

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

[X] Public or [] Non-public

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

Name of Principal Ms. Cheryl Connolly

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

Official School Name Akron Early College High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 225 South Main Street

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

Akron City OH State 44325-6001 Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Summit County

Telephone (330) 972-6450

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Web site/URL
https://akronearlycollege.akronschools.com

E-mail cconnoll@apslearns.org

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

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mr David James

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail djames@apslearns.org

District Name Akron City School District Tel. (330) 761-1661

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 Rev. Dr. Curtis Walker Sr.

(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

- Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
 - 28 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 9 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 9 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools

46 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

- Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
 - Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
- 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	38	75	113
10	33	70	103
11	47	52	99
12 or higher	33	50	83
Total Students	151	247	398

*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
 - 23 % Asian
 - 36 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 32 % White
 - 6 % 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	6
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	6
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	383
(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: 0%
0 Total number ELL

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

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0%
Total number students who qualify: 0

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>2</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>3</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: 3
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	2
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	10
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	1
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.	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 22:1

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	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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	83
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	90%
Enrolled in a community college	2%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	11%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	81%

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. 2013

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

Each student in our diverse population will achieve his or her fullest potential in a safe and affirming learning center characterized by an extensive, student-focused collaboration of all segments of the community, with an emphasis on preparing students to live and excel in a global environment.

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

PART III – SUMMARY

Akron Early College High School (AECHS) was founded in 2007 in partnership with Akron Public Schools (APS), the University of Akron (UA) and KnowledgeWorks. The school is located on the University of Akron main campus. Along with completing state required 9th and 10th grade high school courses, our underclassmen take one or two college classes. Juniors and seniors, with support from the AECHS staff, are full-time college students while completing courses towards graduation. The school has continued to evolve and adapt to challenges over the past 12 years with a great deal of success. Our school has 398 students with ten teachers, a counselor, an assistant principal, a lead teacher, and a building principal.

Students at our school come from Akron's middle schools as well as surrounding Summit county district and charter schools. Our school population is comprised of 32% white, 36% African American, 23% Asian, 6% multi-race and 3% Hispanic. 100% of our students receive free and reduced lunch and 68% are first-generation college students. Many of our Asian students are also English Language Learner (ELL) students who are immigrants and refugees to this country. The school is a blend of racially and ethnically different students seeking education as a way out of poverty. We highlight the years of academic success and our pathways for student achievement. We make sure the families know that teachers have common classroom expectations that must be met in order to solidify a strong academic foundation for their child. This foundation is the contributing factor to having success at the university and motivating our students to continue on for their bachelor's degree.

The graduation rate and number of students earning an associate degree has steadily increased over the past twelve years. The number of students completing our program has risen from 59 in 2011 to 83 with the Class of 2018. The number of students earning an associate degree has also risen from 32% with the first year's graduating class to 83% in 2018.

Our school has a rich tradition of success. We were named one of the top schools in the country by Newsweek and US News and World Report, we continually rank among Ohio's top schools on the state report card, we were a National Blue Ribbon school in 2013 and we have been named a School of Promise by the Ohio State Board of Education.

Our school's success lies in our willingness to constantly reflect on our strengths and weaknesses, a strong spirit of collaboration, a culture of innovation and support demonstrating collective efficacy. Students in every grade level are assigned into either an advisory or seminar class where they learn tools to cope and succeed with the demands of our program. A senior to freshman mentoring program helps freshmen adapt to the AECHS culture and provides seniors with a hands-on leadership opportunity. Every year an alumni panel of former AECHS students return to share their AECHS experience with current students. This panel is used as an intentional effort to build a sense of tradition and pride in our school. Staff meet once a week in content level and grade level meetings to share best practices for maintaining high rigor and develop intervention strategies for struggling students. Office staff hold weekly meetings with seniors and juniors who need extra support in their college classes. The staff spend a week of extended time at the beginning and completion of each school year to reflect on the previous school year and brainstorm ideas for the upcoming year.

Over the past five years AECHS has completed professional development including Personal Learning Styles, student agency, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies for our ELL learners, differentiation, teaching students with trauma, classroom management strategies, children in poverty, testing and instruction using higher level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions, growth mindset, teaching grit, gifted training, the 4 C's of the 21st Century skills - adding our 5th C, compassion for all.

Our school offers intramurals, Student Council, National Honor Society, Cultural Awareness Club, Yearbook, Poetry Club and a Literary Magazine. We also hold three school dances, two lock-ins, an all-class competition, an end of the year Cedar Point trip and a senior class trip to New York. These clubs and activities allow students opportunities outside of the classroom to enrich their high school experience.

Classes at AECHS are taught with a high level of rigor and a great deal of support. Students who may have gaps are provided wrap-around services that include intervention. They are also double blocked in ELA or math for extra support in that content area. After school tutoring is offered in every subject area both during the Fall and Spring semesters. Gifted students are identified by staff and strategies are put in place by classroom teachers to maximize their learning. We also integrate ACT prep into all content classes and offer ACT prep classes for additional support. This summer we are offering a two week Skills Boot Camp in math and ELA for incoming 9th grade students who may be skill deficient in those areas.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

1a. Reading/English language arts:

AECHS has adopted the model curriculum designed by the state of Ohio. The Standards-based curriculum is aligned with the Ohio State Standards. All AECHS students are enrolled in 9th and 10th grade English Language Arts (ELA) with the goal to enroll in dual credit courses through college composition. SIOP strategies are emphasized during instruction. This provides delivery of content through a multimodal approach to ensure all learning styles and language levels are addressed. ELA instructors practice varied instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. ELA instructors work in tandem with other content area teachers to employ cross-curricular instruction throughout the year. ELA instructors strive to make lessons stimulating and relevant to develop student agency.

Students are taught to read for comprehension and analysis with a focus on argumentation and support through textual citations. The accountable talk strategy teaches students to be active listeners in order to provide credible evidence to support arguments. Every lesson is centered on a learning target to ensure students are focused and reflecting on their individual progress. These strategies are emphasized to ensure college readiness in Intro to Public Speaking and English Composition I and II. The students are formatively assessed during every lesson so that they have access to content at their level of academic readiness. Our formative assessment data is used to determine cooperative learning groups. Regrouping is based on assessments, both formative and summative.

During enrichment/intervention students participate in gallery walks, reader's theater, small cooperative learning groups, jigsaw groups, and are provided supplemental materials for additional standard-based support. Our enrichment/intervention groups are created using various data points including PSAT and Ohio State Tests (OST) scores to address specific weaknesses that require additional supports from the staff.

1b. Mathematics:

The mathematics department continually works in tandem with The University of Akron to prepare students for postsecondary course work. Students at AECHS must complete three high school courses before having to complete Maplesoft testing (college math placement exam). The three high school courses students are required to complete are Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II/Trig. The curriculum taught in these courses places an emphasis on ensuring students acquire the skills necessary to be college ready. These skills are outlined by the Ohio Learning Standards and the Akron Public Schools math curriculum department. Students are taught using the model curriculum from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Students are challenged to obtain the skills necessary to be college ready by the end of sophomore year.

This is accomplished by focusing on a variety instructional approaches within the classroom and interventions for students in college math courses. The culture of our school is one that challenges every student in our population to be college ready upon the student's 11th grade year. The math curriculum focuses on preparing students for the rigors of college coursework, but also ensures that students are provided wrap around supports. This is accomplished using the following instructional approaches: differentiated content to allow for increased student achievement, scaffolding, questioning, independent study, cognitive organizers and "find the errors" problems. The math instructors use DEMOS, MathXL and Khan Academy to support instruction.

Students who fall below the 50th percentile are placed into interventions during the school day to further differentiate material and to help students with gaps achieve success. Introduction to Analysis, a fourth year math course, was created to provide students with additional ACT and math placement support and help ensure that all students are college ready once leaving AECHS.

1c. Science:

All students at AECHS take two science classes at the high school level: 9th grade physical science and 10th grade biology. The key focus of these classes is preparing students to succeed in the college level science classes they will take as Juniors and Seniors, helping students explore the potential for careers in these fields, and, most importantly, equipping students with the scientific knowledge necessary to make informed decisions in the modern world. Both classes take a student lead, real world approach to teaching key concepts. Through the use of technology and hands on activities, students assume the part of geneticists, evolutionary researchers, aerospace engineers, molecular biologists, and many other scientific roles. By leveraging the many industry standard resources available - such as DNA databases, simulators, and interactive manipulatives - teachers build lessons that reinforce these concepts. Daily assessments of varying DOK levels in the form of student discussions, exit tickets, and bell quizzes are used to ensure that all students are mastering their material and as a means of tracking students' progress.

The APS Instructional Framework of our curriculum is based directly on the Ohio State Standards. Each student is tasked with meeting these standards as well as exceeding what is expected from the state. In addition, science instructors at AECHS communicate with professors in the Biology, Allied Health, Physics, Chemistry, and Geology departments at UA to help understand what our students will need when they enter these classes at the beginning of their junior year. Teaching these skills and foundational knowledge to our students will prepare them to be critical thinkers and life-long learners.

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

AECHS students take two Social Studies courses: Freshman Honors World History and Sophomore Honors US History. Learning Standards are determined by ODE and the APS Social Studies Curriculum Department. Learning standards are taught within the scope of college readiness. Each lesson is planned to incorporate SIOP strategies, higher level DOK questions and real world applications. These all foster independent learning which are critical for the success in college courses.

Lessons include clearly articulated learning goals to ensure that all students understand expectations. In order to prepare students for college and career, relevant and rigorous activities are used to assist students in becoming independent, life-long learners. Through DOK-focused questions students are challenged to build problem-solving and inquiry skills. Lessons are brought to life through simulations and role-playing activities that allow students to get into character and engage in deeper learning. Further, assignments require that students engage with their community in order to build empathy skills and soft skills that will assist them in their future. One-to-one technology and an online interactive textbook support students as they research topics using primary and secondary sources to build arguments based on valid and reliable facts.

Instructors use a detailed 5-Step approach to lesson design and assessment. Formative assessments occur daily to ensure that instruction is differentiated. Think-pair-shares, exit-admit tickets and strategic questioning enable teachers to assess student progress. Summative assessments are not simply conducted with traditional written tests. Students demonstrate their mastery of learning through mock trials, accountable discussions and group projects. Not only do these serve as assessments, but they also allow for the enrichment of gifted students and those who display gaps in their learning. In order to ensure that learning targets were met for all students, instructors examine data after each unit, allowing them to best address the needs of students.

1e. For secondary schools:

AECHS seniors either earn an associate degree upon graduating from high school or complete a minimum number of 40 hours of college credit. Akron Public Schools, ConxusNEO and Ford Next Generation Learning have partnered to develop strong College & Career Academies that will provide all students with opportunities to pursue their interests and passions related to high demand careers in Northeast Ohio. AECHS will incorporate more career exploration, experiential learning, internships and externships for our students and staff. The University of Akron, as a named Sister University, will assist in providing real-world opportunities for our students and staff.

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

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Courses in visual and/or performing arts, physical education, health, and technology are taken as dual credit courses provided by UA.

AECHS currently offers Spanish I and II as an elective. We encourage students to take Spanish. It contributes to a well-rounded education and counts toward students earning an Honors Diploma. A high percentage of Spanish instruction at AECHS is immersive, and Spanish is the primary language used during class time. Students learn to read, write, listen and speak every class period. Like all subjects, students are at different levels of comprehension and strengths and weaknesses are identified through the use of a daily formative assessment. Students are grouped in a variety of ways and instruction is consistently rigorous and meaningful. The teacher is conscious of the students various learning styles and incorporates opportunities to show learning through interactive writing, reading, listening, speaking, acting, and other creative displays of learning. Learning about Spanish culture is another component of the class which offers students the opportunity to reflect on and share about their own culture. This allows students to form important relationships and develop a strong sense of community. While the content is central in this class, students are also developing important social-emotional skills by learning about different cultures and practicing conversation skills frequently. Students benefit from the environment that emphasizes high expectations, personal responsibility and respect for all. These classes benefit students in many academic and emotional ways that extend far beyond foreign language.

Freshman Seminar, a full credit course, was added as part of the APS College and Career Academies initiative. To support the transition to high school, Freshman Seminar emphasizes student success skills including professional communication and email, using e-learning platforms like BrightSpace and Google Classroom, reading a syllabus, using a planner, time management, and being an independent learner. We prepare our students for college success. We encourage them to read and understand materials outside of class, we expect students to submit coursework online without reminders, we emphasize that instructors may give tests without providing review guides or review sessions in class. If students are able to anticipate these challenges they will be able to succeed in the class.

One of the ways that we help students to understand relevance and planning for the future is by exploring scholarship opportunities by emphasizing the importance of GPA and ACT scores. This class includes a unit on financial literacy, which helps students better understand the value of scholarships and how to make good financial decisions. Additionally, this class infuses career exploration and helps students to project a future life after their schooling is completed.

As students move into Sophomore, Junior, and Senior they are scheduled into a weekly seminar class that is tailored to the unique challenges they will face during that particular year. Much of the curriculum builds on the foundational skills the students learn in Freshman Seminar, and how to apply these skills to their new classes. During their Sophomore year, students begin to take more rigorous college classes and must apply their college ready skills and habits. In their Junior year, students take the ACT for the first time and become full-time college students taking up to 12 credits of college coursework. A significant amount of time in Junior Seminar focuses on supporting the students in the transition from high school to college and preparing them for the ACT test. During their senior year students begin to build resumes, apply for college, and apply for scholarships. Students are given an opportunity to connect to real world experiences that use their academic knowledge.

3. Special Populations:

At AECHS we constantly review data and brainstorm ways to provide wrap around services for all our students with academic gaps. We have strategically placed low performing students in intervention for ELA and Math during a study hall. Many of these same students are double blocked in ELA and Algebra I during NBRS 2019

the second semester to receive extra instruction to fill their gaps in learning. After school tutoring is available for struggling students in all content areas. Teachers also make use of study hall periods to reach out to students who may not be able to attend after school tutoring. Study halls are monitored closely.

At the end of every semester students who are below a 2.0 GPA, and their parents, are asked to sign a contract with the school. The contract simply states that students will agree to do their part to improve their grades (e.g. complete all assigned readings, take notes, complete homework assignments, attend after school tutoring and ask for help when needed, etc.). These students are then assigned a staff member as a mentor to monitor their weekly progress throughout the semester.

We also intentionally schedule our low performing ELL students in ELA with the same teacher. The class size is smaller and the students feel more comfortable in this setting. All of our staff have attended SIOP training to develop strategies to better service our ELL population. We also have an ELL tutor who meets with all of our ELL students weekly to tutor and mentor them in all of their classes.

The staff is currently attending training to become “gifted certified” so that we can better service our higher performing students. Teachers differentiate in their lessons to intentionally service these students in their individual classes. Staff has also attended PD for teaching learning styles. Teachers intentionally plan and teach with the awareness of the various learning styles that make up their classrooms so they can better service students in all of our populations.

At the junior and senior level, students are scheduled into college classes based on staff recommendation and individual ability. We scaffold this experience for all of our students so they are not overwhelmed by the college experience. Once students are scheduled into college classes we monitor their progress using interim reports from their professors. If a student is struggling, they are assigned to one of our office staff (principal, assistant principal, counselor or lead teacher) who meet with them on a weekly basis for support. We encourage our junior and senior students to utilize the wrap around services offered by UA. We encourage and organize study groups and teach strategies for success in their college classes through their seminar classes.

AECHS has an extensive mentoring program for some of our struggling 9th grade students. They are paired with a senior who they meet with once a week. The seniors assist them with study tips, time management and organizational tools.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

The culture at AECHS is focused on academics. Students can earn a “Blue” or a “Gold” card based on attendance and GPA. Students with good attendance and a 3.3 GPA earn the ability to eat lunch outside of the lunch room. Students with a 3.8 GPA or higher additionally earn the right to be excused from study halls. AECHS celebrates its academic success in the fall with the annual 3.0 Club Ceremony and in the spring with our National Honor Society Induction Ceremony. Students who have gaps in their learning are supported through after school tutoring, interventions, and student meetings with the office staff.

AECHS schedules several school-wide activities throughout the year that are well attended. Lock-ins happen after 1st and 3rd quarter, the PTA Themed Dance is in October, the Student Council Formal is in February, the Class Competition happens during the first week back after winter break, and every year students who had no disciplinary problems are eligible to go on a trip to Cedar Point at the end of the year. These events contribute to a positive school climate and strong bonds between students and staff.

The teachers at AECHS are a small group of highly committed professionals. AECHS has a very low turnover rate. Half of the staff are veterans that were part of the team that opened the school. The staff are open and willing to collaborate with one another. All of the teachers choose to be at Early College and understand that the expectations are high. They choose to be on the staff because they believe in the schools mission. Teachers are included in setting goals based on school data during instructional improvement days. Every teacher at AECHS is part of the School Improvement Team and contributes to setting the goals that drive decision making for the year. These goals are clearly communicated to all members of the staff, including non-certified staff, and revisited often. Making these decisions as a team, and working towards goals as a team, results in teacher ownership of goals about instructional improvement. Working collaboratively to identify and meet these goals results in staff buy-in.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

AECHS reaches out to middle school parents on APS middle school transition nights to inform families about the opportunity to apply to Akron Early College. We host two information nights, explaining to parents the expectations of the school and how to apply. We sponsor a “Meet the Teachers” night at the beginning of each school year to continue to build connections with our families. We strongly encourage parents to attend parent-teacher conferences where we provide valuable information for families to support their child. Outside of face-to-face meetings, the school communicates student progress through Home Access, email, phone calls, BrightSpace, Google Classroom, and paper mail. AECHS has a dedicated PTA, and an administrator is present at each monthly meeting to provide updates on what is happening in the school. We believe that keeping several clear lines of communication with family members has contributed to the success of the school.

In the last two years, AECHS has set a goal to engage community businesses and institutions. This year, The University of Akron officially became a Sister University to Akron Early College High School, which means that they are committed to partnering with the school to provide educational resources. This year, AECHS hosted a Career Expo, inviting 20 community members to share their careers with students. The University of Akron assisted with securing several guest speakers. The objective of this event was to help students to learn about the careers that are available to them locally, and also to develop a relationship with local businesses. Whenever possible, AECHS includes community members offering several opportunities to volunteer as classroom speakers or to judge competitions. Community involvement increases relevance for students. We will continue to develop these relationships and create new relationships so that in the future we will be able to place students in job shadows and internships. Our goal is for these relationships to be mutually beneficial, our students will benefit from the real world connections and the businesses will benefit from the opportunity to hire our graduates.

3. Professional Development:

AECHS incorporates a blend of Professional Development (PD) offered by our district as well as “home grown” PD presented by our own staff. At the end of each semester we reflect on our strengths and weaknesses and attempt to structure our PD around those needs. For example, there was a push in the district over the past two years to incorporate higher level DOK methods in the classroom through instruction and assessment. This clearly aligned with a main focus of our school: rigor. We invited learning specialist from the district to conduct a PD session for our teachers about higher level DOKs and how to incorporate them in the classroom.

Last year we determined that we needed to do more as a staff to prepare our juniors and seniors when they transitioned to full time college students. Oftentimes our students struggle in a college class because the professors teach in a way that doesn’t fit the learning style of our students. We attended a Knowledge Works conference in Columbus and received a PD regarding student agency and Personal Learning Profiles. We returned to school that Fall and created a Personal Learning Profile (PLP) for all of our students and incorporated this into our focus for the school year. Students were taught how to adapt to the teaching style of college instructors by being more aware of their own learning styles.

Four years ago we had four new teachers on our staff. The veteran teachers got together and developed a PD for the younger staff about classroom management and the importance of relationships. We knew that our younger teachers who were all new to the classroom would benefit from this type of PD and consequently we had enough veteran teachers on staff with 20 or more years of experience that we could develop the PD ourselves. This PD clearly aligned with another focus of our school: relationships.

We honestly feel that the staff’s willingness to continually reflect and improve strategies and techniques in their classrooms has a direct impact on student achievement at AECHS and that this is one of the main reasons for our success as a school.

4. School Leadership:

AECHS is a place where we are invested in helping our students achieve through collaborative leadership and a focused, shared vision creating the necessary pathways for students to be successful. Our ten teacher leaders consistently establish relationships and provide rigorous learning in and outside the classroom. They work collaboratively in professional learning communities to discuss best practices for successful learning incorporating content standards and DOK questioning. Teachers also meet with their grade level colleagues to address individual student needs.

The principal, assistant principal, lead teacher and counselor work in tandem with the teacher PLC’s to assist in student learning and achievement by analyzing how to foster student success. We synthesize and analyze our student data regularly to guide instructional practices that best supports our student academic weaknesses and strengths. We have expectations that our students need to uphold in order to create a solid foundation for success in high school and college. We work collaboratively with students, parents and guardians to help foster this vision of success. With parental support we allow our students who demonstrate academic strength to have unsupervised time as a true college student in various locations on the university campus. The students’ academic performances are monitored regularly with interim progress reports and report cards.

The University of Akron supports our endeavors to foster this academic perk for our students. As our Sister University through the College and Career Academies, the University of Akron supports our vision to create independent learners by having our students learn time management skills and believes in our efforts to promote student agency for academic success. They also help us create experiential learning for our students by providing access to events on campus.

The district provides ongoing professional development to assist our teachers with instruction and best practices. A Governing Board consisting of the public school and university members meets to examine data, grades, test scores and graduation rates for high school and college. In addition, the principal, the

assistant principal, the counselor and the lead teacher meet monthly with our university liaison and advisor to discuss relevant information relating to our school.

Lastly, grade level parent meetings are scheduled annually to review school policies and procedures that address the issues relevant and specific to each grade level. These meetings are conducted by the principal, the assistant principal, the school counselor, the lead teacher, the university liaison, and the university advisor.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In our effort to model best practices, we are continuously working towards collective efficacy as defined by Jenni Donohoo, John Hattie and Rachel Eells in their article, *The Power of Collective Efficacy*. Collective efficacy refers to the belief on the part of the staff that our actions can affect student success. Three areas highlight the evidence that we continually work towards this end.

First, we regularly reflect on next steps for staff and students. This includes analyzing data and teacher input to identify our strengths and weaknesses. Utilizing our district's Site Improvement Process, we disaggregate our data and use research-based practices to assist us in our improvement process. Reflecting on next steps also includes teachers using formal and informal data to guide their instructional practices from unit to unit. Finally, reflection includes discussion about how to be the change agents with our students. This means setting high expectations, conducting rigorous lessons and providing wrap around support for all such as different classes and lunch time or after school interventions. We commit to this reflective practice because we believe it will have an impact on student success.

Second, our teachers possess a passion for their craft. They are dedicated to their students and they work diligently to lay a foundation for success. Our teachers, the principal, the assistant principal, the lead teacher, the counselor and all other support staff are vested and invested in our students and school. Much of the staff have been part of the school since its beginning. Younger teachers are mentored in the "Early College ways." At the core of the "Early College ways" is our collective efficacy, the belief that what we do will impact student success.

Third, our school's culture promotes academic success that yields a high school diploma and an associate degree for many of our students. Our students can earn scholarships to continue towards a bachelor's degree virtually debt-free. We believe that the initiatives we make will have positive results.