment. Dual Enrollment instructors attend twice yearly professional development conferences which ensure instructors function in-sync with the philosophy and procedures of STC. These opportunities target specific departmental needs, and give teachers the ability to network across the broader post-secondary community. This collaboration and support from STC allows adjunct instructors to provide students an authentic college experience, while simultaneously supporting their high school education.

Additional general staff development is available from Region One Education Service Center, and The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Continuing Education Department, which supports regional staff in improving instructional practices. The district incorporates Edivate, an online Professional Development provider which gives teachers ability to modify training based on individual professional goals.

Staff development that positively impacts student achievement includes training that encourages students to increase reading capacity and interest, with the awareness that improving grade level reading improves TSI and EOC Exam results. English teachers receive routine staff development from the English Language Arts Coordinator on effective strategies for EOC Exam. Math instructors are trained by Texas Instruments on calculator applications. Science instructors receive EOC Biology Exam training on implementation of content-based vocabulary in the science classroom.

At the onset of the school year, teachers receive staff development in programs which foster student respect, morale enhancement, and character development. Yearly, teachers receive training on suicide awareness and prevention, anti-bullying, and campus safety procedures.

Each year, staff, teachers, and parents analyze data to identify action items to include in the Campus Improvement Plan. Teachers and staff take an annual survey that measures the organizational health of the campus. Based on survey results, administration and staff make adjustments to function optimally and plan campus staff development.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Transformational leadership, teamwork, and transparency are the tenets of the school's leadership philosophy. Meeting regularly with the assistant principal, counselor, social worker, and department chairs, the principal created a team in which all share ideas that contribute to school success.

The principal, as instructional leader, meets with students to disseminate important information on district, campus, and graduation requirements. Accessibility is highly modeled, and teacher support is evident through student interventions, parental contact, formal and informal meetings, and teacher and student incentives. Teachers are frequently invited to provide input on innovative use of funds and resources, especially on programs and materials that positively impact student achievement. EOC, TSI, PSAT and ACT/SAT data analysis is conducted with staff. The principal conducts PLCs, grade-level and faculty meetings focused on the complete academic and emotional success of students. The principal maintains open lines of communication with teachers and staff to implement policies. Weekly meetings with immediate staff outline weekly, monthly and yearly goals, and ensure expectations are clearly articulated. Aside from traditional administrative and disciplinary duties, the principal recruits the incoming grade 9 cohort from middle schools, serves as a liaison between LJISD and STC, and models the early college program to districts and communities across Texas.

The assistant principal coordinates committee meetings for special populations including Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC), Section 504, and Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD). Other duties include issuing textbooks, parent meetings, student behavior, and attendance. The assistant principal supervises and coordinates local and state exams. She is well-aware of required instructional and assessment supports and helps teachers to implement them.

The counselor ensures students meet high school and associate degree graduation requirements and through audits and monitoring of credits, facilitates on-track graduation. She coordinates university visits, and facilitates admission, scholarship and financial applications. Based on needs, the counselor modifies schedules and conducts group counseling sessions. The counselor is readily available to meet students for personal or academic matters, and works closely with the social worker.

Transformational leadership is essential to JCECHS, evident in assignment of department chairs, grade team leaders and committee members. Committees input suggestions for campus improvement: Site Based Decision Making Committee (SBDM), Attendance Committee and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies Committee (PBIS). Teachers attend District Educational Improvement Committees, Vertical Team, Safety, and Insurance meetings, then share information with faculty. The principal conducts grade-level meetings which allow input on issues such as campus policies, student conduct, and pedagogical approaches. Campus leaders, identified as master teachers, serve as mentors to new/developing faculty and regularly engage in team planning and lesson modeling to ensure consistent, rigorous instruction. Teachers also serve as club sponsors, committee chairs, department heads, and grade-level team chairs.

## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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The Common Instructional Framework (CIF) is the most instrumental practice influencing our school's academic success. This approach consists of six key components: Collaborative Group Work, Writing to Learn, Scaffolding, Questioning, Classroom Talk, and Literacy Groups. When synthesized, each component compliments the others, and since the campus' inception, each teacher has been carefully, consistently and thoroughly trained in this essential instructional method.

In Collaborative Group Work, students, from Summer Bridge until 12th grade, learn to work together in a variety of academic situations. These scenarios range from production of a school newspaper, construction of a catapult in physics, presentation of a problem in math, to creation of an original poem in English.

Writing to Learn is a technique effectively utilized across all subjects. Social studies teachers encourage students to express their opinions toward current historical events. Math teachers prompt students to explain steps in a math problem. Science teachers utilize writing as a tool to refine students' lab skills and motivate them to express opinions in bioethics. Students interpret songs, paintings, and poems.

Scaffolding is successfully used when teachers draw on students' prior experiences to plan lessons, use appropriate language level for delivery, and connect to previous learning. This approach maintains a target to, and alignment with, student needs. Effective scaffolding is evident in the campus End-of-Course performance and campus distinctions received.

Questioning is powerfully implemented throughout all subjects. In English, science and history courses, research assignments are initiated using a targeted focus question which engages and prompts students to delve into the topic. In journalism, students use questioning techniques to explore newsworthy topics for the school newspaper. Questioning is successfully combined with group work and classroom talk as creation of invigorating and insightful classroom discussions.

Classroom Talk is vital to our campus' academic environment and success. On any given day, in any given classroom, teachers are constantly talking with students or students talking with students. Journalism and speech students conduct panel interviews, experience daily formal and informal group discussions and interactive interviews.

Literacy Groups are implemented to master any text in courses like social studies, English, biology, art, and Spanish. This technique facilitates critical understanding over a variety of texts: essays, novels, articles, poems and textbooks. Students effectively understand assignments and collaboratively assume responsibility for learning.

The Common Instructional Framework is the most instrumental practice that influences the school's academic success. The methodology of CIF allows for facile recall and flexible implementation for both teachers and students. Formal and informal classroom observations and lesson plans show evidence of implementation. JCECHS has achieved successful state exam results and graduated college ready students through the implementation of CIF.