

U.S. Department of Education
2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Mr. Alex Melton

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

Official School Name Early College Academy

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 320 Devalcourt Drive

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

Lafayette LA 70506-4124
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Lafayette Parish

Telephone (337) 521-8956

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mrs. Irma Trosclair

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail idotrosclair@lpssonline.com

District Name Lafayette Parish School District Tel. (337) 521-7000

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

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr Justin Centanni

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

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

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. 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, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 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.
3. 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.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 23 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 12 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 8 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 43 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, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	18	52	70
10	18	41	59
11	19	50	69
12 or higher	16	39	55
Total Students	71	182	253

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 7 % Asian
 - 23 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 65 % 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 2017 – 2018 school year: 2%

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, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	5
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	249
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.02
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
2 Total number ELL

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

Arabic

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 41%
Total number students who qualify: 103

8. Students receiving special education services: 0 %
0 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

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

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	8
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	0
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 31:1

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

Required Information	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	98%	100%	97%

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 2018.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	51
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	82%
Enrolled in a community college	2%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	14%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
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.

Early College Academy's mission is to advance educational achievements and encourage independent thinking in concurrent pursuit of a high school diploma and an associate's degree.

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

Students apply through the Lafayette Parish School Board Magnet Academy office. Students must meet the following requirements: score of "Mastery" or "Advanced" in either ELA or Math on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) standardized test and at least a score of "Basic" in the other category. If no LEAP scores are available, then a score at or above the 70 percentile on a nationally normed standardized test is acceptable. Students must also have a final grade no lower than a "B" in math and English from the previous year.

Once students apply and meet admission requirements, they are accepted through the Magnet Academy lottery.

PART III – SUMMARY

Nestled in the heart of Acadiana, Early College Academy lies within the city of Lafayette, the unofficial capital of the region. The first early college program in the state, ECA was designed around the Bill and Melinda Gates Early College High School Initiative, which encouraged college readiness and improved college completion rates of students who were underrepresented in postsecondary education. Housed on the South Louisiana Community College (SLCC) campus, ECA did not fully act as its own school, instead functioning as a satellite for each student's home-based school for two years. Eventually, ECA became its own school and honored its first graduating class in the spring of 2012. In keeping with Lafayette's diverse cultural makeup, ECA mirrors the ethnic makeup of the community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the parish (county) comprises a population of 70% white, 27% black, 5% Hispanic, and 2% Asian; likewise, ECA is composed of 65% white, 23% black, 7% Hispanic, and 5% Asian.

The initial school colors of orange, black, and white, along with the logo, were assigned to ECA upon its inception, and the student body voted for the hawk as its mascot. In 2013, administration decided to revamp the school brand and held a contest to determine new school colors, crest, and logo. The winning designs resulted in the current school colors of garnet and gold, the eagle as the mascot, and "soaring to new heights" as the motto.

In keeping with these new heights, ECA has garnered recognition as one of America's Best High Schools by the U.S. News and World Report every year since 2014. Similarly, since the first year of eligibility, ECA has been ranked as an A school by the state of Louisiana. In the fall of 2019, the school achieved the overall number two ranking in the state, according to school performance scores.

ECA functions on a 4x4 block schedule with all high school courses divided into 100 minute-long blocks that students complete in one semester. Juniors and seniors carry a full load of college courses. Freshmen take four high school honors classes per semester, and sophomores take three high school honors classes and two college classes per semester. Because ECA students earn 60 college credits in college classrooms with college instructors by their senior years, they face increased academic rigor at an earlier age than the typical high school student. To prepare students for this increased academic rigor, instructors strategically design high school courses to be more challenging than the average high school while simultaneously following the state curriculum. In addition to teaching skills and concepts to achieve content mastery, teachers help students develop positive habits that translate into being successful college students. These skills include prioritizing, managing time, researching concepts independently, juggling multiple assignments, and learning outside the classroom. Teachers also assist students in understanding their own learning styles and focus on creating a community of caring within the school. By assisting students with becoming familiar with what works and what does not for them before they walk into college classrooms, they can quickly find success.

Despite the lack of day-to-day contact with the juniors and seniors, ECA teachers help upperclassmen through mentoring and tutoring. Each instructor is responsible for a group of students identified in the mentoring index who are experiencing minor issues in their college classes. ECA teachers meet with the aforementioned students weekly to offer support and guidance to improve grades and attendance.

From the school's inception, clubs, dances, and other social events that provide opportunities to step into leadership roles throughout their high school and college careers have been part of the ECA experience for students. As freshmen and sophomores, students can be class and ECA club officers. However, during their junior and senior years, the added opportunities of SLCC club officers and college student government exist. For example, last year, an ECA senior was president of the SLCC Speech and Debate team. This year, an ECA junior is the president of the SLCC's chapter of an international honor society for community colleges.

Interestingly, students have initiated some ECA clubs. When an idea about a new organization sprouts, students interested submit a written proposal and follow ECA procedures to create a club. Most of the activities in which clubs participate are student-driven, and many of the student-initiated ideas, such as the grade-level Meet and Greet, the Talent Show, and the annual Friendsgiving, have become schoolwide

activities.

In addition to leadership opportunities, students have a sense of emotional support and feel respected within ECA by students and faculty alike. They have positive connections with at least one adult to whom they can turn for help and advice and with whom they can share their feelings and opinions without fear of reprisal. Diversity and differences are accepted and respected at the school and expected by the faculty and students.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

English Language Arts I and II classes are honors courses taught using a lecture and discussion format designed to clarify material that students are required to read prior to class, in expectation of future college courses. The interactive nature of the courses, through discussion and debate, necessitates a community environment wherein all students must take on active roles of autonomous participation, referencing knowledge gleaned in other subjects throughout the course of their educational careers. English classes incorporate a variety of both classic and modern literature through which students learn reading, analysis, and writing strategies. Students are provided with computers and required to research, write, and participate in online forums, as well as utilize multiple online interfaces for testing. In addition to this, data-based instruction is paramount, with teachers assisting students in crafting individualized instruction plans based on their ELA weaknesses. This plan, titled LEAP Blitz, requires students to identify their weak areas, use state standard guidelines to find corresponding practice activities employing a variety of resources--such as IXL, Zinc, Khan Academy, and Crash Course--for remediation, prescribe a “wellness plan” of study, and complete the remediation by assigned due dates. This differentiated instruction affords teachers with the opportunity to meet students’ individual needs. College instructors teach English III and IV, for which students may choose from a variety of courses, such as Rhetoric and Composition and British literature.

1b. Mathematics:

All mathematics classes are taught at an advanced level in which students earn honors credit via lecture and collaborative learning. Students are encouraged to problem-solve, discuss solutions, and communicate with their peers. Each math course has a small class size to allow for a rigorous and fast-paced learning environment. However, instructors cultivate a climate where failure is temporary for those who make strides to rectify their mistakes by offering reassessment. In keeping with this, the mathematics department provides small-group tutoring and remediation before school every day, and upperclassmen also volunteer to assist freshmen and sophomores. By the end of sophomore year, students earn Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II credits at the high school level. During their junior and senior years, students take a minimum of two college-level mathematics classes, such as college algebra, trigonometry, and statistics. Students also have the option of taking Advanced Placement Calculus BC with an ECA teacher.

1c. Science:

In ECA’s science courses, the instruction is rigorous. All students are expected to meet high standards set forth by the teachers. This feat is impressive considering students enroll in classes typically considered above their grade levels (i.e. freshmen in biology and sophomores in chemistry and physics). In each science course, teachers deliver differentiated instruction through problem-based learning. Students must develop and implement solutions to solve given problems. Technology--such as laptops, USB sensors, hand-held microscopes, and software-- frequently is utilized in these investigations. ECA science classes use an investigation-lecture-follow-up approach to instruction to investigate phenomena. Science instructors also incorporate field trips, such as Engineering Day at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and an overnight trip to Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium to study Louisiana’s disappearing wetlands, to supplement classroom instruction. Instructors then hold group discussions, and students report their findings, and fully stocked college laboratories host ECA’s science classes. Assessments are varied to capture a complete picture of student mastery, and they range from projects and LEAP 2025-aligned summative assessments to informal reviews of comprehension through conversation, critiques of peer work, and supporting the conclusion process through reasoning. During their junior and senior years, students take a minimum of two college courses, such as Microbiology and Introduction to Astronomy.

1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement

ECA social studies curriculum utilizes Louisiana standards, grade level expectations, and state-created curriculum to ensure scholars have the skills and knowledge needed to be critical thinkers, problem-solving citizens, and lifelong learners. Students take Honors Civics and Honors U.S. History at the high school level and complete core requirements with two college classes, such as World Civilization, World Geography, political science, or economics. High school classes often are run in a Socratic manner wherein students are encouraged to utilize higher level questioning to obtain information to answer essential questions dealing with historical detection. Students can express opinions with appropriate support to substantiate claims and accomplish tasks while using primary sources as a vehicle. Students are responsible for using technology to communicate with the instructor and to obtain materials for class. Varied methods are used to accomplish instruction, including backward planning, simulation, visual detection, and investigation classroom. We the People curriculum and mock senate hearings are used to expand the classroom curriculum. Students also can participate in an after-school organization concentrating in law education where several competitive Mock Trial teams compete on a real-world case. Teams have participated and won at the regional, state, and national levels.

1e. For secondary schools:

Assessment data is used to learn where and how to move students to improved learning. Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) test scores in English, math, science, and social studies are available to all teachers. These scores can be used to help instructors develop lessons, target areas within the curriculum, and diagnose students' needs at the beginning of the school year.

Using the school-wide improvement plan helps the school identify weak areas and develop strategies to implement ideas to improve weaknesses. One of the recent areas identified in the school-wide plan was the American College Test (ACT). In response, mandatory weekly ACT preparation classes have been implemented beginning freshman year, and ACT preparation material writers and publishers have been brought in to provide faculty workshops. Additionally, senior students who have not achieved minimum scores of 21 on the ACT are allowed to take the test free of charge to improve their scores for better opportunities with college acceptance and scholarships. Additionally, ECA offers a free, annual ACT Bootcamp for all students. The seminar is held on a Saturday and run by an ACT preparation expert not associated with the school.

When a student's grade point average drops below a cumulative average of 2.0, an academic review meeting is held with the counselor, administration, student, parent, and teacher(s), if needed. The goal is to identify the area and the reasons why the student is struggling and to develop a plan that will provide support to the student. ECA also pays for students to take college placement exams to test out of remedial college classes. Similarly, the school offers assistance to students who would like to test out of non-remedial college courses by taking the College Level Examination Program test.

1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Health and P.E. are taught concurrently, using principles from Healthy People 2020 and the American Heart Association (AHA) to guide fitness, heart disease prevention, nutrition, and weight control units. Information is then applied with such assignments as a weekly activity journal, planning and serving a healthy meal, confirming exercise within Target Heart Zone by counting exercise pulse, and evaluating favorite foods for sodium content and writing letters to food manufacturers or restaurants, asking them to follow the AHA recommendation to lower the sodium content of their foods. The health portion of this course is designed to give students the opportunity to gain knowledge about the various aspects of health and wellness and to apply that knowledge to achieve the highest quality of life. The Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Louisiana Health and Physical Education Standards drives the course content. Students learn and practice emotional health, assertive communication, conflict resolution, and refusal skills. Students also are taught the AHA

Basic Life Support course and are afforded the opportunity to earn a two-year certification. Due to a lack of typical physical education facilities, physical education units include fitness, ballroom dance, bowling, and volleyball.

ECA offers an accelerated one-year study of Spanish I and II in answer to today's inter-reliant, interdependent, and connected world. Incorporated in the courses are the strands of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Students who earn a French I credit in middle school may take a district credit exam for French II. The cognitive skills involved in learning foreign languages support academic rigor by improving memory, decision making, multitasking, and improving primary language, evident in higher scores in math, reading, comprehension, vocabulary, and standardized testing. Opportunities for networking with other multilingual individuals are available for students to volunteer in target language conditions, such as Festival International de Louisiane.

3. Special Populations:

For students who require further assistance in their studies, those with limited English proficiency (LEP) are provided English Learner Accommodations Checklists for translation dictionaries and ActiveClassroom translator access for reading passages. The Talented Arts program offers to students identified as talented in visual arts, music, and theater pull-out support from district specialists to cultivate their specific talents. ECA utilizes district 504 plans for students with disabilities where appropriate for their high school classes, with assistance offered by the Students with Disabilities Services Department through SLCC for their college courses. In addition to this, students coming from middle schools with high school credits can accelerate their coursework.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

ECA faculty create a welcoming environment that facilitates open discourse among students and teachers, resulting in multiple upperclassmen and alumni returning to participate in class discussions. Students are encouraged to develop a mindset of academic excellence. In addition to awards ceremonies that honor academic achievement, students also receive recognition for volunteerism and community spirit through Student of the Month acknowledgment.

As previously mentioned, faculty and students have created a culture of care and support, with various clubs and lessons that encourage students to share their experiences and support of one another incorporated into student life. Among adults and students, diversity, differences, and acceptance are part of ECA culture, an expectation rather than an exception. If the need to have the discussion arises, then a conversation takes place. Otherwise, ECA culture demands respect for everyone.

Many clubs incorporate service components, and the school also organizes campus-wide service projects. Recent examples of service projects include Food for Families Food Drive, Shoe Drive, ECA Gives Back Day, Boo at the Zoo, International Fruit Sampling, and volunteering at Camellia Crossing to benefit the Miles Perret Cancer Services.

ECA students and faculty also love to relax and engage in the joie de vivre typical to Louisiana, participating in functions such as cake bingo, school dances, Fun Day, Friendsgiving, Activity for Heart, Carnival, ACT celebration, Senior Banquet, and Junior & Senior Advisory. These events and activities provide students with the opportunity to socialize, relax, and celebrate while taking a step back from academic and typical teenage stresses.

On the ECA campus, teacher-input is valued and often used to plan academic and non-academic functions. A high instructor retention rate demonstrates that teachers enjoy and appreciate the unparalleled experience offered by ECA. Instructors have access to and embrace technology that they incorporate into their daily lessons. Instructional supplies are available to all faculty, and teachers often can add to their classroom repertoire by ordering new supplies, including lab equipment, technology, and hands-on materials.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

ECA administration, faculty, and staff provide multiple opportunities for parents and community to gain information about the school and upcoming events. Before the admissions application process begins, a showcase is held to allow faculty, staff, and students from each of the district's academies to provide information about their programs. After the showcase, ECA hosts information sessions for parents of potential students to assist them in deciding if ECA is the right fit for them. Before the beginning of the new school year, new students participate in a student-led orientation to help them become familiar with the campus, faculty, extra-curricular activities, policies, and peers. The administration and counseling departments hold annual Testing Information Parent Night and Financial Aid Parent Night to assist with communicating with parents concerning these areas. Similarly, administration emails a monthly bulletin to parents and students, informing them of strides made by the school and important upcoming dates.

ECA has worked with SLCC to form a true partnership. Examples of this partnership include administration and science teachers participating in the Associate of Science Louisiana Transfer Degree Program (ASLT), hosting SLCC instructors as guest speakers in the ECA classroom, and having ECA faculty teach SLCC classes as adjunct instructors.

In addition to working with SLCC, ECA also works closely with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, such as inviting guest lecturers, aligning curriculum, and participating in provided learning opportunities. Similarly, local attorneys, state police officers, professional photographers, mental and physical wellness professionals, and other community volunteers provide curriculum related, practical application discourse.

The administration publishes a monthly Parent Bulletin and sends email and text messages to keep parents updated on current and upcoming events and information. ECA also offers a Parent, Teacher, Student Organization to provide a platform for parent input and communication. A vital companion piece is creating and maintaining community connections. The concerted effort to organize after-school family events with local businesses has allowed ECA parents and students the opportunity to share much more than just a meal.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development is an integral part of being a highly effective teacher. ECA administration provides instructors with opportunities for professional development beyond those offered through the school and the district. This year alone, teachers attended or are scheduled to attend the following: Louisiana Department of Education Mentor Teacher Training, National Wellness Conference, Instructional Society for Technology in Education Conference, Louisiana Council for Social Studies Conference, and National Science Teachers Association Conference.

Within the school, teachers are trained and certified in Basic Life Support through the American Heart Association, as well as given time for PLC discussions on topics to improve pedagogical practices, classroom rigor (questioning, backward design, assessments), and testing practices.

Professional development topics are picked using several methods: a review of data, input from faculty and staff, and district supported and/or initiated ideas. Data used could be in the form of standardized test scores, grades, behavioral data, and surveys of stakeholders. Teachers have improved their professional practice by enhancing strategies for student questioning, correlating objectives and assessments, and differentiating instruction. A specific example would be ELA classes incorporating strategies learned in Project Read professional development to assist students who struggle with writing. Two students who entered this year with a severe deficit in writing skills completed a writing boot camp utilizing these strategies and obtained a score of Mastery on the LEAP 2025. Another example is a physics teacher who changed the way in which students prepared their egg drop project to incorporate a more interactive design after attending the National Science Teachers Association conference.

4. School Leadership:

ECA leadership holds high the philosophy of transparency and clear communication, encouraging professional development for quality instruction, self-reflection and evaluation, peer observation and reflection, time for reflection, and teacher input. Each faculty member also takes on numerous leadership roles, including club sponsorship, testing coordinating, and event planning. Similarly, faculty encourage and provide leadership opportunities to students who take on integral parts in leading incoming freshmen through the orientation process and upperclassmen assisting instructors as teaching assistants.

Immediate feedback from the administration is a regular part of the week for an ECA teacher. Administration conducts frequent walk-throughs and provides same-day feedback. Informal feedback is part of the daily conversation between teachers and administration. Instructors also are required to observe other teachers within the school to look for strategies and pedagogical practices that they can implement in their classrooms to improve student learning. The Administration is visible in the classroom and hallways throughout the day, including before and after school and during lunch. An open-door attitude is the demeanor of all ECA administration, faculty, and staff, which offers teachers the freedom to express opinions, make suggestions, air grievances, and assist. At ECA, there is a partnership among students, faculty, staff, and parents: everyone is committed to making the learning process unique and challenging.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Although multiple strategies contribute to ECA’s academic success, the one strategy faculty and stakeholders agree pivotal is that students are taught responsibility through the vehicles of academic and personal autonomy.

When students walk in the doors at ECA their very first day of high school, they are expected to implement the hallmarks of ECA--education, character, attitude--and successfully maintain them throughout their educational career. This success will look different depending on the individual, but with the support of the faculty, others in the student body, and the parents, it is possible for everyone.

Although faculty treat students as young adults from the first day, students invariably have different levels of responsibility and self-discipline. For some students, the burden of communication is not natural, or they have not had the opportunity to develop this particular trait. ECA faculty teach and stress the importance of the student communicating with the teacher rather than the parent performing the communication. Having students advocate for themselves is the first step in teaching them an essential skill for college because college professors do not communicate with parents. Learning to balance and prioritize their workloads is a skill with which many students struggle in college. ECA teachers work with their students to make the transitions from middle school to high school and high school to college as smooth as possible. Likewise, teachers emphasize the idea that having freedom leads to having more responsibility. Cell phone use in many schools is discouraged or even prohibited, but ECA students may use their phones on campus before school, after school, between classes, and during lunch. The responsibility to put the phone away and focus on learning is up to them. That being said, there are many times teachers ask the students to use their phones as a learning tool during class. Students quickly learn that to keep that privilege, they must uphold their end of the bargain. It is evident that ECA students understand the connection between freedom and responsibility, the rationale of having them advocate for themselves, and the importance of bridging these skills from high school to college.