

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

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

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

Official School Name High School for Law and Justice  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3505 Coyle  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Houston State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 77003-5501

County TEXAS (TX)

Telephone (713) 867-5100 Fax (713) 802-4600

Web site/URL https://www.houstonisd.org/hslj E-mail sgarci14@houstonisd.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\* Dr. Grenita Lathan E-mail glathan@houstonisd.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Houston Independent School District Tel. (713) 556-6000

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 Mrs. Sue Deigaard  
(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 2020 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 2014 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: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019.
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 (2019-2020) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 200 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 43 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 37 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 280 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)  
 Suburban  
 Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2019 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the 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	44	80	124
10	46	73	119
11	28	61	89
12 or higher	37	81	118
<b>Total Students</b>	155	295	450

\*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
  - 2 % Asian
  - 19 % Black or African American
  - 77 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 2 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2018 - 2019 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, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2018 until the end of the 2018-2019 school year	22
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2018	450
(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. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %  
14 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 55 %

Total number students who qualify: 248

8. Students receiving special education services: 2 %

10 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>3</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>5</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>1</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: 1

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the 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.	26
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 20:1

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

<b>Required Information</b>	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	100%	99%	100%	99%	99%

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 2019.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	87
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	64%
Enrolled in a community college	26%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	2%
Found employment	5%
Joined the military or other public service	3%
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.

To provide students with an academic education in conjunction with an in-depth study of Law Enforcement or Legal Studies in order to provide a successful transition into their chosen career paths or advanced academics.

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

We are a school of choice and do not have an attendance zone. Our students come from neighborhoods within the Houston Independent School District and apply in the fall of they previous year that they plan to attend our campus. Students apply using the district online portal, and if currently a student in the district they must only make a selection of the schools they are interested in. If they are currently outside the district, they may apply at a later phase during the process and must supply academic data. A matrix is created for each student in which their academic history is reviewed along with other data and a final total is given. Students meeting our criteria then are considered qualified and enter a lottery pool for selection.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

---

The High School for Law and Justice is centrally located Houston, Texas. The area has undergone a lot of gentrification in recent years and there are few homes in the surrounding area that include school age children. The community has also changed in the last several years not only in the area of housing, but also transportation. A transportation rail system can be found right in front of the school, and it allows the community to access several parts of the city from north to south. As the housing began to shift, the area has changed from simple neighborhood homes to 3-level lofts and town homes. Some businesses that had been around for decades no longer exist, and that has also made it easier for the area to shift to new construction. Most recently, a low-income housing apartment complex was built just south of the school campus.

Our campus serves students from all areas within the city of Houston that are part of the Houston Independent School District since we do not have a set attendance zone and are a school of choice. Students do have to initially apply to our campus during their 8th grade year for the following school year as a 9th grade student. Our student body consist of predominantly Hispanic students at 77%, and African American students at 19%. We have a large percentage of our students that travel from the Greater Fifth Ward (northeast of downtown) to our campus. The north side of the city directly above downtown is a high crime area. At least 2/3 of our student body uses district bus transportation daily to go to and from school. For the students that live close to the campus, it is at least a minimum of a 2-mile walk to their homes. We are a Title I school and 55% of our students come from low-income homes.

What makes us unique is that we are the only school that focuses on Law and Justice within the greater Houston area, and the only school in the Houston Independent School District. The school was first opened in 1981 in collaboration with the Houston Police Department and the Mayor of Houston. It became the first law enforcement special curricula high school in the United States at that time. Our students have the opportunity to select a specialty of study in the field of Law Enforcement, Legal Studies, Emergency Services, Government, or Cybersecurity while also focusing on core courses. It is our goal to make a positive impact on each of our students lives.

Our focus is to ensure that each student is learning each and every day. We are a small campus of only 450 students, and we strive to build personal relationships with each student. We make sure to truly solidify the bridge between middle school and high school by providing extra support to our ninth-grade students. All the core 9th grade teachers have a common planning time which allows them to confer and discuss student progress and their social emotional well-being. Although almost all our students come from within the school district, they definitely are not all at the same academic level. Again, the size of our campus allows for ease in building relationships with students and a better understanding of how to help them excel academically, socially, and emotionally. In order to best support students academically, we make sure that teachers have frequent check-ins with students. This is done during our advocacy and study lab classes. These classes allow for review of grades, support from peers, and instructional support/enrichment if needed. All of our teachers have a common planning time by department, and this allows for vertical alignment of instruction in an effort to strengthen systems throughout the campus. Beginning in their 10th grade year, students also have the option to take Advanced Placements classes as well. It is important that all students are exposed to rigor in the classroom regardless of the prep being on grade-level or advanced.

Our teachers receive instructional support from four administrators: the magnet program coordinator, teacher specialist, assistant principal, and the principal. Each of these members focuses on a particular content, monitors Professional Learning Community meetings with department teachers, and reviews data as needed. This allows for collaboration among teachers and admin that results in academic growth for students through the sharing of ideas and best practices. Everyone has a responsibility to ensure that all students are learning.

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

---

### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

**1a.** Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas

At the High School for Law & Justice, each of our students have one-to-one technology. Additionally, each teacher has a laptop and classroom equipped with a smartboard and document camera. Across content it is expected that students are able to access classroom presentations and documents using the HUB, which is the districts on-line platform. It is the expectation that teachers across the campus utilize the technology as part of their instruction and assessment planning.

Each subject is provided with a district scope and sequence that guides the calendar of instruction in the classroom. It is the responsibility of the teacher to adapt their teaching based on the needs of the students. These adaptations are made based on assessment results that are reviewed at multiple times during the school year. Students in all core areas take a district created beginning of the year assessment and teachers utilize those results to group students and guide instructional planning and the process is repeated at the middle of the year. Students also take a progress monitoring assessment for English I & II and Algebra since those are tested at the state level at the end of the year. We expect students to be challenged and supported in order to reach their full potential. Each classroom is required to have a daily objective posted and agenda that will guide the student through the days lesson.

Each content area does have an administrator that is assigned as their supervisor and each core team meets in vertical teams bi-weekly for planning and instructional support. This provides a true support system to teachers at all levels of experience and allows for engaging discussion regarding student progress and supports.

**1b.** Reading/English language arts

Our ELA instruction is guided by a scope and sequence that is provided by the school district. Additionally, we have access to vertical alignment matrices, and unit guides that teachers utilize when creating their personal lesson plans. In our 9th and 10th grade levels, students are also required to take and pass a state English exam. Additionally, half of the students in 11th and 12th grade take advanced placement exams through CollegeBoard. Throughout the school year our students receive instruction based on state standards and expectations. Teachers access these district guides through the district portal called the HUB.

Our students are required to complete progress monitoring assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of each year. These assessments determine if any interventions are needed and provide feedback to students and teachers on what the areas of weakness. Our teachers do have the flexibility to modify the sequence based on student needs considering that each group of students is not at the same level. In order to support our students in need of intervention, we added a creative writing class to our master schedule. Students scoring low in writing are placed in this class to allow for a double block of ELA without it negatively affecting their track to graduation. Students in 9th and 10th grade are also required to take a benchmark exam mid-year in preparation for the state examination. The results from this assessment are also used to determine a student's overall progress and mastery of objectives taught. Placement/removal from the creative writing class is also guided by the results of the assessment. We also have the option to enroll students in a study lab during the school day students that only need mild interventions into a study lab class with an English teacher for additional support. Being that the majority of our students are not able to stay before or after school due to transportation issues, we make all attempts to embed instructional intervention during the school day.

Students do have the option of “choice” when completing assignments to support differentiated instruction. Teachers embed technology into their lessons using several methods such as presentations, online games like Kahoot, No Red Ink for writing and grammar support, and Vocabulary.com for language support as well. The districts online system named the HUB is where teachers upload their assignments and

presentations, which allows students to access instructional materials easily. Our English teachers also meet as a vertical team bi-weekly in order to discuss student concerns and instructional practices. They focus on being truly collaborative by sharing ideas even though each teacher is responsible for a different grade level. Reflecting on the campuses need to increase writing performance across grade levels, we also partner with an organization called “Writers in the Schools.” This is an organization that recruits professional writers to support teachers using a co-teach model in the classroom. Not only do they assist teachers with planning writing lessons, but they also model those lessons as well to ensure a complete understanding of how to engage students in the activity.

### **1c. Mathematics**

Our math instruction is guided by a scope and sequence that is provided by the school district. Additionally, we have access to vertical alignment matrices, and unit guides that teachers utilize when creating their personal lesson plans. The district creates a scope and sequence that determines the content and when it is to be taught. Four times a year, the district releases common assessments for our teachers to use to gage the learning going on in the classroom. Our students who take Algebra 1 are required to pass an Algebra 1 state assessment. Additionally, students in 11th and 12th grade have the opportunity to take a higher-level Calculus class take advanced placement exams through CollegeBoard. Throughout the school year our students receive instruction based on state standards and expectations. Teachers access these district guides through the district portal called the HUB. Our teachers also work together to create meaningful lessons that educate and then put the students in the specific role of a Mathematician. They design bridges and houses, as well as devise budgets and standard deviation of growth.

Students are assessed on every standard once instruction has been completed. The teacher creates questions based on the objectives through our testing platform, OnTrack. These results can group the students into meaningful small groups for our teachers to specify the interventions to the students’ needs. Every four weeks, the low standards are spiraled back into an assessment for indications of growth or stagnation. Our students are required to complete progress monitoring assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of each year through a program called Renaissance 360. These assessments provide detailed data and determine if any interventions are needed and what are the student’s areas of weakness. Our teachers do have the flexibility to modify the sequence based on student needs considering that each group of students is not at the same level. In order to support our students in need of intervention, the Math department utilizes an online resource Imagine Math, provided by the district. As students are practicing the lesson, Imagine Math only allows students to move onto the next problem if they have answered all the parts of the question. If a student does not get a part correct, it scaffolds them to the correct answer by providing examples and step by step instructions. There are online math teachers, who walk the students through examples so the students can be reminded how to go through the problem. Our English Learners also can be provided instruction in English and in their native language with subtitles. Students can access these resources at any time and can compete against each other for lessons completed. We also have the option to enroll students in a study lab during the school day students that only need mild interventions into a study lab class with their Math teacher for additional support. Being that the majority of our students are not able to stay before or after school due to transportation issues, we make all attempts to embed instructional intervention during the school day.

### **1d. Science**

Our science instruction is guided by a scope and sequence that is provided by the school district. Additionally, we have access to vertical alignment matrices, and unit guides that teachers utilize when creating their personal lesson plans. The district creates a scope and sequence that determines the content and when it is to be taught. Four times a year, the district releases common assessments for our teachers to use to gage the learning going on in the classroom. Our students who take Biology are required to pass the Biology state assessment. Additionally, students in 11th and 12th grade have the opportunity to take advanced placement Environmental Science and advanced placement Biology class take advanced placement exams through CollegeBoard. Throughout the school year our students receive instruction based on state standards and expectations. Teachers access these district guides through the district portal called the HUB.

The Science team uses a variety of Online Labs for students to utilize if something cannot be tangible in the classroom. Every student at our school has a laptop, therefore labs can be shared, modified and critiqued by peers throughout the class. Our students watch Kahn Academy, Pearson online, and Quizzes to check for understanding. The teachers create quizzes and assessments based on the objectives through our testing platform, OnTrack. These results identify students who need assistance. Standards that are low scoring are spiraled back into instruction and later assessed for indications of growth or stagnation. Our teachers do have the flexibility to modify the sequence based on student needs considering that each group of students is not at the same level. In order to support our students in need of intervention, the science department utilizes online resources like Edpuzzle and Padlet for a variety of instructional tools. We also have the option to enroll students in a study lab during the school day students that only need mild interventions into a study lab class with their Science teacher for additional support. Being that the majority of our students are not able to stay before or after school due to transportation issues, we make all attempts to embed instructional intervention during the school day.

#### **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

Our social studies department consist of four teachers and they follow the mandated district curriculum which uses the state standards as a foundation. This department is also responsible for most of our advanced placement classes and instruction. Students follow a track of courses for social studies starting with World Geography, World History, United States History and Government/Economics in their senior year which are half semester courses. There is one state exam for U.S. History that students are administered in the spring of their junior year.

Students are monitored during their ninth-grade year in the World Geography class. Based on their performance and knowledge they will be recommended for the advanced placement class the following year. We want students to be challenged to reach their goals, but also want to be assured that they will be able to succeed without feeling overwhelmed. The learning standards for social studies are extensive and are therefore ‘chunked’ into eras, periods and topics in order for not just the teacher to be able to teach the curriculum but for the students to grasp the ideas and be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. We use professional learning communities for curriculum alignment, data disaggregation and general teacher sharing/learning.

The instructional approach for our social teachers is more representative of project-based learning units as it fits with the idea of student choice, students teaching students, and the goals of 21st century problem-solving: collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. In addition, it fosters the curriculum being that the units are very era based and chunked.

#### **1f. For secondary schools:**

Students at High School for Law Justice (HSLJ) begin to concentrate their CTE studies as soon as they start their high school experience. Instructional content begins with career exploration and becomes progressively more occupation directed as students specialize in their coursework. Some can participate in a Work-Based Learning placement where they may learn and apply skills in an industry setting. During their junior and senior year, registered apprenticeship programs, such as our partnership with the Houston Emergency Center, are provided with advanced technical skills and the training needed to find employment in a specific occupation. This includes student certifications required by the state for Emergency Dispatch, International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED). It benefits those students who become certified by keeping them well-informed of the latest developments in emergency telecommunication and Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE). It assures the public served that telecommunication professionals have met standards of care and practice for Emergency Telecommunication (ETC), Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD), Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) and Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD). This program continues as an apprenticeship where these technical skills are continued with on-the-job training.

Along with this program, students can gain industry-recognized certifications in Microsoft Office Specialist, which can be utilized in different avenues in entry-level businesses. For instance, soft skills and customer

service are important because most companies demand it. These skills are needed to ensure students are college and career ready, regardless of whether they plan to complete an apprenticeship after high school or attend a two-year or four-year college. Within the curriculum, students have opportunities to learn how to prevent emergencies, respond in accordance with rules and regulations during crises, and investigate emergency situations. Students also get to examine the roles and responsibilities of police, courts, corrections, private security, and protective agencies of fire and emergency services.

**1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Since we are a specialty high school that focuses on law and justice, most of our elective classes fall into that category. When a student enrolls in our campus at the beginning of their ninth-grade year, they are scheduled for few courses in the specialized areas. Instead, they are enrolled in all the core courses, arts, physical education, and language classes with only one class for their area of study. This is done to make sure that students are frontloaded with the courses that are required to graduate high school based on district expectations and not wait to complete those courses in their later years of high school.

We only offer one type of fine art class, which is Art I and Art II. A very limited amount of our students arrives with a high school fine art credit; therefore, they are scheduled into art as a 9th grade student based on space availability. Students that take Art II do so by choice, as it is only a requirement that students earn one high school credit for art to graduate. It is through the art class that students have the opportunity to express themselves using a multitude of media types. The art teacher follows the district guidelines for these courses, but also embeds opportunities for students to explore cultures through art history.

Students are required to earn one physical education credit as part of their graduation requirement and our campus provides two choices for students. We have a robust JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Course) program and physical education class. They are required to make this choice upon entering our program in the 9th grade but do have the opportunity to switch to either program mid-year. For those that choose physical education, they will typically take it during their 9th grade year. The activities in the class vary by the unit which include archery, basketball, tennis, volleyball, and soccer. Students are also required to complete fitness tests as part of this program. The students that choose to enter the JROTC program do so with the understanding of the requirements and expectations of the program. It does require more of a commitment from students and after school activities as well. There are two retired military instructors that lead the program and they in turn teach students how to be leaders themselves. Students that choose this track have the opportunity to be promoted to various ranks and participate in competitions all while learning about leadership, morals, and humility. The standards for this program are provided by the district in conjunction with the U.S. Army. Overall, the classes in this category support social and emotional support and wellness through group activities and team building.

Spanish is the one foreign language that we offer, again due to restrictions from our campus size and budget we are only able to offer one language. All students are required to have two full years of the same language as a graduation requirement. Depending on the student's level then can start with a basic Spanish 1 course in 9th/10th grade, or a native Spanish speaker course if they qualify. If enrolled into the native Spanish speaker course, the student will earn the two years of credit in one year. Students that are enrolled in Spanish 1 will take Spanish 2 the subsequent year. The instruction goes beyond language as the instructor exposes students to a variety of cultural celebrations and customs from Spanish speaking countries. The language is embraced and can frequently be heard around the campus being spoken by students and staff. The language acquisition for the class focuses on basic common phrases and words that student learn and express via oral and written expression.

Our technology course is call Business Information Management and it provides students with access to certifications for Microsoft Office. Approximately one fourth of our population participate in this course and it is not a graduation requirement. It does allow students to gain skills that support their completion of assignments in other areas and support general workforce expectations upon graduation. Students have the option of completing two years of this course, and 100% of our students choose to do so. Technology is an

integral part of this class and students are guided through lessons by their instructor all to prepare them for the certification exam at the end of the year. Students are able to earn progress certificates during the learning process and the teacher motivates students for posting them in a common area to show her support.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level**

At the beginning, middle and end of the school year, students are required to take an assessment created by Renaissance 360. This testing platform identifies what level of reading and math students are at based on how they answer the questions. It provides detailed feedback on where specifically a student is struggling and throughout the year, documents their growth. For students who perform below grade level, the school tailor's instruction through data driven lesson plans. Our teachers are consistently looking at student's assessment scores and dissecting that score. Using our online testing platform, teachers can identify students on what interventions they need and more specifically, what objectives they struggle with. Instead of reteaching the entire lesson to a whole group, our teachers are able to identify a population of students and what part of the content needs to be readdressed. One of the more popular resources that teachers use for intervention is Imagine Learning. More specifically in math, Imagine Math walks students through math problems who support and online guided instruction. It provides language translations and subtitles for the students as well for a scaffolded lesson. Therefore, the students who are below grade level, can access Imagine Math for any grade level to catch up during time for Intervention. Often times, our teachers like to make a competition out of it, you will hear students brag about how many Imagine Math lessons that they completed and aced. We also implemented a study lab into our daily schedule for students to receive interventions with the core content teachers to close the achievement gaps. Other resources like Kurzweil is used for English Learners and other students who need the accommodations of read aloud. Our students have an option of choice when completing assignments to support learning at all the different levels.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level**

As we prepare student schedules in the spring and summer for the following school year, we review assessment data to inform those decisions. Students that perform above grade level are identified using multiple data points such as universal screener results, state exam data, academic grades, teacher recommendation, and previous advanced placement exam performance if applicable. In some cases, even if students do not necessarily meet the above level criteria, they may be placed in advanced classes based on teacher recommendation. It is important to consider that students may be up to the challenge, although their complete performance is not meeting the mark.

In order to ensure that our teachers embed rigor into their instruction, we provide them with professional development that focuses on higher-order level thinking and differentiation. Teachers utilize strategies choice boards, student generated questions, open-ended questions, and leveled text. Upon entering the 9th grade, students that are performing above grade level are provided with differentiated instruction in the classroom using the strategies noted, as we do not offer any advanced placement classes at the 9th grade level. Students in 10th grade and above are scheduled into advanced placement courses such as World History, US History, Macroeconomics, Government, Statistics, Language, Literature, Biology, and Environmental Science. These classes encompass a lot of writing, research, and thought processing that fosters students that perform above grade level. We also allow the option of being moved into an advanced placement class during their first three weeks of school if the teacher/student support the move based on in class observations.

#### **3c. Special education**

Our special education students are supported using the inclusion method on our campus. This means they are scheduled into classes like any other student and receive support from their case manager in a push-in model. Since we are a small high school, we do share our special education case worker with two other campuses and do not have the ability to have him on campus every day. The supports we provide our special education students vary from in-class support, one-on-one meetings with case manager, and teacher

professional development focused on best practices.

One of the frequent concerns for this subgroup is their ability to organize and keep up with assignments. This area of need is supported by the case manager and classroom teacher. The case manager supports the students and frequently communicates with the classroom teacher to ensure that the student is making progress and on track to receive all credits for classes. Our special education students do receive supports/accommodations as noted in their individual education plans. Additionally, they are administered all the same assessments as any other student in their grade level.

Based on the requirements to gain acceptance to our campus, our special education students do have some record of success academically. With that being said, there are some that do encounter difficulty upon arriving to our campus. It is the case managers responsibility to monitor the accommodations the student receives and determine if changes should be made based on the new environment and through the progression of grade levels. When it is determined that a student is in need of support beyond what inclusion provides, a plan is created that allows for an open block of time during the school day in which the student is able to receive support from their case manager and content specialist.

**3d.** ELLs, if a special program or intervention is offered

Students who are English Learners are assessed in Spring every year. They are assessed on their reading, writing, speaking and listening through a series of tests and writing samples. These tests are called the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System and are a government requirement for all English Learners. This information gives us the level of English Learners they are and what supports they will need in the classroom to be successful. Beginners start off with work and content that has been translated where Advanced High are scaffolded into everyday English Language instruction with a Dictionary provided. The steps in-between Beginner and Advanced high have a set series of accommodations and modifications for the students to be successful but also fall in that zone of proximal development to ensure their growth. On our campus, because every student has a laptop, has access to online resources provided by the district, including Kurzweil. Kurzweil is an education tool that provides reading and writing assistance for our English Learners population through read aloud. Any digital assignment or scanned materials can provide an audible lesson for them to listen while they work. Another program is IXL.com that provides the students up 100's of opportunities to practice their skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking. For vocabulary practice, our teachers use Vocabulary.com. The students often use this program for practice with seeing the word, definition and a picture. It is an easy application that they can use in and out of school, and you cannot move onto the next set of words until you have successfully completed the first. The Multilingual Program at Houston ISD also provides our teachers with trainings and workshops to use these resources in their classroom. We also implemented a study lab into our daily schedule for students to receive interventions with the core content teachers to close the achievement gaps.

**3e.** Other populations (e.g., migrant), if a special program or intervention is offered

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

In this day and age, being able to engage students can definitely be a challenge. Technology and learning are moving at such a fast pace, and it requires teachers to be innovative in the classroom more than ever before. We understand that lessons need to interest students, challenge them, and most importantly reflect real world challenges. Our classes allow students to engage in discussions regarding current or historical even through debate, and even mock trials as part of our court systems class. Academically students are engaged in the classroom with hands-on science labs in anatomy and physiology, or bridge making in Algebra. Teachers make an effort to become knowledgeable of student's interest and utilize that knowledge to create lesson that maximize engagement.

We also found a way to encourage students using social media by creating a school Instagram account. It excites students to know that they will be spotlighted on the account for all to see, and it is also a great way to disseminate information regarding important events as well. Most importantly, it gives students direct access to communicate with an administrator at all times. We found that building relationships and trust was strengthened even more by utilizing social media.

There are times when a student may be struggling with their workload or issues at home. It is of utmost importance that students know there is always someone they can talk to at school. For that reason, our counselor is dedicated solely to duties in her office. This allows her to be available on a regular basis to students that need someone to talk to. Beyond the counselor, our policy is that students may speak to any administrator regarding concerns that require more support or assistance. Our message is that we are all counselors and available to provide social emotional support when it is needed. We also determined that students needed an easy way to report any concerns, whether regarding a friend or themselves. We have "Incident Reports" available in offices throughout the school building for students to access. At times they report concerns with friends, or issues they are having themselves. As administrators, we follow up with these students immediately, listen to what they have to say, then assist as we can. Upon leaving high school, we know that students will need to know how to problem solve, know how to handle problems with coworkers, and advocate for themselves. Every conversation with a student regarding an issue is always connected to a life experience they may encounter later in life. We pride ourselves in going beyond the labeled roles we have and guide students to be successful by providing academic, and emotional support.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

HSLJ parents and community play a major role in establishing long-standing relationships that lead to partnerships with all stakeholders. Prior to acceptance, students and parents are encouraged to attend tours provided by student ambassadors. This interaction encourages students to interact with their peers, observe teachers and students and get a feel of the campus. This outlines the expectations of their child's learning experiences and helps us understand where we can improve. This shared responsibility continues through the year with our monthly Shared Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) meetings held where we discuss implementing pertinent campus-level planning and school budget. In addition, Coffee with the Principal meetings are conducted monthly where parents can attend to get more information about their child's Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), hear from college and university representatives, HISD College and Career Readiness Department representatives and community stakeholders, like Houston Crime Stoppers. This partnership culminates our annual Law Day event. This event includes community involvement from organizations around our city, educational career presentations, career intern opportunities and networking advantages in public service industries. This includes the Houston Police Department, SWAT, bomb squad, firefighters and other public service careers that our students are interested in pursuing. This highly anticipated event has grown each year thanks to parents who have connected us to even more opportunities for our students. For example, Harris County Attorney's office has made a great impact bringing in professionals who are judges, assistants and transcribers. These experiences help students recognize various career opportunities available. Students ask any questions pertaining to their career goals.

To show our students the commitment to our community, we have our annual Charity Basketball game. This provides all students the opportunity of giving back by donating toys to Texas Children's Hospital. Our Police Explorer mentors get a chance to compete with our students in a basketball game to raise money for our community stakeholders.

Parents also serve as chaperones for college visit field trips, dances, and participate in College and Career Day. In an effort to keep our parents informed we sent out via email and callouts are made regularly for upcoming events. This along with social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter highlight our students and campus accomplishments to parents and community.

HSLJ receives support from our CTE Program Specialist, for the purpose of establishing partnerships that lead to experiences in sectors of our local community, while maintaining college and career programs.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Our supportive professional culture stems from our campus' mission and vision and our commitment to the belief that all members of our community are responsible for ensuring all students succeed. To fulfill this commitment, teachers and staff are supported through open communication, leveraging our families and community members, teacher mentoring and coaching, professional learning communities, and ongoing professional development.

Open communication ensures that all voices are heard, and information is provided regularly and clearly. Teachers receive weekly updates on school events and issues that affect them directly. Teacher input and feedback is regularly sought, and collaborative discussion between teachers and administration is used when making important school decisions.

Another area where teachers receive support is through leveraging our families and communities to assist with the work they do every day. Parent and community volunteers work hand-in-hand with our teachers in many of our afterschool programs by providing hours of mentoring and coaching in support of ensuring our students are receiving valuable educational experiences. Additionally, the PTO provides a point-of-contact for teachers to connect with parents and community members to assist with student learning and sponsors several teacher appreciation events honoring their work.

Through mentoring and coaching our teachers work closely with administrators and peers in order to develop effective teaching practices and collaborate and share what works inside outside the classroom. The campus Teacher Specialist is also available to provide one-on-one coaching in developing new lessons, feedback on instruction, and assistance with data collection and interpretation for instructional best practices. Teachers are encouraged to self-reflect and provide input into their own work, using video recordings and instructional self-monitoring tools, all while receiving guidance and support from the Teacher Specialist.

Professional learning communities provide additional peer and mentor supports through bi-weekly meetings. Teachers and administrators work collaboratively to analyze and assess student progress, lesson pacing, and other topics. This collaborative process allows teachers to work with their peers to share their knowledge and provide feedback on lessons. Teachers can also discuss current school issues and trends and provide direct feedback to administrations.

Finally, we strive to support the professional development of our teachers and administrators by providing professional development that is tied directly to their day-to-day work and focused on the best practices in instruction and leadership. Beyond that, teachers and administrators, through the guidance of their mentors, are encouraged to seek out and attend professional development which best serves their needs and interests while developing their professional capacity.

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

As the leader of the school, the principal models what is expected of all others on the campus honesty, respectfulness, fairness, and a focus on an honest, respectful and fair and constantly focused on what is best for the students. The philosophy is that of a servant leader, meaning that the principal focuses on serving others and is in the work with the staff, whether planning assessments with teachers, rearranging a classroom, or helping clean up after an event. This is also modeled by the rest of the administration team which consist of an assistant principal, teacher specialist, magnet program coordinator, and counselor. Decisions are made as a team with the guidance of the principal, always keeping in mind what is best for the students. In order to ensure that the message is the same across the campus, administrators hold regular grade level assemblies with students and teachers. Students are given their opportunity to share and request activities at the school. The principal and administration encourage students to look for ways to make the school a place they want to be – even something as simple as requesting that we start a club to class offerings. The administration works as a team, and the same is expected of our teachers.

Faculty meetings are held on a monthly basis, and teachers have the option of attending an AM or PM meeting. We found that this allowed for more flexibility for our teachers and their travel to and from work. In turn it helped bond the relationship between teachers and administration because it enforced the fact that they are important to us. Content departments are also given the autonomy to connect with the community, stakeholders, and alum in order to enhance learning in their classrooms. Transparency regarding decisions such as the bell schedule emphasize to teachers that their opinions count, and they do have a voice in what we do.

We are slowly starting to see more involvement with our parents, as it can be a struggle in the high school years. Our parent and teacher organization hold weekly board meetings with the principal and magnet coordinator. They support the school and are always willing to provide input from the parent perspective as we make decisions.

The main goal that is tasked to the staff is that when our students leave our campus, they should be academically prepared for college or the workforce. This is a frequent topic of discussion and it drives the decisions that we make regarding our master schedule, teacher selection, and needed resources. We want our students to be able to achieve success whether they step into an entry level college course or the workforce. Our counselor works diligently with students not only providing emotional support, but in sharing all the information she can regarding the process for college entry or workforce certifications.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

The school's success is not based on one sole area of focus, but a combination of many. If a school fails to have a strong understanding of a student's academic ability, social-emotional needs, and effective assessments they will surely struggle to succeed. It is a combination of all those areas that lead a campus to be successful and create students that are knowledgeable and college or career ready. Considering all those factors, a strong focus on academics is one of the most instrumental of all.

It is through the actual instruction in each class that students learn and evolve. It is not common that vertical planning occurs on campuses, but that is the model we use. This allows for teachers to frequently support one another across grade levels and create systems that provide students with a sense of consistency as they go from one level to the next. Additionally, our advanced placement teachers hone their instruction by attending training every summer to ensure they have the most up to date information regarding those classes.

We also put an emphasis on writing across all content, solely because it is a general deficit across the campus. This is accomplished first through our English courses and the support of organizations like Writers in the Schools. Not only do they provide lessons for our teachers to utilize, they also model and co-teach lessons. These practices are shared across the English team and beyond. We know that students need to be challenged academically as well and we offer a broad selection of advanced placement courses to ensure they have access to college level courses. These courses additionally require an extensive amount of writing regardless of the content area.

Academics also drives several of our career courses since students will need to attend college to eventually enter those fields. The career and technical education teacher's role are to motivate students, incite learning, spark interest in career fields, and ensure that students are mastering the objectives. Providing students access to teachers from a variety of backgrounds and fields provides a sense of assurance that they can also reach their goals.

We strongly encourage students to challenge themselves, try new things, and focus on doing their best. This is reinforced through grade level assemblies, meetings in their advocacy classes, college fairs, club meetings, and classroom. Focusing on academics has resulted in gains in student achievement on state exams, with 99%-100% of our students meeting the expectation in each area. Upon entering college, they will need to be academically prepared or they will fail. This is the goal that we strive for, to make sure that all our students complete their education prepared for the challenges they will face outside our walls.